



Rise Up Like Gideon

I love the story of **Gideon in Judges 6-7**. The Israelites are being oppressed by the Midianites so they cry out to God for help. God calls Gideon to deliver Israel, but Gideon is **doubtful** of his own ability and authority, saying: "But Lord, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." God reminds Gideon that it is not by his human strength that he will prevail, but by the **strength of God** working through him. Gideon gathers an army of 32,000 men, but God says "too many" and thins his ranks down over 90%. With only 300 men, Gideon goes forth **boldly** in the Lord's name and defeats the entire Midianite army.

As a pastor here at GVBC, I see **a lot of Gideons** in our congregation. God calls us to do hard things in his name – to serve the needy, to share the gospel, to transform our family relationships, to impact our community and world – but there are plenty of reasons to **hesitate**: "I'm too **young**." "I'm too **old**." "I'm more of a **follower**, not a good leader." "I'm **not brave** enough to take on that much responsibility." "I'm too **busy**." "Someone else would do it **better**." Like Gideon, we are tempted to make excuses and to pass the ministry buck to someone else.

But there are people here at GVBC who are hearing God's call to **step out** of their comfort zone. They are reminded that it is **not by their own strength** that they will prevail, but by the strength of God working through them. They are saying "**yes**" to be a Sunday School **teacher**, a **youth leader**, a **member** of the board or Pastoral Search Committee, a spiritual **mentor**, a community group **leader**, a **messenger** of the gospel to their friends and family. There are Gideons at GVBC who are taking intentional steps to go forth boldly in the Lord's name, to **make a difference** in the lives of others, to shine God's light in the dark corners of our world.

GVBC is currently going through a **major transition** as we search for a new senior pastor. More than ever, we need the Gideons of our congregation to **rise up**. We need Gideons to faithfully **pray, serve, and witness**. God is still in control, and he is calling us to follow his lead and **never waver** even in times of uncertainty.

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How about you? Is God calling you out of your comfort zone? Is God calling you to witness to your friends and family, to take on a **new role** in church ministry, to reach out to your neighbors, to give sacrificially to those in need? Are you **ready** to obey, or are you making excuses? If God can use Gideon, then he can use ordinary **people like you** and me. In the months to come, instead of saying, "I have no strength," say "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). **It's time to rise up like Gideon!** May God use our entire church to impact our family, our church, our community, and our world for **his glory!**



His servant,
Daniel Matsuda
Associate Pastor, Community Life

A circular inset image showing Pastor Doug Brown speaking at a podium with a microphone. Behind him is a large sign that says "LOVE".

Pastor Doug's Farewell

GVBC Staff

On Sunday, December 26, 2021, **Pastor Doug Brown** preached his final sermon entitled "**Necessary Endings, New Beginnings.**" In service, our Board and Pastoral Staff **prayed for him and his wife Sue**, giving thanks for the many ways God used their 4.5 years with us to bring about His fruitfulness and grow His kingdom. As a church family, we celebrate together with cake and refreshments and bless them toward the **next season** of God's calling in their lives.





2021 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Pastor James Chang

On Friday, December 24, we held our annual **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**, both in-person and online. It was a wonderful gathering together of our **whole church** family, including children, youth, English, and Nihongo congregants. Afterward, we enjoyed together a **special hot chocolate fellowship** time. What a beautiful way to prioritize worship at Christmas and **celebrate the birth of Jesus** with our church family!



College Christmas Party

Vincent Fu

On Sunday, December 19, 2021, the **College Christmas Party** was hosted at their College Director's house. **The Toys** welcomed our students with a fun-filled night of **White Elephant** and good tacos from a **Taco Man**. Students were excited to begin their winter break with fellowship. Many students **headed home** and won't be able to see each other until 2022. This night was a **cherished memory** for them.



KIDS Church Christmas

Susan Wakuta

Spreading God's joy at Christmas! Kids danced and celebrated Jesus' birth!



Youth Christmas Party

Erik Uratsu

Youth had a Christmas party! It was a **great time** to exchange gifts, have some fun, and hear about Jesus. We had about **45 students**, so the white elephant took a little time...!



Missions Report

BY BOB MATSUSHIMA



James Chung

Intervarsity

This fall, we had opportunities for more in-person interaction. As Jay Kim writes, "Digital informs. Analog transforms." And as we started to engage more students and faculty face-to-face — it was easy to sense the growing excitement and signs of life.

For me, it was just great to be back at Campus By The Sea, teaching at the Greater Los Angeles Fall Conference. Using the life of Paul, we worked through themes of expectations, listening and healing prayer, commitment and mission... and it was great to see the ways that God moved that weekend!

