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A Publication of the San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church  
"Growing together and reaching out in the love of Christ"

# Firmly Rooted

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

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## Worship and Song

Some of you that are reading this article may already know this, but have not said a word about it. Well, I'll just come out and admit the fact - I am a terrible singer. I have difficulties with high notes and many times I can't carry a tune. I'm sure that I must cause some people around me to squeeze their eyes shut and consider sitting in another row next week as they hear the off-tune sounds coming from my throat. Still, I must confess - one of the most pleasant and rewarding times that I have is when we sing the songs of worship and praise at the beginning of our Sunday service.

So, why does a person with a singing voice that causes dogs to howl and cats to run and hide, enjoy singing on Sunday so much? It is because it makes me so happy to be doing something to honor and praise our God. I'm worshipping our Lord and Savior with the words coming from my lips, even, if they are out of tune. While my voice may be out of tune, the words of the songs that we sing are right in tune, no matter whose voice is singing it. Even with a voice like mine. I love singing the words that praise and honor the Lord, our God. I'm worshipping the Lord, praising Him for who He is, acknowledging His love for us and every aspect of His being.

When else during the week, do I acknowledge His "Amazing Grace" and how it has "saved a wretch like me?" How often during the day do I get the opportunity to voice "How Great is Thy Faithfulness" to my God? Or tell those surrounding me "How Great is Our God?"

Though I would love to voice these praises time and time again, sadly I do not carry those words or such a message as much as I would like. So, happily on Sunday I'm able to do that and it brings me great joy.

The songs we sing on Sundays allow me to worship the Lord with my words and loudly for all about me to hear. Though my voice may be sour, I hope that the words that I sing are sweet and pleasant to His ears. I love telling all those about me of His greatness and praising Him for all that He has done. Singing these songs each week, allows me to truly worship Him in my spoken words and with all the emotion that I can express when I sing "Blessed be Your Name." Most importantly, I know that He looks into my heart for how I worship Him, whether I sing in tune or not.

So, I thank the praise teams that lead us in song each week and the assistance they give us to verbally worship our Lord each week. Most importantly, I hope that next week you might excuse that out of key voice singing praises to the Lord sitting by you because it will be someone worshipping our God with all his heart. If you are fortunate, it may not be me, but that friend or loved one that you came to worship with.

*I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. (Psalm 9:1-2.)*

In His Name,  
Jeff Kataoka

# Finding God in Unexpected Places

By: Grace Vilain

I met the LORD on a cross-country bicycle trip from Seattle to New York City. In the summer of 1985, my husband and I flew up to Seattle with our tandem after he finished his Master's at UC Berkeley. (A tandem is a bicycle built for two.) The timing was perfect – the genetic engineering company that I was working for was moving to Boston to be closer to MIT. I quit my job, my husband graduated, we sold our cars, put stuff into storage, and off we went.

We had no idea -- no clue what the LORD had in mind for us! We did not grow up in Christian families – my parents were Buddhist, my husband's mother is Jewish, and his father was agnostic. From the very first day with our loaded tandem, *our* bicycling adventure was really the LORD's adventure to "capture" us – to make us His own! We made it to our first campground on Mt. Rainier from Seattle, but it was completely full. It was getting dark, and we were wondering what we should do, when a couple approached us and said that we could camp on part of their site. We were so grateful! They were a Navy family with two little girls. They were curious about us and our plans. We shared our camp food made on a little backpack stove with them. And then they prayed for us, for our safety, for our journey – I have never been prayed for before. It was a strange feeling.

We would experience this same scenario many times on our trip. We would get to our destination, there would be no campsite for us, "no room at the inn," and someone would always offer to share their site, or invite us to their home to camp in their backyard. Most of these people were God's people reaching out to us! They would pray for us. I learned that the LORD works through His people!

One day in Wyoming in the middle of no-where, we met this man, Mark, who was walking along the road in a very white robe with a red bandana around his long hair and a blue backpack. We rode by him initially greeting him with a wave, but my husband felt that we were supposed to go back and talk with him. My initial impression of him was that he looked really clean! I was all sweaty and salty from riding the tandem in this desolate Wyoming landscape. We learned that he was a drug addict from Hollywood, and the LORD spoke to him at his lowest point to get up and walk America preaching the gospel. From that, I learned that God uses anyone who is willing to follow Him – even this drug addict from Hollywood! I started sensing the immense grace that the LORD has for His people. The LORD saved Mark from death – literally – death from drugs. As we continued to ride through God's creation, to climb His Rockies, to ride through His corn fields, wheat fields, we were eager to greet each day and who we

