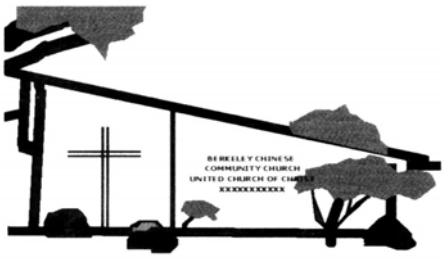

ETC Monthly

Berkeley Chinese Community Church

卜技利中華基督教會 February 1, 2009

BCCC Welcomes Pastor Karl Fung 歡迎馮家鎏牧師

February Highlights

2/1, Sunday, 11:00 AM
First Sunday for Dr. Karl Fung to be pastor at BCCC and Chinese New Year celebration with lunch reception

2/7, Saturday, 9:00 AM
BCCC church leadership planning conference

2/21, Saturday, 6:30 PM
Adult Fellowship dinner meeting

2/28, Saturday, 3:00 PM
Cantare Children's Choir fundraiser concert

Message from the Moderator --Derrick Wu

This first leg of our '09 journey has been eventful: Pastor Grace's ordination, *Rev. Grace's* farewell dinner, our first membership meeting and Council meeting of the year…just like that we shoot past the first month of the New Year.

With January in our rearview mirror, we're headed toward a turn that is much anticipated but somewhat uncertain. A new pastor is coming. We are at the threshold of plotting new directions and trotting new grounds. This may be exciting to some. But I am one who always needs time to make up my mind about anything new. The thought of keeping a balance between facing changes and retaining our identity weighs heavy on my heart. It shows on my face, you say.

You remind me that when the prophet Nehemiah was given the task to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, his first order of business was prayer. He did not start up by surveying the site, drawing up the plans, or gathering builders and masons. He started with a prayer. We do not have a wall to build, but we do have a task given to us, and we need to kick it off with prayers. You suggest that we go to our own sanctuary to pray. Good idea!

We take our seats in the back of the hall. The stained glass windows usher in what natural light the day has to offer, the center aisle is bathed in shadow, and all of a sudden I feel a sense of strangeness to this place, or is it freshness? I've been here thousands of times in different time of the day and have always taken it for granted. I sit here now and realize that this place is not exactly the same as it was when I first came some 15 years ago. The floor used to be bare concrete. The carpet that covers it now has been replaced two times since I was here. I was told that there was a radiant heating system embedded in the concrete floor. It failed and now forced air from the attic warms up the space. The choir section at the chancel was gone. The once fixed pulpit now slides laterally on track and wheels. All the pews have been turned at a slight angle. The stained glass windows did not come with the building when it was first built. Even the multiple nail holes in the wall sconces were an afterthought. (continued on next page)

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Message from the Moderator

(continued from Page 1)

The moving partitions, the projection screen, the speakers, the banners, are all changes made not overnight but through the years. While there is no doubt that more changes are yet to come, one thing remains evident: the identity of this place has not changed. It's a simple, modest building, straightforward, without pretense. It may not stir my soul as does the massive granite and soaring vaults of a cathedral. But the unadorned and underdone wood-framed structure fairly warms my heart, suits me perfectly. In this place, I can hear the brush of angels' wings, see glory on faces of the saints who gather, and feel the presence of our Lord just the same.

I bow my head to pray and reach for your hand, remembering the biblical promise: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Prayer connects us to our maker, to each other, to the present, and to the unseen. The unfamiliar becomes familiar. The uncertain becomes hope. At the approach of this new turn in our journey together, I know my prayerful thoughts have been heard. --Derrick Wu

A Thanksgiving Testimonial

--Darlene Hamady

(*At the worship service on Thanksgiving Sunday, Darlene gave the following testimony*)

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my mother, Gail Lee, for bringing me into this church. For Mom, this church and the senior center has been a cornerstone of her life—especially after all of my siblings and I left home. Mom would always tell me how much church and senior center meant to her.

