

Mia Owens 0:00

Mengshu Ye. So we are all graduate students at American University and we recently completed our first year at AU's public history master's program. And for this event, we'll be recognizing the history and the legacy of the Chinese Community Church as the oldest and the only Chinese church in Washington DC. First, Michelle Wong will be giving a presentation about the history of the church. And then Claudia, Mengshu, and I will discuss our work with 1882 foundation. And then following with those presentations, we will have a q&a session as well as open discussion. So since we have a lot of members from the CCC here, we would like all of you and we invite all of you to share your experiences with CCC as well.

Claudia Vinci 0:50 We also wanted to say at the beginning of the event that this event is both part of the talk story series at the 1882 foundation as well as in partnership with the Asian American historic context study for Washington DC, which is the 1882 Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service, the DC Historic Preservation Office and the DC preservation league. And the talk story events are hosted regularly by the 1882 foundation on different topics where individuals can come and share their stories and for the context study which Mia will discuss more later. This works to tell the history of AAPI experiences in DC and our research was within the theme of faith and religion and more specifically the Chinese Community Church.

Mengshu Ye 1:38

So to start us off, I like to introduce our presenter Michelle Wong. Michelle is part of the fourth generation to have worshiped in the Chinese Community Church of Washington DC. Her great grandfather and grandparents were some of the first to join the church in 1935. Though she has since moved from the DC area. Michelle continues to expand upon and tell the stories of CCC, her granduncle Lindy Liu, a founding member, a longtime historian of CCC, first row. Michelle, thank you so much for joining us. I will now pass it on to you to present.

Michelle Wong 2:15

Well, thank you so much, ladies for the opportunity to present on the church I grew up in. I'm looking forward to sharing a little bit of the history that my uncle Lindy was able to put together and I have continued with writing some of the more recent history. Kenny is are you starting the presentation perfect? Well, I wanted to start with something from our founding pastor, Reverend CC Hung, and he said what is the Christian church? The Bible tells us that the church is divine and spiritual and existed as a fellowship, which bound the true believers together with their Christ before its big buildings and organizations became visible. The function of the church is to bring men to God to help them believe in God to love God and to walk with God. The ultimate goal of the church is to bring man under the banner of God. Christ has commanded us to minister not to be ministered to and to love one another as he loved us. The church exists in the community as a servant of the community, we cannot deny

this responsibility. We have heard this before many times before, but to me it is the best guiding principle I have yet found for the Chinese church in the Chinese community. Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the ways you can at all the times you can and all the places you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can. And with that our story begins. So in 1934, when two Chinese Christians Dr. Pok Shu Chan and Dr. Tim Guan Ho met in Washington DC, it can only be described as divine intervention. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was still very much law in the US, which meant not only that the numbers were few, but also that the discrimination against them was high. The majority of Chinese followed Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism. These two Chinese Christians became fast friends, and together worshiped in many area churches, finding maybe one or two, perhaps as many as six Chinese Christians at each church. Dr. SHAN then formulated an idea and a vision of having a unified Chinese church to serve the Chinese population that was scattered throughout the city. Now, early historical records show that Chinese Sunday schools have been started as early as 1889 at Calvary Baptist Church, other churches followed suit in the 1890s and into that Early 1900s doctors Chan and Ho put together a proposal they brought before their American Christian friends who are part of the DC federation of churches. There was overwhelming support from the Federation, and in May 1935, the Chinese Community Church was incorporated in the city of Washington DC. The purpose of the church according to its constitutional bylaws, shall be to carry on the usual activities characteristic of an institutional church, including educational, recreation, social and religious programs. The search began for a Chinese pastor, which was divine intervention yet again, as Reverend CC Hung answered the call to move his young family from Detroit, Michigan, to Washington DC. The opening service was held on Sunday, September 22 1935, with nearly 200 people attending prominent people of that era were also present. They included Daniel Roper, the Secretary of Commerce, Dr. Alfred Sao-Ke the Chinese ambassador, Dr. Pok Xu Chen, director of the Central Hospital in Canton, China, the Reverend Benjamin Meeks, the president of the DC federation of churches, the Reverend William Jarvee, the Federation's executive secretary, the Reverend Eddie Ford, Director of religious education at the foundry Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Reverend W. Angie Smith, pastor of the Mount Vernon place Methodist Episcopal Church. Reverend Hung preached his first sermon in English, and then translated it into the Cantonese language. This became his standard sermon format throughout his career.

Michelle Wong 6:55

Despite what seemed like an auspicious start, Reverend Hung was not widely received by the Chinese community upon his arrival. However, when the Japanese invaded China and war erupted in 1937, another divine intervention happened, Reverend Hung found his way into a rally in support of China war relief and voluntarily spoke. Impressed by his speech, many people started asking him who he was and what he was doing there. This is one of the earliest instances in which the church came to the community and the community became the church.

