



A Publication of the San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church

*"Growing together and reaching out in the love of Christ"*

# Firmly Rooted

**Our Values**

**Serve Adore Nurture Learn Outreach**

*"Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him." Col. 2:6a*

Vol. 31, no. 1

January 2021

## Making All Things New

*"Behold, I am making all things new." Revelation 21:5*

It has been an extraordinary year! None of us planned for what 2020 would bring with COVID-19, shelter-in-place, civil unrest, a heated presidential race, and much more. At moments, it feels like we are just dragging our feet into a New Year, but I want us to reflect back on the significant blessings of 2020, for God *will make all things new* in the end.

**#1 The Blessing of the Church** - We are grateful for all of you! Church is not limited by four walls. The Church has thrived with shelter-in-place, living to support one another with a mask-making ministry, adopt-a-senior care, zoom prayer meetings and small groups, and our online services.

**#2 The Blessing of Technology** - We are grateful for technology so we can still worship the Lord in the safety and comforts of our homes. We praise God that we were able to get online that very first Sunday of shelter-in-place, and we have been able to preach the Word with an increase in viewership to 800-1,200 hits weekly. We praise God for the tireless efforts of Pastor Josh and his entire team for their continued service to make church happen week in and week out.

**#3 The Blessing of Lament** - We are grateful for the Lord's comfort during a season of sorrow and grief. We have learned from Romans 12:15, *"weep with those who weep."* We've grown to have empathy for those in our community over civil unrest and to deeply appreciate our police officers, teachers, and frontline workers. I can't think of another person who would be so proud to support those in our community than our very own Pastor Rod as he went home to the Lord on Good Friday. We greatly miss him, but we cherish his leadership and sacrifice, which has left an eternal mark to greet each another with Christ-like love. We have had heavy hearts through this season of mourning, yet it has made us a stronger community in Christ.

**#4 The Blessing of Transformation** - We are grateful to see lives transformed by the power of the gospel. We were blessed to have several new members and the baptisms of Randee Lee and Ran Tao. God's power is not stopped by anything, even a global pandemic.

**#5 The Blessing of His Faithful Servants** - We are grateful for an amazing team of servants through the elders, staff, and deacons. We appreciate the faithful service of long-time deacons, Tammie Lee and Vernon Hu, and we are excited for our new deacons, Helen Lee Takaki, Kimi Yee, and Patti Okui.

We appreciate the staff with Pastor Scott's fun and uplifting videos with Red and Stripes, Stan's transformation of the church sanctuary (it's amazing can't wait for you to see it!), and Pastor Brian's counsel to create a culture of care.

Finally, I can't say enough about Kathy's leadership, character, and dedication to the Lord and our church. She has gone above and beyond the call for she has been the heart and soul of SanLo to make us feel supported, whether we are brand new or we've been in a dark rut. This is her final Firmly Rooted as she retires next month. With much thanksgiving, we appreciate her for all she has done to firmly root us in the Lord. We will miss her interaction on staff, but grateful that she will be around to continue to care for us like only Kathy can. We are thrilled and excited to have Jessica come onboard and take us to a whole new level in our communication.

The Lord has nurtured, challenged, and blessed us in 2020, and He has more in store for all of us in a New Year as we hold onto the hope that He is making all things new. Happy New Year!

*In His Care - Pastor Eric Yata*

## God's Plans Unfolding!

*"I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds." Psalm 9:1*

It's hard to believe over 30 years have passed from the time I got a life-changing phone call from Pastor Rick Chuman, who was our young Assistant Pastor at the time. Pastor Rick asked me if I would consider working for the church as a part-time Administrative Assistant, working with he and Rev. Jim Toda, our Lead Pastor. There had never before been any kind of admin staff and the church recognized the need. I couldn't believe what I was hearing when I got that call!