For me, my involvement with BCCC began with a moment of serendipity. In the summer of 2002, after retiring from 33 years of teaching in Oakland Public Schools and seeing our daughter off to college, I mentioned to my husband, Johnny, that Mom was going to go on a trip to China with a group from church, led by her good friend, Lily Wong. Johnny highly encouraged me to ask Mom if I could go, too. The morning I asked her, she immediately called Lily. And I will never forget how enthusiastically she said, "You're in!" Thus, began my journey into the fold of this wonderful church family. After the China trip, I started helping the cleanup crew in the senior center kitchen. And before I knew it, Pearl Chinn recruited me to work with the regular kitchen staff headed by Ben Young and Elsie Ng—both of whom have been my mentors in food preparation. Next, I am asked to become the certified food handler to keep the senior center kitchen in operation.

All the while, I start coming to Sunday service on a regular basis. When Pastor Wr'near came to our church, his sermons were very personally inspiring. I next had the opportunity to work with Janice Young and Annie Pang to develop a new mission statement for the church. I soon began to feel God calling me to get baptized and join this church. I had grown up in the Chinese Presbyterian Church in Oakland Chinatown but never felt secure enough as a young person to "go the distance". But last year on December 2nd , the day before my 62nd birthday, I made the commitment to Jesus Christ and Pastor Wr'near baptized me and I joined this church.

I also have to thank Adrienne for asking to me to serve on the Pastoral Search Committee. As a new member to the church, I found I had much to learn about the operations and workings of the church. The camaraderie and focused purpose of working on the committee under Andrew's leadership was a very rewarding experience.

Learning more about my faith continues each week as I attend the adult Sunday school class. I thoroughly enjoy the discussions of current events and how they relate to our everyday life and to our lives as Christians. Taking notes in a journal during the weekly sermons has helped me to deeply think about and absorb the messages and the "good news" of Jesus Christ. It has and will continue to enrich my life.

In the coming new year, I look forward to serving on the church council, assisting Dick Hsu in the kitchen for senior center, and participating in the YEAH program. I am grateful and give thanks to God for these opportunities to serve Him.

From "My Faith Journey"

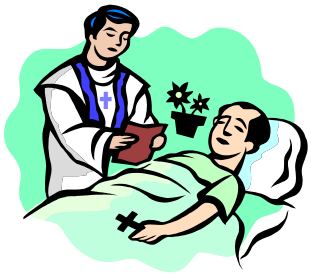
By Grace Song

(*The following is an except from the writing submitted for the ordination of Grace in the United Church of Christ. Rev. Grace Song was ordained on January 3, 2009 at BCCC.)*

"….In the Song of Songs of the Old Testament, the Lover calls out for his beloved, "*My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside*." During the unusual circumstances in China, I enjoyed the presence of God in the clefts of the rock and in the hiding places of the mountainside. But this retreating for the sake of safety can be a hindrance and a barrier to approach Christ. In the past years, I have gone through changes in my personal life which challenged my faith and theological understanding. It reminded me of the girl of Shulamite longing for her lover, as I tried to follow Christ. From "my lover belongs to me," to "I belong to my lover," there is a reversal of focus. Years ago, Christ was someone to satisfy my hunger, as comfort for my pain, and replacement for what I missed. Now, I am responding to the calling of "*come, walk with me*," and I know there is an enriched life nourished by faith. It may be a learned scholar, or a shepherd like Abel, and there is a message when faith enters into life.

I am grateful to God for the lessons I learned in the past two years serving in a Chinese American church. It provided me with a realistic assessment of my calling and my spiritual gifts. I am by nature a shy and sensitive person. I have a solid grounding on my knowledge of the Bible, and am confident in my understanding of the messages in the Scriptures. It is always a joy to organize my insights and inspirations into a sermon and share that with the congregation from the pulpit. But my gifts from God do not include that of an outgoing personality, nor am I a charismatic speaker in front of a crowd. Again, the love of God has led me to BCCC, a church with many mature and caring Christians who have helped me in every step of my journey. I find myself most energetic in exploring the biblical truth with anyone willing to learn with me. People have also told me that they were comforted, and uplifted spiritually when I visited them in their home or during their stay in a hospital. I am never tired or bored spending time with those who asked for my personal company. It must be the work of the Holy Spirit for me to connect to those who have a space in their heart for the words of God.