Another such instance was how the church became a connection for the Chinese and their American born children between the new home and their homeland, as these two Washington Post articles suggest, the earliest Chinese school was showcased in the 1937 article on the left. For these youngsters, the Chinese language was just as foreign to them as it was to any other American child's. This Chinese school continued into the 1950s as the article on the right shows. This created a bridge for these children and their Chinese speaking parents. As the Chinese church continued to impact the community, its congregation grew in size. Having spent their first few years utilizing the undercroft Theater at Mount Vernon place, the Board of managers was convinced that it was not possible for the new church to carry out its expanded services in borrowed quarters, there became a need for a new and permanent home. The Search Committee of the trustees found a prospective property located just blocks north of the White House. Kenny, you can hit the slide on this was the Mackay Smith mansion at 1325 16th Street Northwest located just blocks north of the White House. The board authorized the building committee to raise the necessary funds to purchase that property or any property that might seem best suited to the church's needs. The 16th Street property never came to fruition though. Undaunted and more determined than ever, the search for suitable property continued divine intervention happened again. In the summer of 1939, a mid city site was located. A three storey building at 1011 L street Northwest with an adjacent vacant lot. The building was obtained considerably below market value at \$20,000, because of the purpose for which it was to be used. funds were raised to cover both the purchase price and remodeling of the structure. It was remodeled and opened officially in February of 1940, with the basement and first floor being used for religious educational and recreational activities, the second floor for the pastor's residence, and the third floor for students and needy transients. Later A house had joined the other side of the lot. 1007 L street Northwest was purchased for use as a parsonage, and possibly for future expansion. Now with a space of its own, the church continued to flourish even more. The church became a meeting place of sorts, a place for the Chinese community to have a home away from home, not only for religious activities, but also for social and cultural activities. Kenny you can keep going through the pictures. Such activities included the May-Ling club started by Mrs. Hong and Miss Chu, the Chinese school teacher, in honor of Madame Chiang Kai Shek. Boy Scout troop 11, with Lawrence Lu K. a Scoutmaster at a United States organization or USO during World War Two to support the Chinese American military service members in the area. The early years were predominantly made up of young people and children, which is why the church programs place much emphasis on youth. Reverend Hung and later other members like him, while long actually would drive around the city before church to pick up kids from neighborhood laundries and restaurants. By God's grace, the growing congregation made it apparent that the carriage house at 1011 our street was much too small. On May 5 1947, the Chinese community church started another city wide campaign, this time to raise \$145,000 for new building. Attorney Melvin de Hildreth and US House of Representatives member Walter Judd,

were chairman and honorary chairman respectively for this fund drive. Judge Eugene black served as treasurer. After many church building plan changes and modifications, architect Troy G Y presented the approved finished product.

Michelle Wong 11:46

Amidst the fundraising efforts for a new building, the city and the country was recovering from a big war, one that saw significant change for the Chinese community in the US. The Magnuson act coupled with the fact that many Chinese Americans honorably served in the war created a somewhat less hostile environment for the Chinese community. Reverend Hung continued his drive to bridge gaps and form relationships in the community. This resulted in him being named to the committee responsible for the inauguration activities for President Truman. One such inauguration activity was a huge parade complete with floats, including this one, where the Chinese community saluted President Truman. Despite Reverend Hung's involvement in city activities. His primary focus remained the church and he continued to urge the church to press forward with fundraising efforts to build a new building. The church was still managed by an external board made up of members from the DC federation of churches, many board members questioned whether it was the right time to raise money as the country was still recovering from the war, Reverend Hung's quote, sincerity and his conviction and a strong faith in God and God eventually won the support of the entire board of managers. And the dream was the picture in this fundraising brochure. Divine intervention struck yet again. Dr. Edward B. Lewis, the Mount Vernon Place pastor said let us with God's help, quit talking about a new church building and build it. Let's do it without enough money and believe the money will be provided. Ground broke on October 7, 1956. Kenny you can hit the next picture. And during the next 14 months, CCC returned to MVP yet again while the new building was constructed. This is a picture of Dr. Lewis and Reverend Hung. On October 6, 1957. Kenny keep going through the pictures, Cornerstone ceremonies were held in the rain and on December 22 1957, the first service was held in the building. This was followed by an open house, a banquet, youth night, family night, and community night. The dedication services were held in April 1958. An education building was added in 1961.