You see, I was a stay-at-home mom, and had been praying for weeks about whether I should go back to work. I had prayed very specifically, expressing my heart's desire to the Lord -- a job near-by, flexible hours and to still be involved with my children's activities. I remember thinking to myself, I'm looking for the impossible! Where does a job like this exist? God blessed me more than I ever imagined with the perfect job opportunity! I live less than 10 minutes from the church and I knew this was God's gift and provision for our family.

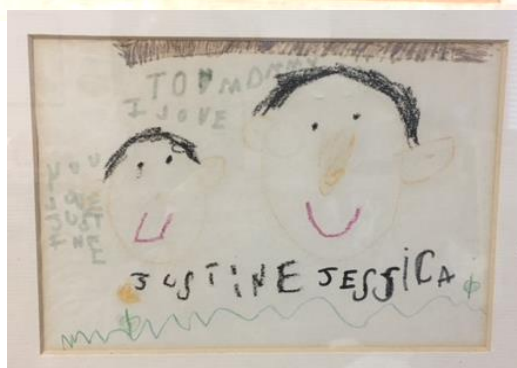
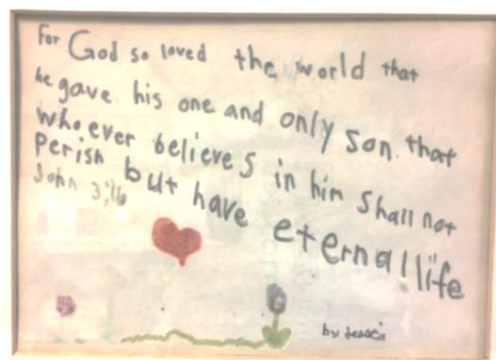
I recall hanging up the phone with Pastor Rick and laughing out loud, thanking God and marveling at how He answered my heart's cry. What a privilege to serve in ministry, with Rev. Jim and Pastor Rick. I knew I would take the job! God's plan continued to unfold. Little did I know I would end up working for the church 30+ years and later my husband would become a pastor! It never crossed my mind nor Brian's that we would actually end up working together about six years later.

God's plans are always better than our own and often surprising. I have loved working for the church and am so humbled to have served alongside an incredible staff, both past and present. I've learned so much about trusting God and caring for His people. Many times, the verse from 2 Corinthians 12:9 would come to mind, when Jesus said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."* Truly God would allow me to work in many different situations through the years and truly His grace proved sufficient over and over again.

January 31, 2021 will be my last day serving on staff as I retire. I give God thanks and praise for His faithfulness and His provision through all these years. I had the privilege of serving with ten English pastors and four Nichigo pastors. Even when our church faced challenging times, the Lord filled in gaps, allowing Rev. George Toda (Rev. Jim's brother) to come out of retirement to serve as our interim pastor for what was supposed

to be a year, but turned out to be three years! God built His team of wonderful pastors and staff later with Pastors Rod, Sunao, Scott, Eric, Brian, and most recently Josh. I'm so grateful to have served with Stan, our multi-gifted Church Administrator and Tomoko Shimada and Atsuko Smart, our Nichigo support staff. I've seen God's love and care as we lost many beloved church members and walked through grief and loss together. We've been incredibly blessed with the birth of many babies and to witness spiritual births as well, as many have received Christ.

Pastor Eric had to inherit a huge role as our Lead Pastor in 2018 as he managed his new position and shepherded the church through the grief of losing Pastor Rod to cancer and this year's pandemic crisis! There's no denying, we've gone through some harsh times, but praying and supporting each other and "building a gospel community of growth for every generation," is how God uses each of us for His glory and purpose.



**These pictures drawn by my daughters have hung in my office for 30 years. The top one was from Jessica and the bottom one was from Justine. Who would know that years later Jessica would sit in the same office that her picture hung for so many years?! God's amazing plans continue to unfold!**

As I write this, there are many mixed emotions as this is the final issue of the Firmly Rooted newsletter. I'm so grateful for the many people who served on our newsletter team when we were sending out almost 400 printed editions by U.S. mail before going to the electronic version. I'm also so thankful to our pastors and elders who wrote the inspiring front-page editorials for every issue.

It's crazy how much times have changed since I began working here, but the one thing that never changes is God's love, provision and blessing upon the San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church. I will forever be grateful for my time serving on staff. What a privilege and honor it has been.

I give thanks to the Lord and thank each one of you for always being such a loving, supportive and encouraging church family! God's blessings upon SanLo as we begin a new year and I am eager to see what His plans will unfold next!

*With heartfelt gratitude, Kathy Tekawa*



## Jessica Pham to Join SanLo's Staff!

SanLo will welcome Jessica Pham on staff as the new Communications Assistant in January. Jessica

has been hired on at 15 hours a week and will assist the Lead Pastor and staff in the daily operation of the church office, will promote events and church news, and oversee the weekly Sunday worship programs.

Prior to having her two children, Jessica worked at Joni and Friends ministry as an Administrative Assistant and Project Coordinator. She also served on International Campus Staff for Campus Crusade for Christ, Tokyo, and lived in Japan for 5+ years.

Jessica stated, "I love SanLo's vision of building a gospel community of growth for every generation. I'm passionate about the gospel, desire others to know Jesus and pray for the growth of faith for our church body." Jessica loves the older generation and is thankful for their legacy. She is also appreciative of the ways SanLo has welcomed young people and new families.

She looks forward to beginning her new role on the SanLo staff and would appreciate your prayers for this transition.

## Grow SanLo Update



The Elders and staff feel deeply humbled by your giving especially during these challenging days. We do recognize that you may have your own financial hardship, so please do not feel obligated to give. If you need assistance, please let us know as we have a crisis fund to serve those in need. **Thank you again for your faithful giving as we seek to be a gospel community of growth for every generation!**

## COVID-19 Update: Reopening - Safety First!

The Elders are extremely grateful that we can continue to meet together online through the benefits of technology. We are saddened by the rise in COVID-19 cases throughout our community and nation. We are doing our part to monitor the latest updates, and we have postponed all in-person services for the foreseeable future. We will begin a soft reopening when it is safe and allowable to do so as **we are committed to a safe and meaningful experience for everyone to worship our Lord Jesus Christ together.** Praying for you all to be healthy and safe and have a blessed New Year!!!

In His Care,  
Pastor Eric on behalf of the Elders

Rev. Eric Yata, Pastor (English)  
Rev. Brian Tekawa, Marriage/Family Pastor  
Pastor Joshua Scott, Young Adult/Worship Pastor  
Pastor Scott Shimada, Youth Pastor

Rev. Sunao Shimada, Pastor (Japanese)  
Tomoko Shimada, Director of Christian Education  
Atsuko Smart, Administrative Assistant


Stan Naruo, Church Administrator

Kathy Tekawa, Communications Administrator

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**Any newsbriefs or articles for “Firmly Rooted” should be at the church office by the second Sunday of each month.**

San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church  
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Dated Material  
Week ending Dec. 18, 2020

## Newsbriefs

\* After each Sunday worship service, there is a **Zoom prayer and fellowship time**. All are welcome to join in by following the worship service reminder email sent out each week. If you do not receive it, request it from Pastor Josh at [josh@slzjcc.org](mailto:josh@slzjcc.org).

\* **“SanLo Together,”** our very own podcast series is about growing and walking together even as we are physically apart. We’ll visit with staff, members, and others in our community to hear each other’s stories, learn from God’s Word, and just grow! You can find us at the link below or on Spotify. Check out the Advent newest edition <https://anchor.fm/sanlo-together>. Questions? Contact Chris Wu.

\* **Winter Vision 2021** is coming virtually this January 15-17. Registration is required as it will be limited to 150 participants via Zoom. Register here: <http://wintervision.org>. John Yeo, Youth Pastor from SoCal will be the main speaker. Questions? Contact Pastor Josh or Pastor Scott.