There are many questions for a Christian to answer in ones spiritual journey. My task as a minister for God is to connect these questions through my own experience, and to work with my flock to follow the purposes of God. We can believe that He has a plan for us toward the higher ground. This Way of God involves the creative power, and the saving grace will break through all societal barriers to be the true good news for mankind. Just as the good news proclaimed at the birth of Jesus Christ, it will bring peace and joy to the world. That is my hope and wish for the ordination and my response to His calling. My faith is the most precious gift from God, without which I will be a prisoner of the power in the world, lost for direction. To live in the faith in God, I have true freedom and courage to bear my responsibility as His child. Now I can hear the calling of my lover, "*The winter is past, the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth, and season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land….Arise, come, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me*." With courage and faith, I start my journey anew."



An Excerpt from "A Politics of Conscience" by Senator Barack Obama, June 23, 2007 (*The full text can be accessed from: http://www.ucc.org/news/significant-speeches/a-politics-of-conscience.html*)

…These are some of the challenges that test our conscience – as Americans and people of faith. And meeting them won't be easy. There is real evil and hardship and pain and suffering in the world and we should be humble in our belief that we can eliminate them. But we shouldn't use our humility as an excuse for inaction. We shouldn't use the obstacles we face as an excuse for cynicism. We have to do what we can, knowing it's hard and not swinging from a naïve idealism to a bitter defeatism – but rather, accepting the fact that we're not going to solve every problem overnight, but we can still make a difference.

We can recognize the truth that's at the heart of the UCC: that the conversation is not over; that our roles are not defined; that through ancient texts and modern voices, God is still speaking, challenging us to change not just our own lives, but the world around us.

I'm hearing from evangelicals who may not agree with progressives on every issue but agree that poverty has no place in a world of plenty; that hate has no place in the hearts of believers; and that we all have to be good stewards of God's creations. From Willow Creek to the 'emerging church,' from the Southern Baptist Convention to the National Association of Evangelicals, folks are realizing that the four walls of the church are too small for a big God. God is still speaking.

I'm hearing from progressives who understand that if we want to communicate our hopes and values to Americans, we can't abandon the field of religious discourse. That's why organizations are rising up across the country to reclaim the language of faith to bring about change. God is still speaking.

He's still speaking to our Catholic friends – who are holding up a consistent ethic of life that goes beyond abortion – one that includes a respect for life and dignity whether it's in Iraq, in poor neighborhoods, in African villages or even on death row. They're telling me that their conversation about what it means to be Catholic continues. God is still speaking.

And right here in the UCC, we're hearing from God about what it means to be a welcoming church that holds on to our Christian witness. The UCC is still listening. And God is still speaking.

Now, some of you may have heard me talk about the Joshua generation. But there's a story I want to share that takes place before Moses passed the mantle of leadership on to Joshua. It comes from Deuteronomy 30 when Moses talks to his followers about the challenges they'll find when they reach the Promised Land without him. To the Joshua generation, these challenges seem momentous – and they are. But Moses says: What I am commanding you is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven. Nor is it beyond the sea. No, the word is very near. It is on your lips and in your heart.

It's an idea that's often forgotten or dismissed in cynical times. It's that we all have it within our power to make this a better world. Because we all have the capacity to do justice and show mercy; to treat others with dignity and respect; and to rise above what divides us and come together to meet those challenges we can't meet alone. It's the wisdom Moses imparted to those who would succeed him. And it's a lesson we need to remember today – as members of another Joshua generation.

So let's rededicate ourselves to a new kind of politics – a politics of conscience. Let's come together – Protestant and Catholic, Muslim and Hindu and Jew, believer and non-believer alike. We're not going to agree on everything, but we can disagree without being disagreeable. We can affirm our faith without endangering the separation of church and state, as long as we understand that when we're in the public square, we have to speak in universal terms that everyone can understand. And if we can do that – if we can embrace a common destiny – then I believe we'll not just help bring about a more hopeful day in America, we'll not just be caring for our own souls, we'll be doing God's work here on Earth.

