

History of Peacemakers Korean Covenant Church

Why Celebrate Unity?

Normally, a church would celebrate its birth by remembering its founding events. Deviating from the norm, we gather today to celebrate unity. This is for two reasons. First, unity as we use it here refers to the initiation of our church's membership in the universal church. What is the universal church? It is the church established by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every church upon the Earth confessing the right faith is a member of this universal church. Regardless of geographical, denominational, racial, and cultural differences, these churches all belong to the universal church as its branches. If celebrating the founding events of a local church has its merits, celebrating its membership initiation in the universal church is of even greater value.

Second, unity highlights the unique history of our church, the coming together of Gyu Ja Shee church and Peacemakers Korean Covenant Church (hereafter PKCC). This is not a mere cooperation but a full-scale unity; whereas cooperation is coming together of two or more parties for a particular purpose, unity is a becoming of a single entity from multiple parties. "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3, ESV) In this structure of unity, Gyu Ja Shee church forms the seedbed of PKCC, since the latter succeeds the confessional faith of the former.

A Tiny Movement

August 30, 2015. A group of three families (five adults and three children) came together and requested Pastor Min Ho Choi to preach. The resulting gathering marked our very first worship service. We then set our vision towards a Biblical and healthy church, grounding our hopes upon the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit. It is in this context that we began a weekly sermon series on the book of Acts (102 sermons total, from Aug. 30, 2015 to April 19, 2018). In accordance with the church's philosophy of ministry, we woke each morning with the Word of God, holding morning services (initially through internet broadcast) since the beginning days of our church. In addition, upon the request of church members concerned with spiritual growth, we also began weekly Bible study.

Unity by the Holy Spirit

March 20, 2016. Our group merged with Gyu Ja Shee church (Pastor Jong Hun Park) moving our location to Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit (Elk Grove Village). Pastor Park oversaw the merging process, and by the initiative of the new united church, we held a celebratory retirement worship service, remembering Pastor Park's (and his wife Kwang Ok Park's) twenty-one years of faithful ministry. Here, Pastor Park demonstrated the abundance of an empty hand by making offerings for building a church in Brazil through Christian Vision Mission Organization and donating the remainder to PKCC. In remembrance of Pastor Park's faithful service to the church, our Evangelical Covenant Church denomination awarded him the Pastor's Award of the Year, given to the most influential and exemplar pastors in the denomination. The Evangelical Covenant Church certified PKCC as its member on its 130th annual meeting (April 28-30, 2016), and Pastor Min Ho Choi began serving as the senior pastor on May 1, 2016.

God Who Leads People by His Hand

The history of PKCC can be told in terms of providential meetings of peoples.

When Pastor Choi stood at the crossroads of immigrant church ministry, several people challenged him with their words. “Please become a pastor who relies only on God.” “Give up the green card, trust in God, and leave.” “I want to see a pastor who is pure and without selfish motives.” These are my most precious ministry partners.

On September of 2015, Tae Hwan An Jeondosanim (a title given in the Korean church for pastors who are yet to be ordained) began serving at PKCC as Sunday School pastor. Pastor Choi first met him as his student at a seminary. The two served together at Yaeil Church and Namseoul Church. After completing his military duties as an officer, he came to the US to serve together with Pastor Choi once again. Today, eighteen years since their first meeting, the two continues as partners in ministry. On August of 2016, TaeJung Kim Jeondosanim began serving at PKCC as Middle School and High School pastor. As a Freshman at UIUC, he met pastor Choi who was a youth group pastor at the time. The two have been serving together for eleven years since then. Receiving his call to ministry during his time at UIUC, he went to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he currently studies in the PhD program in systematic theology. He and Pastor Choi have served together at New Life church and Han Woo Mool church, and after completing his military duties, TaeJung returned to the US and have been serving at PKCC since.

The Fruit of a Mustard Seed is Peacemaking

In His divine providence, God brought Gyu Ja Shee church and PKCC together. Though the two churches differ in generation and background, they share a common confession of faith and a common set of core values. When Pastor Park first opened the doors of Gyu Ja Shee church in 1995, he recognized the value of faith that our Lord Jesus Christ taught. Throughout his ministry, he has been unwavering in teaching and modelling his life after the truth that the faith of a mustard seed (Luke 17:6) is the basis for a life without regrets, a life of maximum value.

Pastor Choi recognized that what is most urgently needed in the Korean church today is peacemaking. The Bible teaches that truth faith is manifested in peacemaking. “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14, ESV) Holiness refers to having healthy relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Peace refers to the practical dimension of interpersonal relationships that Christians ought to have.

PKCC has as its foundation the “power of faith” emphasized by Gyu Ja Shee church, and it strives to practice such faith in the actual everyday lives of its members.

You Will See Greater Things than These

God has used the unity of these two churches to show us even greater things. First is the peace between the retired pastor and the senior pastor. Ever since the two churches came together, Pastor Park has supported the senior pastor’s ministry with prayer. Not once has he imposed his thoughts on the pastor’s sermons. Pastor Park has demonstrated what a godly retirement of a pastor ought to look like. This did not mean disinterest for the church: He is faithfully obedient to the requests of the senior pastor, and he always sits up front and listens to the sermons with a heart of a child. Second is the trust among the pastors and possibilities for team ministry. The two Jeondosanim at our church have expertise in areas of children’s ministry

and theology. They could have left for better positions in other places. Yet they sacrificially continue to serve at PKCC for team ministry. Third is the church being used as God's tool for missional work. For missionary center at Laos, for pastor's families at neighboring churches, for seminary students, we have provided support beyond our capabilities by the power of God. Our members no longer calculate numbers, but rather discern whether it is the will of God. If it brings joy to God, we obey without hesitation.

Therefore, we hope.

I pray that every one of you here who are with us today may return as those called to be blessed peacemakers in your family, work, and church.

September 23, 2018

Pastor Min Ho Choi.