Michelle Wong 14:15

Thanks Kenny. This is one of the few pictures that we could find from the 1960s many of the pictures we believe have been had been destroyed by a leaking roof. Towards the end of the decade, our beloved pastor Reverend Dr. CC Hung came down with a serious illness and could no longer lead us full time. The title minister Emeritus was bestowed upon him in his retirement in 1971, ending a 36 year stint as founding pastor of the Chinese Community Church, Reverend George Wan seeking a graduate degree from the Wesley Theological Seminary was named interim pastor in 1970. In February of 1972 the last mortgage payment was made and its subsequent mortgage burning ceremony seen here took place. The Chinese Community Church once a fledgling missionary project of the DC federation of churches was ready for self government. The church council prepared a new constitution and new bylaws which was presented to an

improved by the congregation in October of 1972. The chairman of the board of managers Herbert Wilson, relinquished responsibility and pass control on his personal blessings to the official board of the Chinese Community Church in December 1972. Kenny please go to the next picture? This is a board of managers and this is the first official Board of which Richard Lee was the first chairperson. Now during these years of transition, our congregation experienced that pastors may come and go, and even our beloved pastor Reverend Hung had to step down. But this is our church, the church of Our parents and the church of our children. It is up to us to keep the church going and growing. Divine intervention prevailed again, when Reverend Daniel Wong from Calgary, Canada answered the call to become the second full time pastor of the Chinese Community Church. He was instrumental in establishing the after church service lunch program, a congregation participation program that still exists to this day. In April 1973. The church was actually chosen as Church of the month by the Council of Churches a greater Washington commended for culture and educational activities and concern for improvement of the general community. The church continued its work in the community when board members started two programs, one of which is still in existence today. In 1975, the Chinatown service center was built to serve the local area Chinese community. In the later part of the decade, the value of hope project was designed to help support the flood of Asian refugees that came after the Vietnam War. Both these programs served to accommodate, acclimate and assimilate these new DMV residents to American culture. They connected them to counseling to housing, social services, health services, education and job opportunities. In the 1980s, the church continued to grow and a new balcony was built and dedicated to accommodate the growing numbers. This is a picture of the balcony dedication ceremony. 1980 also marked the 40th anniversary of the church. During this Ruby anniversary, November became the designated anniversary month and thanksgiving Sunday, the anniversary Sunday. During this time, while there was still a big focus on developing the spiritual and social lives of the church, especially the young people. There became a need for a group for senior citizens. And here you'll see the founders of the Chung Pak fellowship a senior citizen fellowship giving the church their 40th anniversary gifts. Later on in 19. In the 1980s, Reverend Judy Chen became the first female associate pastor of our church. Approved by a unanimous vote by the official board she was ordained at CCC and served faithfully until 1990. Reverend Man King Cho had been the church's first seminarian in 1968 and he returned to the church as a senior pastor in the mid 1970s. It was in the 1980s, though that his work on included the restart of the seminarian program, a joint partnership with both Virginia and Wesley theological seminaries. Here Reverend Cho is pictured with Bishop will me, a seminary student from Burma.

Michelle Wong 18:55

Reverend Hung passed away suddenly in 1984, a shock to the entire community as well as the church for this had been Reverend Hung's church. He said on the 40th anniversary, that his 40 years of pulpit ministry have been filled with

challenges and rewards, as well as trials, frustrations and disappointments. my happiest experiences had been watching the steady growth of the church and observing how some of our original Sunday school children now grown up and married have remained loyal to this church and become its leaders. And Dean the church continued to grow with plenty of activities for young and old. The 1990s brought more change to CCC Reverend Cho was reassigned by the Methodist conference leaving CCC without a pastor. Church life went on complete with the retreats like this one, Bible study groups, fellowship outings and such. Reverend Su a visiting pastor in 1990. He attended the Wesley Theological Seminary as our seminarian obtaining his graduate degree. He was a First pastor from the Chinese mainland from Shanghai, China to be sponsored by the Chinese Community Church, after obtaining his graduate degree Reverend Su returned to Shanghai. He subsequently founded and established the East China Theological Seminary. Pastor William Wan joined the church and as its next senior pastor in 1991, Reverend Sharon but joined as associate pastor in 1992. And with the congregation outgrowing its space again, they led CCC back to MVP in 1940 1994, and a joint ministry venture. And MVP was led by Dr. Carol gunkel there on the right. This was the third time CCC health services and MVP. And here the charge continued to grow with a variety of programs like the next one pictured.

Michelle Wong 20:59

Subsequent events like the spring retreat in this photo saw the merger of both congregations in church life together. Now during the 90 separate services started to be held for both the Cantonese and the Mandarin speaking congregations. They were held in Mount Vernon places chapel in 1999, Greg and Luna Chen pictured in the middle there, along with a couple other started the Mandarin congregation. They invited retired pastor Reverend Andrew Shen pictured on the left to help Shepherd their growing flock. The Mandarin congregation received its first official full time pastor in just Joanna Shu, who was commissioned by CCC in 2016. As a minister of the gospel, and there she is pictured on the right. And January 3 on January 3 2003, Pastor Charles Kuh from Philadelphia accepted the call to lead CCC. Again, the Chinese Community Church continue to grow and started looking at options to renovate the L street property. Still a big part of the community ccs needs grabbed the attention of other parties. Divine Intervention saw a complicated business deal among a Hotel Group, a neighbor church and CCC happen. In 2006, CCC had found his new home at fifth and I Street. The building scene here was originally an assembly Presbyterian church built in the 1850s. It became home to have shalom in 1906, which is in the next picture. And in the next picture, it became Corinthian Baptist Church in 1957. After three phases of renovation, including the restoration of the original break, and the Italian style tower across the church building was finally completed in 2009. Here, the Chinese Community Church of washington dc continues to make her home, opening her doors to the community, focusing on the worship of God, the fellowship and learning of God's people and service to the community. And I conclude as I began with one of Reverend CC Hung's favorite quotations,