Rev. Grace Song, BCCC

Ordination, January 3, 2009

Rev. Calvin Chinn preached on "The Meaning of Ordination."

Rev. Drew Nettinga presenting the certificate of ordination

Rev. Dr. Mary Susan Gast charged the ordinand for ministry in Christ

Moderator Adrienne Hull putting the ministerial stole on the Rev. Grace Song

Farewell Dinner, February 25, 2009

Beautiful table setting for a catered dinner

"May the Lord Jehovah Bless You" sung in Mandarin for Pastor Grace

Elsie Ng sharing with the audience her happy moments with Pastor Grace

Pastor Grace having the final words of thanks for the BCCC congregation

Landscape Makeover in the Church

"What happened to the trees?" People asked when looking at the central island between the church building and the driveway. For the last few months, the tree and bushes in that area have been removed until only some large rocks remain. We are told by the old-timers that the area was once a showcase of landscape design, with each plant carefully chosen and cared for. Some of the rocks are in fact not ordinary stones, but pieces of petrified trees. Through the years, the vegetations have overgrown and the original design was no longer recognizable.

The Board of Stewardship has started to completely re-do the landscape. The flowering cherry tree, which tended to soil the walkway in fruiting seasons, is replaced by an evergreen *Southern Magnolia*. The aging junipers were removed to provide visibility between motor vehicles and pedestrians. Where there were *Birds of paradise*, now stands a clump of *Mediterranean fan palm*, its fronds may one day grace the church on Easter week. At the other end of the strip, a *Japanese black pine* and several *mugo pines* take up residence in the company of the petrified wood and moss rocks. As all the new plants are young, the area looks open and sparse at this time. A few more plants will be added after the ground is better prepared.

The above landscape work is carried out entirely with volunteer labor and funded by special donations. The project will be complete when two new park benches are installed on the patio. Church members and friends have the opportunity to donate these benches as durable memorials to a loved one. Inquiries may be directed to Chester Wong, Board of Stewardship.

Senior Center in February

2/3 Nora and Frank Pong will give a talk and show photos of their "2008 Cantare Chorale Concert Tour in Eastern Europe".

2/10 Clifford Yamachita from the California AAA will give us insights as to what happens when we need help from AAA.

2/17 Jon Colias will continue the fascinating talk he started on November 25, 2008 regarding the US interests vis a' vis Tibet, the Free Tibet movement. (THE PROGRAM WILL START AT 10:30 AM.)

2/24 Sally Yu Leung, a historian of Chinese culture and works of art, will give an informal lecture entitled, "Things Chinese: Chatting with Sally Yu Leung". (THE PROGRAM WILL START AT 10:30 AM.)

Cantare Children's Choir Concert and Fundraiser

On February 28, Saturday, at 3:00 pm, BCCC will host a children's concert called "The Voices of America" featuring the All Star Singers of the Cantare Children's Choir of Oakland. Tickets are $10 for adult and $5 for child. A reception will follow the concert. Proceeds from ticket sale will go to support of the Cantare Con Vivo's Outreach and Education program. For information about Cantare Con Vivo, please visit their website www.cantareconvivo.org.

Praises and Prayers --Mabel Low

GUNG HAY FAT CHOY! This week the world welcomed the new year-- the **YEAR OF THE OX 4707**. People born under this sign will be dependable, capable and methodical. Patient and tireless workers who stick to routine and conventions. Generally fair minded and good listeners but sometimes stubborn. Those born in Ox years are of steady and trustworthy character and will be entrusted with positions of authority and responsibility.

Prayers for BCCC as we look forward to a "new beginnings" for our church. Praises that at the beginning of this month, we will welcome a **new pastor** and together will plan for new programs for the church. We also have a **new church council** with members who are eager to help shape the future of our church and we pray for wisdom, patience and understanding to do God's will.

