

## History of the First Chinese Baptist Church

### By Ruby Fung

#### Matthew 28: 19-20

19. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
20. Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Reverend J. Lewis Shuck and his wife, Henrietta, were the first American Baptist missionaries to China in 1835. In Hong Kong Reverend Shuck established two chapels and a school and preached every Sunday in Chinese and English.

After 18 years in China, the Southern Baptist Board sent Reverend Shuck to California to work among the Chinese in Sacramento. Rev. Shuck also became the pastor of the First Chinese Church, the previous pastor had just left.

The Southern Baptist Board sent Rev. Shuck \$300 to buy land and additional funds to erect a chapel for the Chinese. Rev. Shuck preached every Sunday in Cantonese. He baptized 15 Chinese members at the First Baptist Church.

In January 1860 Rev. Shuck resigned from the First Baptist Church. Also in January 1860 the 15 Chinese members of the First Baptist Church organized into a regular Baptist Church with Rev. Shuck as pastor.

In December 1860 Rev. Shuck resigned and returned to South Carolina. He went to be with the Lord in 1863.

The Chinese Chapel was destroyed by fire in 1872.

Around 1888 Miss Eliza Willsie was appointed by the Women's American Baptist Mission Society to do God's work among the Chinese in Sacramento. Miss Willsie was born in Canada and was a teacher. She founded the Chinese Baptist Mission at 907 5<sup>th</sup> street. She was in charge of the work at the Mission, visiting the Chinese families, teaching English and sharing her love of Jesus. Her perseverance and her steadfast faith laid a firm foundation for the mission. She was aided by Mrs. Nellie Nelson and women volunteers from the First Baptist Church. After retirement she stayed on to help at the mission.

I asked my brother Andrew and my sister Anna "What was Miss Willsie like?" They mentioned that she always wore black, long black dresses and clothing. I have one clear memory of her. I was four years old when my mother took me to visit Miss Willsie. She had been ill and was in bed. A lady was caring for her and let us in. I remember standing in her room and not moving closer. Miss Willsie greeted us. Then she got out of bed in her nightgown and robe and slowly walked toward me. Smiling, she stretched out her arms and said "Ruby" and kissed me on the forehead. That is my memory of Miss Willsie. She gave over 30 years to the work at the Chinese Baptist Mission.

In 1917 Mrs. Mary Allen became the missionary. Mrs. Allen was a graduate of the Baptist Missionary Training School in Rochester, N.Y. She visited the Chinese families bringing the message of Jesus and His love. She founded the Mission Sunday School. She had a night school for the Chinese to learn English.

Most of the young men who came to learn English also attended the Sunday evening worship services. Some accepted Christ as Savior and were baptized at the First Baptist Church which was at 9<sup>th</sup> and M street. Several of these young Christian men formed a partnership and became the owners of the Panama Market at 17<sup>th</sup> and O streets.

Mrs. Allen called them the Panama boys. They were in there 20's and 30's and were among the most enthusiastic supporters. They were:

Young K. Chow  
Fong Him  
Dong Tong Yip  
Fong Bak Luk  
Lee Gee Lum  
Lum Sing  
Gee Tseang

The Fong Him family is still active in our church today. They are Henry and Audrey Fong, Frank and Mary Fong.

My mother Mrs. Rachel Yuke was asked by the Home Mission Society to do missionary work among the Chinese families. She also started a Chinese Language School at the Mission. In 1920 Rev. Yee Sur Wun was called from Canton, China. He was born in Kwangsi Province. He studied to be a pastor at the Tung Shan Seminary. Rev. Yee was well liked and he served the Mission for two years. Then he was called by the Chinese Independent Baptist Church of San Francisco and he served there until 1929.

In 1923 the Mission moved to 914 4<sup>th</sup> street. Mrs. Allen had resigned to care for her family. Mrs. Maude Pook became the missionary. Mrs. Pook was a public school teacher and the education chairman of the First Baptist Church. Mrs. Pook was in charge of the Sunday School and the night school. With no pastor the members took charge of the evening worship.