consider the turtle, he makes progress only when he sticks his neck out. I think that sums up the history of CCC very succinctly. The church has grown and flourished as a result of God's divine intervention, and God's people sticking their necks out despite any obstacles they faced. Thank you for your time.

Mia Owens 23:41

Thank you so much for giving that presentation Michelle. If anybody has any questions or comments they'd like or questions you'd like to ask Michelle, please feel free to type them into the chat below and we'll have a q&a session after we get our presentation about our work with the 1882 Foundation. But also if you just want to share anything in the chat, please feel free to do so as well. So now we're going to move on to our presentation about work with 1882 Foundation. So over the past year, Claudia Mengshu and I have been to see assisting the 1882 foundation with some research for the AAPI in DC historic context study. And we want to share about kind of our research that we've done since we kind of met some of y'all through it. And we want to talk about the reason why you want to learn more about the Chinese Community Church and take this time to explain about about our relationship with 1882 Foundation and the CCC. So Kenny if you could go ahead and bring up the slide deck. Awesome and then go on to the next slide, please. Great. Okay. So as we mentioned before in our introductions, Mengshu, Claudia and I are public history master students at American University. And during the spring of 2021, we all participate in a course called public history practicum. During this course, students partner organizations throughout DC, such as DC preservation League, DC Public Library, Charles center, school, museum and archive as well as 1882 foundation. And we work with that partner organization on public history projects such as building exhibits, designing programs and creating resources to help the organization achieve its goals. So these partnerships with the partner organizations have been kind of ongoing with the public history program, and there are other AU students in the past who have worked on different projects at the 1882 foundation. And we're very excited to be one of those groups of people. So students can kind of express their interest of the organization they want to work with. So our professor Dr. Dan Kerr reached out to us about potentially working with the 1882 foundation due to our research interests. Claudia, Mengshu, and I have all my backgrounds and personal interest in studying AP history. And so we were excited to be partnering with 1882 foundation with the practicum course. And we enjoyed it so much that we decided to continue working with the 1882 foundation over the summer as interns. Next slide, please Kenny.

Mia Owens 26:28

Alright, so give you a little more context about what the historic context is since we mentioned it a couple of times as kind of a brief study of or summary of what the project is hoping to achieve. The context study is the first historic context statement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the district. And its purpose is to kind of get a better understanding of the AAPI communities and their diverse histories of experiences, culture, heritage and placement, the city.

And the idea kind of to bring all of these histories kind of into a summary to make it easier for future researchers or people who want to do projects relate to AAPI history in the future. So participants in the research team have been focusing on different areas within the Chinese American and Korean American experiences in DC. This is included I do some research on family and merchant associations, the Wah Luck house, the union market, and Florida Avenue area of DC, as well as this summer Claudia Mengshu and I are doing additional research on military history, which we might have reached out to a couple of you about related to that topic. And then in addition to doing the physical research, research of physical and cultural spaces, the context study team is working on trying to broaden our understanding of history by engaging with the public through programs like this, as well as kind developing some community archives. We've also been working on trying to document historic artifacts and resources related to AAPI history, which we'll talk about more later in this presentation. Next slide, please. So our research focus has been over the past or over the year, it's been on faith and religion, specifically with the Chinese Community Church, and the Chinatown service center. So far our work with 1882 Foundation, we had discussed a couple of different ideas. And we were just really interested in learning more about the history of the Chinese Community Church, and the service center, as we've seen with you know, Michelle's presentation, in discussions with many of you. The church has such a rich history has played such an important role in supporting DC's Chinese communities. And we're really excited to kind of dig more into that. And we were very, also very grateful for 1882 connections. 1882 Foundation's connections, Shirley and Walter Woo. And they have provided us with some great kind of information to help us get started, as well as resources to learn more about the church's history. Next slide, please. I think that brings us on to Claudia.

Claudia Vinci 29:05

Yeah so, now I'm going to delve into part of our research process. And like Mia mentioned we had a lot of help from Shirley and Walter woo throughout our semester. And early on in the process, they were kind enough to lend us nine of their church yearbooks. And these yearbooks are published every five years to kind of track the past five years of the church and celebrate their anniversaries. And we had nine of them from 1975 to 2015. So each of us took three and reviewed them and we thought they were such a cool resource and had so much history that we created this spreadsheet, you can see just a small clip of it on the slide, I think we had over 200 entries. So that's just a very small part of it. But we were lucky enough to be able to review these and kind of track some of the history of the church including the different clubs and social groups. That may have been continuing for decades and still at the church or different cultural activities. They also had different advertisements, like businesses and restaurants that were featured in advertisements throughout the history of the yearbooks. And what we thought would be helpful is creating this spreadsheet to not just help us in our research, but also anyone interested or future researchers in the context study. And what we did is specified the yearbook we were talking

about. So you can see on the slide, it says 1975. And then the page number, the category, like I said, social groups, church activities, and then a short description, and any notes we thought would be helpful. So for example, on the first one, you can see, it's just like an entry for a social group that we were looking at on one of the pages of the 1975 yearbook. So with that, we if you could go to the next slide, Kenny, thank you. We also did informal interviews and meetings like served as a really good kind of combination with the yearbooks. And we did kind of informal interviews with a few former and current church members. For example, former current former member Raksa Yin and current members, Linda Wong, and like we've mentioned Shirley and Walter Woo were a wonderful resource. We also attended four of the church, Sunday school meetings, where the members were kind enough to let us join and take notes. And people would give their personal testimonies about how they got to the church and their experiences in the church and really any other experience they wanted to share. And like I said, this in combination with reading the history of the church, and then hearing the actual members talk about their experiences was a wonderful opportunity as researchers to get that kind of dual opportunity. And you're able to kind of again, track how check the history of the church and hear about it from the church members themselves, some of who had been there for decades. And just finally getting to have these two parts of our research throughout the semester work together. Hearing about like the intergenerational and multicultural history of the church was a really interesting experience. And with that, I will throw it to Mengshu.

Mengshu Ye 32:25

So yeah, I will talk about the rest of our practicum deliverables. So based on our research from the yearbooks, like Claudia mentioned, we create a timeline recording the important dates of the church history. We also included important data in DC history, as well as the US National History mainly related to the AAPI community in order to give more of a context to the timeline of the church, and next slide, please Kenny. We also wrote a historic profile of the Chinese Community Church. And this profile, we sort of talk about seven themes that emerged in our research, and including building history, congregation history, community service, education, immigration, military service, and the church's connection to business. And finally, we each wrote a blog to share our research with the wider public. My blog focused on the CCC history, Mia's blog focused on our research process, and Claudia focus on the Chinatown service center. And these blogs were published on the context statements website AAPI in DC if you're interested to take a look. And next slide, please. So during our process of researching and documenting the history of Chinese Community Church, we came in contact with many church members who provided valuable sources and help us learn and record its history. In the course of our research we understood that as the oldest Chinese church and DC, CCC has historically played a role in the early development of these Chinese community. It is extremely important to preserve and tell the stories of CCC because they represent a vital of DC in action. So this concludes our presentation. Now we can go into the q&a section. Michelle will be answering any written questions that you send in during her

presentation. And you're also welcome to unmute yourself and ask any questions and Michelle or other church members here in this section. Thank you.

Michelle Wong 34:52

Alrighty. I don't know if I can answer all the questions but let's see. Someone might someone on the in the Zoom meeting might be able to answer the questions, because they may have been around during that time. Okay, so first question did missionaries work in the Chinese community prior to the formation of the church in DC? Um, I don't know if you would say missionaries per se. I know that there were Sunday schools that were dedicated specifically to for the Chinese. In probably about six or seven area churches. The first one, the earliest one was at Calvary Baptist in 1889. So, yes, so from 1889 until the 1930s, there were Chinese Sunday schools in DC, and I don't know if there were any other types of organizations dedicated to missionary work. But I know those were in existence. Did the early DC congregations include Taishanese or just Cantonese? That's a great question. I know there are a lot of Taishanese in the community, I don't know if anyone else can answer that better than I can. If someone else wants to speak up, and unmute themselves. Um, doo doo doo doo.

Michelle Wong 36:16

I'm wondering if you have info on who contributed to the funds during the first two fundraising efforts. Um, I don't know specific names. I know we have them listed at the church, I wouldn't be able to list any of them off to you. The campaign's went out citywide, those newspaper articles were in the Washington Post. So all of those any any money that came in, could have been from anywhere in the city. And I know, there was a lot of support from political leaders and the DC federation of churches. So I can't make an assumption on who had the biggest contribution, whether it was a group or individuals, what types of groups but I know that it would that the call went citywide.

Rita Moy 37:05

How? Go ahead. This is Rita Moy. Um, my grandmother, way back 1930s would fundraisers with a group of women did cooking for fundraisers, they have that time we got chicken Chow made the mainstay was very popular. We had fundraisers, lunches for people. That's how they raised some of the monies because it was a was my mom mentioned that a lot of times that, you know, they had fundraisers, probably didn't know people everywhere. Were the lunches.