My favorite moment was a side meeting we had with the 40 or so small group leaders. Our intercessors already let us know that God would move through the students, not just from folks on the stage. As the small group leaders shared, they consistently shared they were being asked what to do next. Instead of coming up with answers, I asked them to come up with what they'd say, knowing that Gen Z likes to co-create. They had fantastic answers, like, "I'd tell them to commit to the Christian community." And I said, "You guys already know how to answer!" We could feel faith rising in the room! They already knew how to lead, and just needed a little encouragement. So good!

Pandemic realities can make it feel like time is standing still, or that we're still being faithful to the same things. I'm still helping InterVarsity lay down some foundations, particularly through leadership on the Online Ministry Task Force. Jinhee's still caring for her parents and her sister-in-law, and other extended family concerns continue to grow. But our immediate clan is doing fine: we just got back from our first vacation together since the pandemic started. It was delightfully boring! And for me, that's progress!

San Telmo and Tijuana Refugee Center

On the weekend before Christmas for the twenty-first year, seventeen Brothers and Sisters went to encourage and celebrate Christmas with the San Telmo migrant farm community. We also returned to the Tijuana Refugee Center. Christmas is a special time of year and even though COVID has changed us, our communities, and our world, it has especially impacted the poor and marginalized people. There has been much suffering during these nearly two years of coronavirus and during this pandemic winter, but it is still important to celebrate the birth of our Savior and bring His love and hope to the people of Mexico. GVBC'ers Gerald Mayewaki, Jim Kawashima, and Bill Louie joined this missions trip.



Mercy Outreach Missions



Cyril Nishimoto

IWA

This year IWA is hitting two significant milestones! The first is that this is IWA's 40th anniversary! Throughout our history, we have not wavered in our purpose and mission for which many of you have supported us all these years. IWA still exists to discover why people of Japanese ancestry have not responded well to the Gospel, and develop more effective approaches to reach and disciple them for Jesus Christ.

The second milestone is the completion of a groundbreaking research project identifying the influence of Christianity upon the early development of the Japanese tea ceremony. God led IWA to

explore how the Japanese tea ceremony changed as Japanese culture evolved through the centuries. We believe that Christianity's influence on the shaping of the Japanese tea ceremony during the 16th century led to almost a million Japanese becoming Christians in less than a hundred years!... We are so excited that in this 40th year, we can break new ground and launch an outreach ministry using the Japanese tea ceremony to share Christ in a fresh, engaging new way and teach others how to share it as well. Please pray as we launch this outreach ministry, to identify outreach opportunities and to help us fund this outreach effort.

Friday Food

Gerald Mayewaki

Happy New Year! Through December the **GVBC Friday Food Ministry** gathered once again to prepare, cook, and serve take-out dinners to the homeless and needy at St. John's. We had a special treat when my friend Carol made a big pot of **Chinese "juk" (rice porridge)** for all the volunteers.

We closed out 2021 with **Girl Scout Troop 6985** serving up a wonderful **Christmas meal**. They also handed out care bags full of all kinds of goodies. Thank you Troop 6985 for your hard work and bringing the love of Christmas to many at St John's!

The GVBC Friday Food Ministry is blessed to be entering our **11th year of ministry** at St. John's. Thank you to all of you **awesome volunteers** that have served in this ministry over the years. God's love endures forever!

If you're interested in how you can **serve** with Friday Food Ministry, contact fridayfoodministry@yahoo.com. May the peace of God come upon you!





Family News

Letters

Dear GVBC,
Happy 2022 New Year!
Thank you very much for the beautiful flowers in memory of my husband, Tom.
Glory to God!
Huynh Family

Condolences

Our sincere condolences to Shari Mrkonjic, Randy Hirose, and Jan Hirose on the passing of their mother, **Denko Hirose**. Denko's late husband Pastor Eishi Hirose was a pastor at GVBC. Denko passed away on **December 11th, 2021**.

Flowers

Donations and Flowers given in honor or loving memory:

From:

Henry & Sanaye Nagami

Henry & Sanaye Nagami

Ted Gohata

Eugenia Park

To:

Lindbergh Kawahara

Toy Sato

Toshiko & Mark Gohata

Denko Hirose

Monetary donations given in honor or memory of loved ones support College Scholarship Fund, unless specified.

Sundays

Online English: 10:00 AM @ www.gvbc.net/bulletin
Online Nihongo: 10:00 AM @ www.gvbc.net/jp
In-person English: 10:00 AM @ www.gvbc.net/inperson

News

Men's Bible Study Sign-Up: 1/17 ~ 8 Weeks
Annual Business Meeting: 2/20 @ 12:00 PM

Links

Website: www.gvbc.net
Youtube: www.bit.ly/GVBCyoutube
GVBC App: www.bit.ly/GVBCapp
PSC Focus Group Sign Up: www.tinyurl.com/GVBCFocusGroup



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