During the 1920's the 3 Chinese Churches had a popular service called Union Sunday, "Lune Wui" in Chinese. On the last Sunday of each month there would be a Union Sunday at one of the Missions:

The Chinese Congregational at 6722 Eye Street  
The Chinese Methodist Episcopal 915-5<sup>th</sup> street  
The Chinese Baptist Mission 910-4<sup>th</sup> Street

The Union choir was composed of young people from each church.

At the Christmas season, the three churches consulted each other regarding their program dates so as not to have conflicting schedules. The Church Christmas programs were a important part of the holidays for Chinatown. They were always held after December 25<sup>th</sup> and they were well attended.

In 1925 Miss Margaret McIntyre came to the Mission a part-time Missionary. Miss McIntyre was from Oregon. She graduated from the Chicago Baptist Missionary Training School.

In 1926 the Mission and surrounding buildings were to be torn down. A hotel was to be built at 4<sup>th</sup> and Eye streets across from the new Southern Pacific station. The Mission moved 6 blocks away from Chinatown to 525 M street. This was another storefront. However there were many Chinese families living in the vicinity. The Mission was to stay in this area for over 30 years.

In 1928 the Mission moved across the street to 528 M street. Another store front but slightly larger. This one had one large room for the Sunday services and a smaller room for a classroom.

Mrs. Mary Allen returned as missionary. She visited the Chinese families inviting them to the Mission. Mrs. Allen started a Cradle Roll. When there was a new baby Mrs. Allen would visit the new mother and baby. She would bring a new layette for the baby. The baby's name would go on the cradle roll.

In 1929 Rev. Lee Shau Yan was called from Canton, China. Rev. Lee was educated at the Graves' Theological Seminary in Canton, China and the Hak-ka Bible School in Shuichow, Kwang Tung Province. Rev. Lee was enthusiastic about his work at the mission. He also preached at the Locke Baptist Mission. Around 1930 Mrs. Rachel Yuke organized and directed a Youth Choir, ages 9 to 16. Mrs. Allen delighted the choir by sewing robes for them, black robes with white dollars. The robes were personally sized for each child.

During Rev. Lee's ministry, a building fund was started to purchase a building for the Mission. In 1934 a 3-story building at 421 M street was purchased for \$3,250. The Chinese Mission paid \$1,000 and the Northern California Baptist convention and the American Baptist Home Mission Society helped with the payments. There was more room for the Sunday School, more room for the night school and the Chinese language school.

In 1935 Rev. Lee was called to be pastor of the Chinese Baptist Mission in Greenville, Mississippi. Rev. Lee had a 12 year ministry in the South, excluding Texas and Norfolk, Virginia. In 1944-1945 Rev. Lee wrote and published two books. "How to win the Chinese" and "China has a ten thousand mile spiritual wall". Rev. Lee became the owner of a publishing company in Brooklyn, N.Y. He published books and records on religion, Chinese philosophy and language.

Last month I received a phone call. The caller said her name was Margaret Lee Masters. Her father was Rev. Lee Shau Yan. She knew her father was the pastor of a Chinese Church in Sacramento but she didn't know which one. She had a picture of the Chinese Baptist Youth Choir. A friend identified the members of the Yuke family in the picture. So she was able to contact me. I told Margaret that I remember her father and I remember taking the choir picture. I said "the Lord has led you to me. I'm just working on a history report of our church. I would like to borrow that photo and make a copy of it". Margaret and her husband brought me a copy of the choir photo. I invited Margaret and her husband to our lunch. Dr. Margaret Lee Masters is a pediatrician and her husband, Dr. Joseph Master is a pathologist. They live in Fair Oaks.

After Rev. Lee left, Mrs. Allen was in charge of the Mission work until 1942 when she retired. Mrs. Allen devoted over 21 years to the Chinese Mission.

In 1944 the Japanese Baptist Church on 5<sup>th</sup> and P streets became a part of our Mission history. The Japanese had been relocated to internment camps. The Northern California Baptist Convention was caretaker of the Japanese Church and Christian Center. It was renamed the Lincoln Christian Center. The Convention asked the Chinese Mission to move to the Lincoln Christian Center and the Chinese Mission building at 421 M street was sold for \$5,000.

The war in China had sent Miss Martha Shick back to America. She had been a missionary there for 16 years commissioned by the Church of the Brethren of Elgin, Illinois. She was bilingual. In 1944 the Convention appointed her to the Mission. She stayed 2 years until Rev. Paul Fong was called in 1946.

Rev. Paul Fong was a native of Canton, China. After graduating from the Southwestern Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He served as pastor of the Chinese Baptist Church in Seattle, Washington. During World War II he became an assistant professor of Cantonese at the Naval Language School at the University of Colorado. He served our church 2 years then he was called back to the church in Seattle. Rev. Fong's daughter, Christina Hom, is on our church board.

In 1947 Miss Mary Opal Crone under appointment of the women's American Baptist Home Mission Society was assigned to the Lincoln Christian Center. The Convention asked her to take charge of the Chinese Baptist Sunday School. Later she was appointed to the Mayhew Baptist Mission. In 1949 her sister Miss Eleanor Crone also under appointment of the Home Mission Society was assigned to the Chinese Baptist Mission. Mary Opal and Eleanor Crone were natives of Nebraska. They graduated from the University School of Music in Lincoln, Nebraska. They taught at high schools in Nebraska and at colleges in Clinton, Mississippi.

Mary Opal and Eleanor were always interested in working for the Lord. They took the examinations for Foreign and Home Missionaries and passed the examinations and interviews by the Board. Each was commissioned by the American Baptist Convention as Missionaries. Eleanor served the Chinese Baptist Mission in Sacramento and the Locke Chinese Christian Center.



The Crone sisters were dedicated and tireless workers for Christ. With smiling faces they expressed the joy of being Christians. In addition they were talented musicians on the violin, piano and organ. One of the first groups organized by Miss Eleanor was the Youth Fellowship. There were classes in English and citizenship and a Friday Bible study class. During Miss Crone's pastorate the First Chinese Baptist Church was organized on October 14, 1952 with 46 charter members. Beginning in 1949 an Easter Sunday photo was taken. In January 1955 the Chinese Baptist Ladies Fellowship Guild was organized. The name was later changed to the American Baptist woman in 1965.

There was a large group of young people who were active in the church. Some were charter members. They assumed responsibility as church officers and Sunday School teachers. They took part in the worship services as chairmen, ushers and musicians. In 1955 Building fund. In September 1959 the First Chinese Baptist purchased a church at 4470 Custis Avenue for \$30,000. The down payment was \$9,000. \$5,000 came from the sale of the building at 421 M street. A mortgage loan for the remaining \$21,000 was assumed. The deed was made out to the Northern California Baptist Convention.

In May 1963 Miss Eleanor Crone and her sister Mary Opal were called to teach at Mather Baptist School and Junior College in south Carolina. Miss Eleanor Crone served our church faithfully for 14 years. Rev. Dwight Coad was called in September 1963. Rev. Coad was born in Iowa. He went to college in Iowa and graduated from Colgate Rochester Divinity School. During Rev. Coad's ministry a new baptistery was constructed and dedicated on March 27, 1966. Seven new members were baptized at the dedication service.

In April 1968 Rev. Coad resigned as pastor. Rev. Walter Holbrook, retired pastor of the Oak park Baptist Church, was called as interim pastor until the First Chinese Baptist called Rev. Donald Jee in November 1968. Rev. Jee, a native of Berkeley, received degrees from the University of California and the Berkeley Baptist Divinity School. Rev. Jee was installed as pastor on December 15, 1968.

Rev. Jee conducted bilingual worship services every Sunday. During his ministry a central air conditioning system was installed by the men of our church. In 1977 there was an expansion program. An addition of rooms was constructed to connect the sanctuary and Crone Hall. The men gave up their Saturdays and often their Sunday evenings to work on the expansion and the ladies prepared hot meals for them. In 1980 Rev. Jee resigned. Rev. Jee had served over 12 years at our church. Rev. Harold Kuhlman was asked to be interim pastor until 1981 when pastor Russell Moy was called. Pastor Moy was a native of Detroit, Michigan. He was a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Calvin Theological Seminary. During Rev. Moy's ministry our church celebrated 125 years of Christian work among the Chinese of Sacramento. Rev. Moy resigned in August 1987.

In 1988 Dr. Paul Nagano, a retired Bay area pastor was asked to be interim pastor. Dr. Nagano drove from his home in San Pablo every Sunday morning to give the sermon. Also in 1988 Pastor Donald Kirk of the Union Gospel Mission became interim pastor. He remained until Pastor Lawrence Kum was called in 1993.

Pastor Kum was born in San Francisco. He graduated from Talbot Theological Seminary. He was ordained at our church on April 30, 1995. During Rev. Kum's ministry, our church had two worship services every Sunday morning, a 10 am contemporary service and at 11 am a traditional service that included a Cantonese interpretation of Rev. Kum's sermon. Rev. Kum resigned in December 1996.

Rev. J. William Oliver Jr was called as interim pastor. Pastor Oliver received a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1976 from the Texas Christian University and his master in education from Southwestern Theological Seminary in 1982. Rev. Oliver was called a senior Pastor in 1999. Rev. Oliver is in his sixth year with us and so god's work continues at our church.

I believe that wherever we may have come from, God has led each of us by His hand to this place, because God and His Love has led this church for 149 years.

A Brief History  
Of  
The First Chinese Baptist Church

The First Chinese Baptist Church traces its roots back to 1854 when Rev. J. Lewis Shuck began work with the Chinese through First Baptist Church. Rev. Shuck was able to obtain \$300 for the purpose of building a chapel for the Chinese. Their first chapel was completed in 1855 on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and H. The church was organized by 15 Chinese members of First Baptist Church with Rev. Shuck as Pastor.

Between 1860 and 1949 the work continued with the Chinese people. The work was mostly accomplished through the work of missionaries in a multitude of places. We are able to document ten missionaries working in nine different locations. Then in 1947, Miss Mary Opal Crone began working with the Chinese people, and in 1949, her sister Eleanor V. Crone joined her in her work.

On October 14, 1952, The First Chinese Baptist Church was organized with 46 charter members. Then in 1959, the current church building was purchased for \$30,000. On July 28, 1963, the Educational Building was dedicated in honor of Miss Eleanor V. Crone. An expansion, connecting the two buildings was completed in October 1979.

The church did well under the guidance of Miss Crone until her retirement in 1963. The church continued to flourish under Rev. Dwight S. Coad who came as a supply preacher and stayed until 1968. Rev. Coad was born in Iowa, ordained in an American Baptist Church, and was a graduate of Colgate Rochester. Upon Rev. Coad's resignation, the church called retired Oak Park Baptist Church Pastor, Rev. Walter Holbrook to be interim pastor. Rev. Donald W. Jee was called as Pastor in November 1968.

The Rev. Donald W. Jee was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and also from Berkeley Baptist Divinity School (1962). During the early 70's, under the leadership of Rev. Jee, the worship attendance reached 80 to 90 adults plus another 20 to 30 youth. The youth group was very active in the late 60's and early 70's. Beginning around 1973 or 1974, the attendance plateaued. By the late 70's the church's attendance began to decline. The decline was to continue until late 1998 when there were only about 45 adults in worship and 2 youth. Rev. Jee resigned in May 1980, to do other Christian work. The Rev. Harold Kuhlman became the interim Pastor in 1980, and remained until Russell G. Moy was called in 1981.

Rev. Moy was a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Calvin Theological Seminary. He was ordained at FCBC on June 10, 1984. Rev. Moy remained pastor until his resignation in 1987. Rev. Paul Nagano came as interim pastor in 1987 and left in 1988. Pastor Donald Kirk, of the Union Gospel Mission, became the interim pastor in 1988. Pastor Kirk became the full time Pastor for about a year in 1991, but was unable to continue in that position because of his duties at the Gospel Mission. He returned to being the interim pastor, and remained in that position until Pastor Lawrence Kum was called in 1993.

Under the leadership of Pastor Kum, a new contemporary service was added in 1995 to the worship schedule, and continued until the end of 1998. During the time of dual services, the traditional service grew to have more than people (about 35) than the contemporary service (about 25). Pastor Kum resigned his position, effective the last Sunday of 1996. At the leaving of Pastor Kum, the services were combined, and the contemporary service is now used.

The Rev. William J. Oliver, Jr. was called as interim pastor beginning the first Sunday of 1997. Pastor Bill received his BS (psychology) in 1976, from Texas Christian University, and his MA (education) from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in July 1982, and was ordained two days after his graduation at the B. H. Carroll Baptist Church in Fort Worth, a Southern Baptist Church. Rev. Oliver was called as Senior

Pastor in January 1999. The attendance is holding around 45 in worship. The church had always had English to Chinese translation of the worship service, however, in June of 1997, the translating of the service was discontinued. The translating was discontinued to help the church move from being primarily a second-generation church (bi-lingual), to becoming primarily a third generation church (English speaking).

The church, throughout its history, had always been a Pastoral led church. Pastor Bill began to work toward helping the church to become a Lay Ministry led church. A turning point came when 20 members of the church attended a John Maxwell "Lay Ministry Seminar" in 1998. The church caught a vision of what a Lay Ministry led church could be, and decided that was the direction they wanted to go. Changes are coming slowly, but the church has a good prayer ministry, is placing an emphasis on evangelism through its Evangelism Team, and a board that desires change.



## Properties

There were many buildings between 1860 and 1959 when the church moved to its present location. The church was built by the members of the Sacramento Bible Church in 1951. The First Chinese Baptist Church purchased the church, which sits on three parcels totaling just over a half an acre, in September of 1959. The church owns all of the property and buildings free and clear. The approximate square footage of the Worship center, including the balcony, is 2000 sq. ft. The approximate square footage of the Fellowship hall (Crone Hall) is 1000 sq. ft. The approximate square footage of the education space is 1150 sq. ft. We have thirteen official on site parking spaces, including one handicap space and about 5 on street spaces, which are in front of our property. We use other spaces in front of our neighbors' homes also.

The education building was completed sometime between 1952 and 1959, but was dedicated by the FCBC members to Miss Eleanor V. Crone in 1963, and is now called Crone Hall. The baptistry was added, and the choir loft and platform remodeled in 1966. The addition, which joined the worship center and Crone Hall, and added new restrooms, was completed in 1979.



### CHURCH and MISSION Locations

1. 1855-1872 Chinese Chapel, 6th and H Streets
2. 1888-1919 Chinese Baptist Mission  
907-5th Street
3. 1919-1923 530 I Street (Eye Street)
4. 1923-1925 914-4th Street
5. 1925-1926 910-4th Street
6. 1926-1928 525 M Street
7. 1928-1934 528 M Street
8. 1934-1944 421 M Street (Capitol Avenue)
9. 1944-1958 1526-5th Street  
Lincoln Christian Center  
(former Japanese Baptist Church)
10. 1958-1959 2317 Riverside Blvd.
11. 1959 - First Chinese Baptist Church  
4470 Custis Avenue  
Sacramento, California  
95822

Our Church has been at this location for 32 years.  
40 years

Revised July 1991

Rev. March 2000