Michelle Wong 37:51

Yeah, I think that's a great point. There. There are a lot of grassroots efforts, it wasn't necessarily a big a big donor, or big donors. It was it was a lot of people doing a lot of work like your grandmother.

Michelle Wong 38:05

areata to who held the mortgage for the space between the 50s and 70s. Or,

Michelle Wong 38:16

I don't really understand this question. Um, we had this we have the building on or we have the location at L street from 19. From the 1930s. And we built

back on that space. So we demolished the building the original Carriage House. When I say we, I mean the church, because I obviously was not there. But the carriage house was demolished and the mortgage was on that on the cost of the renovation, not the renovation but the building of a new building, which was what was shown in that second fundraising brochure. I don't know if that answers that question. Ask ask it a different way if I didn't answer the question, as you wanted it. Any other questions?

Mia Owens 39:29

Yeah, as Jen mentioned in the comments, if anyone wants to kind of add to anything Michelle has said or ask any questions, feel free to either type it in the chat or unmute yourself and be really great to hear other people's, you know, experiences with the church. I know there are a lot of church members here. It looks like Jen put a question there for I think, Michelle.

Michelle Wong 39:55 When you when you say Youth Leadership, what do you mean by that?

Jenn Low 40:01

Michelle, sorry, I just was really interested in how many sort of youth programs there are. And I was just wondering if you could speak to sort of the breadth over time, I guess, history, and I guess, present day to.

Michelle Wong 40:16

Yeah, I'm sure some of the other people on the call can talk or on the in the meeting can talk about all the different groups that have been at the church. I think that I mean, like, like I mentioned, some of the early things, there was a little there was a girls club, it was started out of the YWCA, the Mei-Ling club, there was my grandfather was actually part of Boy Scout troop 11, which was in the 1930s and 40s, which was started by Laurence Luca, who was unfortunately killed in action in North Africa during World War Two. But the as, as the years progressed, I think whenever there was a need a group was started. So there'll be there came a need for there to be a junior high Group, a high school group, a teen group. And then in the 50s, and 60s, there came a need for something in between being, you know, married and the, the, the teenager so a young adult group was born. So I think whenever there was a need for a group, it formed. I mean, even more recently, there was a need for a group that neighborhood kids could be a part of, and that was the birth of cool church kids in the last in the last decade and a half, probably. And the youth fellowship has been a mainstay for decades now to so hopefully, that helps. I don't know who the lender was for the mortgage payment. Someone my dad might know, I don't know. I think my dad is on in the meeting. Okay. Do you have a sense of I'm sorry, if I missed something. Do you have a sense of the percentage of current church members who are based in DC versus in the greater GMB? I would say the majority of the people are in the greater DMV. There are a lot of people that have moved out of the city and into the suburbs. If I, I would not be able to give a percentage, but I know most of the mailings go out beyond DC. And as people increasingly move to areas outside of Chinatown, were affiliated churches

established in the DC suburbs by former congregants. Um, there are definitely churches that are being frequented by former congregates that are now in the suburbs. I don't know if they were actually started. Someone else might know the answer to that. How do active church members who no longer live in the area talk about their commitment and keeping the church vital and active in Chinatown? What is the importance of this? What are the challenges? Um, that's a great question. I guess it's a good question for me, since I do not live in the area. I think one of the things that is really crucial for me is keeping the story alive. And knowing that and being able just to share the story, I talked about the church wherever I go. Because I think it's it's so important, on with respect to how God blesses generations and how they're, and it's no joke, I'm the fourth generation to have attended this church. And and I think that when generations can pass on to the next generation, the next generation, that's how you keep this alive. And it's not necessarily a something that you're able to do in the same way all the time. But it's something that you can continue to pass along. And I think that's, that's really important for us to understand where we came from, in order for us to know where it is that we are supposed to go. And there's there's a lot to be learned from where we've come from, how we did what we did, and how we can take that and make it better moving forward. Um, but yeah, there there are some huge challenges to this because there's a lot of scattering. And the the ability for us to be able to meet on a zoom like this is is pretty incredible. I think that thing things have become further apart, but things have also become closer as a result of technology. How many active church members are there now? Good Question. I don't know. I would have to ask my mother about that. But I would say, a few 100. And can you repeat where to find the results of the research? I think that's a question for one of the ladies.

Mia Owens 45:16

Yeah, I can speak to that. So I think Jen might have wait some of the blog posts that we did in the chat if you want to read any of those where we talk about kind of our research process and some summaries of like the history of the church that we had. And then hopefully, in the future, we'll have more kind of a concrete version of what we've seen with the context study once those kind of documents and pulled together. So right now you can find them on the AAPI, DC website.