Praises for the **Rev. Grace Song**. Pastor Grace came to BCCC almost five years ago as a seminary intern for our church. At that time, she was a very shy individual who had only recently come to the United States and who spoke very little English. In 2005, Grace became our full time associate pastor and for the past two and a half years, has been our only permanent pastor. For the past nine months, she alone has led both the Cantonese and English speaking congregations. In spite of these responsibilities, Grace has diligently pursued her studies at the Christian Witness Theological Seminary and the Pacific School of Religion and with great perseverance completed the required courses to be eligible for ordination in the United Church of Christ. For Grace and for BCCC, January 3, 2009 was a momentous day in the life of our church as Grace was ordained in a very meaningful ordination service. At this service, many of Grace's mentors and advisors imparted words of wisdom and advice to her as she is about to begin the next phase of her ministry.

On January 25th, a farewell dinner for Grace was held at the church and it was a wonderful time for us to let her know how proud we are of her and how much she has impacted our lives. Songs were sung to her, piano solos and hula dances were performed for her and individuals expressed their thanks for all that she has meant to them. Grace thanked the BCCC for what the church has done for her and she shared with us how important we are to her. Prayers for Grace who will be taking some time off to return to China to visit with her family before she begins her training in September as a hospital chaplain at the Stanford University Medical Center in Palo Alto. So to Grace.... whom we see as our daughter, our sister, our confidant, our leader, our inspiration, and our friend, we wish for her only the best as she begins a new chapter in her life journey. As several in the BCCC family pointed out, Grace was very aptly named, for this servant of God is truly "filled with the fullness of Grace".

Prayers for the family of **Helen Hee** who passed away on January 6, 2009. Helen was born on October 10, 1913 and was one of our oldest and very faithful members. Helen was the oldest of seven brothers and sisters and she was like a second mother to most of them. Her nephews and nieces spoke so lovingly of how she was such a caring and generous person. Helen often shared flowers, which she grew in her well-tended gardens as well as homemade goodies, with members of the church and the senior center. Helen is survived by her son, **Randy** as well as many nieces and nephews and other family members. The family requests that any donations be made to the BCCC Senior Center is Helen's memory. Helen was a wonderful person who will be sadly missed.

Prayers for **Vicky Jennings** who is undergoing knee surgery and **Alice Hsu** who will undergo back surgery. We pray for quick recovery and pray that all will turn out well.

Prayers for all who are in need of healing.. both physically and spiritually. May they know that they can turn to God for comfort and healing. Prayers that we seek God's wisdom and grace in all that we do and prayers that we will respond in a way that is pleasing to him.

BCCC Adult Fellowship Meeting

Feb. 21, Saturday, Dinner at 6:30 PM
At 7:30 PM, guest speaker Rev. Deborah Lee will give a talk: "***Asian American Theology: Story of our lives***".
Rev. Lee is associated with the Institute for Leadership Development and Study of Pacific and Asian North American Religion (PANA). All church members and friends are invited to share the fellowship event.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednes-day	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 First day for Dr. Karl Fung as pastor in BCCC and Chinese New Year cele-bration	**2**	**3** Senior Center	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7** Church boards and committees planning day
8	**9**	**10** Senior Center	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14** Women's Guild dinner meeting
15	**16**	**17** Senior Center	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21** Adult Fellow-ship dinner meeting
22 Church Council meeting	**23**	**24** Senior Center	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28** Cantare chil-dren's Choir-fundraiser con-cert

Berkeley Chinese Community Church
2117 Acton Street
Berkeley, CA 94702-1912
(Return address requested)

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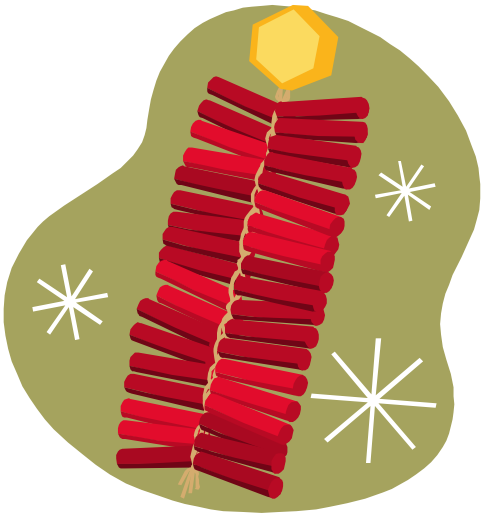

To: