



Seeing God's Hand in History

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in Him. - Psalm 111:2

I don't know about you, but I too easily give lip-service to the "hand of God." I might know how I want God to show up, or perhaps wonder why God seemed to be absent. What doesn't come naturally to me is a deep conviction that God's hand is always at work, superintending over, and through, His people...in the midst His beloved yet broken creation, carrying out His sovereign purposes even when it seems evil is triumphing.

I had known for a long time that my ancestors were among the many Chinese that entered the United States through the Angel Island Immigration Station in the early 1900s. What I hadn't known, until my Mom and brother recently dug up documents from the National Archives in San Bruno, CA, was that a group of Presbyterians played a key role in advocating for my grandmother's release from federal custody, after several months in detainment. You can hear my grandmother's story at the web link below.

It has been a delight for GUM to play a role in uncovering many more stories of God's grace through congregations who served Angel Island detainees in the name of Christ, during an era of harsh, anti-Chinese sentiment. Indeed, these stories speak to us today, and again we can put our trust in a God who is at work through the life and ministry of His people. - Craig Wong

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A Latino Christian Reflects on the Detainment History of Angel Island

At first, I wasn't convinced to go on an Angel Island "pilgrimage" because I asked myself, "What would I learn that I'm not already aware of? I already know how it feels to be un-welcomed as an immigrant."

However, God always surprises, and I felt He wanted me to go. I must say, I enjoyed being with a diverse group of churches, even though they were predominantly Chinese. I just knew that the love of God brought us together. We shared the same faith and background as immigrants to this land, although many of these Chinese had established roots many generations ago.

Something that took me by surprise was during lunch. While I was listening to the speakers, someone shared their food with me, and I was at that moment reminded of the picture of Jesus preaching while the multitudes ate. While sitting there, we heard many people share their painful detention stories even though they would rather have kept it to themselves. It was good for a new generation to know what had happened to their ancestors in the early 1900s...how they had suffered while passing through the island to a new life in this country, yet were grateful to God who didn't abandon them amid their hard circumstances. God sent them saints who provided spiritual, medical, legal and economic help. They dedicated themselves to this because they knew it was wrong for a nation to treat immigrants like this. They saw the detainees as people that God loved and cared for.

When I read the poems etched in the walls of the historic barracks, it was as if the walls were speaking to all of the horrors of being hated as immigrants. I could feel the sadness and frustration these Chinese people went through, feelings they expressed by writing on the walls like graffiti (except much more beautifully). It gave me a clear picture of what individuals had to live with back then, with so many children and adults having to share small beds in a small space. One can only imagine what that was like.

As we neared the end of the trip, and we took the long walk back to wait for the ferry, I overheard someone talk about the immigration problem today, and how unfair it is to use people for labor but then to wish them away. I hope that God touched many more hearts...people whose own family history helps them to have compassion for those being downtrodden by today's anti-immigrant sentiment. May we pray, and act, toward God's deliverance.

- The author of this reflection was one of about 400 people who participated in a "pilgrimage to Angel Island," an inter-faith event co-sponsored by GUM. To learn more about this event, go to www.gum.org/angelisland



Discovering God's Hand through His Church in San Francisco: *Urban Adventures*



For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. - Isaiah 65:17-19

It is often easy for Christians to think God's work begins with *our* presence in the broken places of our city, but I have come to realize, through our Urban Adventure (UA) field trips, that God is *already* present...bringing about his redemption. He graciously extends his hand and invites us to walk with him in *His* work. UA, a ministry of GUM for over 5 years, has been an opportunity for congregation members to see the Lord's work through our partners in San Francisco (SF) by taking field trips to meet churches and ministries that reflect God's heart in our city. "I wanted to see what ministries our partners are doing and appreciate the different ways that God is at work in our city," said Jensa Woo, member of Grace Fellowship Community Church (GFCC), as she reflects back upon the field trips this year.

Such field trips have included visits to Mission Presbyterian Church, Holy Family Day Home, SF Christian Center, Cornerstone Church, Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Chinatown, and many other places where God's hand has been, and still is, at work. This year there were two field trips: St. Peter's Catholic Church and Casa San Dimas (a community that provides housing and Christian teaching to immigrant youth, many who are involved in gangs and spend time at the Juvenile Justice Center). These two field trips have broadened my understanding and picture of God's presence in a broken yet beloved city. As I listened to the history of St. Peter's Catholic Church, and the legacy of Bishop Peter Yorke's ministry of advocacy during the 1890s labor struggles, I was reminded that God's light has been shining through His people in our city throughout the generations.

"These field trips have helped me to pray for these ministries, its work in ordinary ways, and in these places it is where our extraordinary God is at work...bringing about hope in people's lives," said Jensa Woo. A clear example of this arose in the middle of our field trip at Casa San Dimas. One of the ministry leaders received a text on her phone indicating that a young man who they have been helping for several years, through his naturalization process, had just received his U.S. citizenship status! Everyone started clapping and rejoicing! It is in these small moments that God's assuring love and grace is revealed.

As Isaiah 65 proclaims, God is redeeming the city. He has shown us His redeeming presence through fellow Christians as they reflect the face of God in San Francisco...and in so many ways, both past and present. God's love is limitless and beyond what we ourselves can offer. We simply make ourselves available and, as Beverly Low of GFCC recently shared, "we all have a role to play in sharing our gifts with others." May the Lord lead us, and we join Him, in what *He* is doing. †

PRAY FOR... ...the fruit of the Daly City **Cumberland Presbyterian Church's** October 30th *Diabetes Health Fair*, that relationship with their surrounding neighborhood would grow. For Pastor Roderick Gittens, the new senior pastor of **SF Christian Center**, as he leads his congregation in a renewed vision for their life and mission together. For Pastor Danny Fong, and the leadership of **Redeemer Community Church**, as they discern next steps in their calling as the Church in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. For **Grace Fellowship Community Church**, as they anticipate a major renovation of their facility (including the GUM offices) in the Mission District. *Hallowed be Thy Name, our Father!*