Michelle Wong 45:49

For those that are in DC, do residents of the Wah Luck house and museum square tend to attend the church? Yes. And we actually have a big ministry at the Wah Luck house. Bible study classes and other classes are held at Wah Luck house. And many I mean, the Wah Luck house is around the corner, many of the when we were meeting in person, many of the residents would just walk over for service. Hopefully that answers everyone's questions.

Michelle Wong 46:32

Do I think the church is still growing and has the potential to continue to grow?

I believe so. I think it's I think the growth can be measured in two ways, right? growth can be measured in numbers, growth can be measured in the spiritual impact the spiritual growth that people have, right. And I think that there's the fact that the church is still standing the church is there are members that are still active, means that the Spirit of God is still alive and well, in the church. And in any in any organization at any church, you're going to have growing pains, you're going to have frustrations, you're going to have things that that are not so great, but I think that that's a function of that's a result of being human right. And there's definitely the potential for the church to continue to grow, and continue to be a part of the community. And, and I'm really big on what Reverend Hung was all about, which is becoming part of the community and the community becoming part of the church. That's, I think, really crucial. But yes, please have other people talk besides Michelle.

Rita Moy 48:26

Michelle, this is Rita mentioned that our congregation is made up of everybody from the neighborhood. there's no such thing as M. Call it being discriminatory. We just open, diverse community, in our congregation.

Michelle Wong 48:50

Yeah for sure. I think that with with where the church is now it's it's really about being part of the community, whoever's in the community, and I think it's, it's broadened beyond this missionary concept of being the missionaries to the Chinese. And I think one of the things that was really crucial in in that timeframe and the 1880s into the 1930s and 50s into the 50s was that there was this sense of you know, that there was not they were not able to be part of the culture, right and so, but I think that this is this is the time where the church can be part of the community and it can be and you can look like anything and can be like anything you Come as you are and and it's no longer just the Chinese community, right. There are some Chinese traditions and history but you don't have to be Chinese to be part of the church.

Michelle Wong 50:01

Yes, we have three separate services. We have a Cantonese service and English service and Mandarin service. And we actually host two Mandarin services on Sundays and one on Tuesdays.

Mia Owens 50:35

Stan is calling out Walter and Shirley? If you guys are here, we'd really love to hear you talk about the service center, if you don't mind.

Shirley Woo 50:50

Okay, sounds good. Yeah. Okay. Okay. Yeah, of course, the service center is really a vital part of the church. It does serve the community the best we can, amazingly without, with only one paid staff members, and all of us are volunteers trying to do our best to answer questions to help the Chinese immigrants who don't speak English very well, to provide social services to help them get needed medical help. To enroll their kids in school, or just to answer general questions.

Yeah, it's a very important part of the community. And so some of the people who do go to church, a lot of people don't they just hear about us, you know, through word of mouth, because of other people telling them that, where can I go, the first place when they move in? is they need to sign up for many things? And where do they come and somehow they find out their way to us. So we do meet a lot of new families in the beginning, sometimes they come back, sometimes they really don't. And then we're proud to have our our English classes or citizenship classes that have been ongoing for a long time. It's been difficult, especially with the pandemic, not to be in person. Also, on the social service side, because there used to coming just coming in whenever they want to. They're not known to plan ahead of time. So we'll see what happens when we open up. And also for our classes to have zoom classes. It's not that easy for them, a lot of them don't have they don't do email, they don't have a computer, but they do have a smartphone. So we've been able to somehow have that. And luckily, we have a good volunteer who is able to help. And then other volunteers have stepped in to maybe do one on one. So they can do zoom or sometimes even just on a telephone, even though that's a class who come down as a class also. Yeah, so we we've been there a long time. And our purpose is really is to help social services acclimate Chinese residents to the American. And you know, if they come to church, its wonderful there, they understand that this church, actually they don't associate the center as a separate entity, they can consider it as the church really.

Walter Woo 53:26

Well, sure, yeah. Let me just say that, Shirley, and I had been members of the church for I guess, over over 40 years. And, yeah, it it's really, the church is really provides a, a valuable community, valuable service for the community and so forth. And, and, of course, we're, we're very active in the service center. We believe that, that the church should not just service the members and come to know God more and so forth. But we believe in outreach, really, we believe that the church has a very important role, in becoming having a greater presence in the community basically, and I look forward to the church have an even a greater role in the community to be a part of the community. Sometimes it's very difficult, I know for outsiders to come to our church, but I think we try to be as welcoming as we can. And people do come but I think the church does face many challenges, really. I think many of our leaders are getting older, and so forth. And we need to encourage the younger generation to step up and take a lead and it's not easy to do. You know, we we basically are about 200 members in our church basically, of course, during The major holidays and so forth. Yeah, we can almost increase that to maybe possibly 400. But, but in terms of the average Sunday, we don't really have as many people as we would like to come. And then parking is always a very difficult issue really, in terms of having people to come and find a place to park it and come to the church and so forth. But anyway, you know, the churches, as rendered a very valuable service to the community and, and look forward to continuing our involvement in the church and hopefully help the church grow more and, and, obviously, to

reach out to the immigrants, it there are so many immigrants that are in the area, sometimes we look to Chinatown and, and we see the Chinatown really is not that vibrant. There aren't that many restaurants anymore, but you are still a lot of people, immigrants, especially who work in the service industries, like hotels, and so forth, you know, three public housing projects in the area, and many of the immigrants lived there. And so they do look to the service center and to the church, you know, for, for hope, and, and, and so forth, anyway, yeah, thank you.