**There aren't too many people who could ride a bike cross country, let alone meet Jesus at the same time! Grace's life reflects the incredible story of God's pursuit for her.**



would meet! We met a wonderful pastor in Polo, IL who clearly represented God's wisdom, kindness and generosity. We stayed with him for a couple of days enjoying our talks. But it was not until we were climbing up to the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia that I knew I belonged to the LORD. In order to distract myself from the exertion of the climb, I was going over the Lord's Prayer. I must have read it somewhere along our trip. As we climbed higher and higher, I was able to recall the next line. And when we got to the top, all the words were "given" to me. The LORD gave them to me! This is when I knew, the LORD was real and I belonged to Him now! A great paradigm shift occurred within me instantly. It felt like the heavens and angels were rejoicing! But at the same time, all these past sins came flooding my conscience for which I needed to ask for forgiveness. So much was happening in such a short period of time!

On the other side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, we came to the University of Virginia where we met a young college student, Tom Weis. He chased after us on his bicycle and invited us to his house where a bunch of college kids lived. After sharing our cross-country experience, he was the one who recommended that I read the Book of John. I spent the rest of the night reading the whole book. I was "hungry" to know more about Jesus!

God works in mysterious ways. After the Blue Ridge Parkway experience, when we would shop for our evening meal at the local grocery store, sometimes the LORD would have me tell someone something. It felt weird because I had no idea what I was talking about and to tell a complete stranger that I think I'm supposed to tell them something felt vulnerable – like they would think I was crazy! But usually from their facial expression and thanks, I could tell that the message meant something. I had never been used by the LORD before. It felt dangerous because you did not have control. I guess this was a lesson in Trust.

And, yes, after three and a half months on the road, we did finally ride down the Avenue of the Americas in New York City with all the honking taxis surrounding us!

So much has happened over the years as I grow in Christ. The LORD has always been gracious to grow me and call me to serve Him in various capacities. I was a Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) leader for about 12 years before He called me to nursing. He has provided for my family and my schooling these past years. He has given us the energy, stamina and ability. He has done it all!! Both of my children, Nate and Olivia, have grown under His wing. I am so grateful and humbled by His grace and mercy! I look forward to what He has planned ahead.

## My Prayer

By: Alice Stroude

Bless me Lord with your loving care,  
Ease the burdens that I bear,  
Guide your Light on me within,  
Keeping me away from sin.

Take over my heart, making me whole,  
Making for a prayerful soul,  
For with your amazing Grace,  
All problems can easily face.

Help me comprehend the Bible as I read,  
The scripture fill a daily need,  
Sharing the gospel truth with others, be my guide,  
Feel your strength Lord by my side.

Help me remember each day to pray,  
Not just when problems occur along life's way,  
You Lord have blessed all people with Jesus' birth  
Then on the cross gave His life for sins of man  
on earth.

I love you Heavenly Father, as you love me,  
I'm thankful for many blessings and gift of family.  
Look forward to the time you take me home,  
To be with you Lord Jesus on the righteous throne.

## Community Life – Creating a Church for Everyone

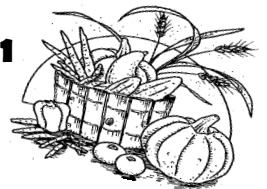
You might be asking questions like: Why is our church spending 10 weeks on a class in small group ministry? How important are small groups? Isn't it enough to just come to worship on Sundays? It is wonderful that we can worship together on Sundays; however, there are some things that we can't necessarily do on a Sunday that we can do in a small group. For example, we can't always get to know someone on a Sunday, but we can in a small group setting. Also, we can't always ask questions about the passage or the sermon when we come to worship service. Our neighbors or friends might never come to "church" but they might enjoy coming to a small group, especially if they are invited to someone's home.

We've begun a 10-week course on small groups on Sept. 20. We hope to provide a biblical foundation for small groups and to give practical tools in building our church to be a place for everyone. As we have set out to be a church about our values SANLO, certainly the small group ministry fits right into the value of nurture. We want to be a church that nurtures and grows each other toward our Savior, Jesus Christ. Please come join us for a time in learning how to be *a church for everyone*.

-- Pastor Eric

### **Come and join us for the Harvest Festival 2009 "Let your Light Shine.."**

**Saturday, October 31  
5:30 to 7:30pm**



**FRIENDLY Costumes only please!  
Bring your own bag/container  
to collect prizes**

**Please sign up to bring  
prize and food goodies  
for everyone of ALL ages to enjoy**

**If you can help, please contact  
Aza Jow or Judy Sugiyama**