Shirley Woo 56:25

Well, because of our English classes that are open to everyone, we do have, in the past, we used to have Spanish speakers come to learn English. But we ourselves, of course, don't have volunteers that speak Spanish, oh, or even another language. We've had even people from Africa that spoke French, even a Japanese that, you know, they, we didn't speak their language, but we do the best we can. And if we have to refer someone, we tried to find another agency that can help them if they don't speak English very well. I remember one time we had someone from Russia come. And that was difficult. And then actually, there's a Russian church somewhere. And we found the name of that. And we say, why don't you call that church and see if they can help you. But yeah, we can't, we can't do everything. Yeah, but we tried to do our best to refer people to the appropriate places. Yeah, it's true that our funding primarily does come from the DC government. But we do are accepting of people that live outside DC to because sometimes people just hear about us, and they just come in from the suburbs. So we'll take them into. And if we can answer their question, we can answer their question. And if we can't, we admit that we cannot, and then we'll try to look up some resources that maybe they should look, look into that we're not capable of doing.

Walter Woo 57:50

Yeah, our tutoring. You know, we've been doing this for over 25 years, that's just our involvement, but the tutor has existed for a lot longer, and the tutoring is not limited to Chinese. I mean, so long as people can want to improve their English, we're more than glad to help. I've had students who, you know, from Poland, from Ethiopia, and so forth. So it you know, we're open. And if they're willing to have this willingness to learn English, we're more than glad to help, really. And I think we're listed as a resource at the Martin Luther King library. So we do get a lot of referrals and that way, yeah, and we have a lot of people are interested in tutoring, and so Shirley does interview a lot of these people, we have a list of people who are interested in and it's difficult sometimes to because we don't know how many students are coming, really. And so we always try to make sure that we have not the tutors that do come and volunteer, they do, they do have a student to teach and so forth. But you know, it, you know, we're not, we're not very structured, and maybe that way, it's good. And, but we've had students who have come for for a long, long time, really, and we've helped a good number of people get their citizenship and so forth. So it's a very rewarding experience. Thank you.

Stan Lou 59:38

Thanks. Thanks for speaking out. Walter and Shirley. I didn't want to embarrass you by calling you out but but but you're such important people in the Navy in the community. up so you offer so much and So I just had to call you out. So thanks, thanks for opening up and tell us some information. Sure. No, Stan's a very important. No, yeah. And for myself, you know, I've been able to 1882 foundation for a long time now. And I know that Chinatown is a real priority for the 1880 community, and the church is a vital part of the community. And so, you know, I think we, in this in this community on this call, need to be supportive of the Chinese Community Church, and, and the Chinatown service center, because, you know, that, that to me, that that church and that service center are sort of the epicenter of Chinatown, in my opinion, you know, you you guys are the ones that keep the cultural touchstone alive for all of us, you know, who moved moved out, and Chinatown, or whatever you want to call it, and don't have physical connections anymore. You know, you're you're keeping, you know, the story of Chinatown alive for all of us. And, and I think that's important. So I think it's very important that this study has been done, you know, I think the team Claudia, Mia and Mengshu, under the leadership of Jen, that to put this story out there and, and, and certainly to call attention to the role that Chinese community churches played in all of this. And so, Jen, I really would like us to be out more on what some of the overall broader missions of what what you're doing in Chinatown, in bringing out these stories, and and letting letting the the audience know, a broader picture of what what you are doing in in this context, contextual study here. Speak up, Jen, I'm calling you out.

Jenn Low 1:02:01

You're a great facilitator, Stan. Yeah, so all of this that one, I think it's important to note that without sort of the community leadership, support and cooperation and coordination with like Michelle, and also Walter, and Shirley, we can't really sort of surface and make visible these stories in Chinatown, right, or in the Chinese American community, the Asian American community. So I think this partnership over the past few months, of Walter and Shirley in the relationship with 1882 Foundation, being a really important avenue for students, and researchers like Mia Claudia Mengshu, to be able to do this public history work. And I think across Chinatown, and neighborhoods just like it, I think, often, the lack of visibility of the stories and histories creates an incredible burden right on our neighborhoods. Because we can't sort of keep and maintain and sustain these cultural touchstones that are such important sort of every day institutions. So there's cultural preservation from the aspects of what we see as sort of these, these these little jewels, these plaques of memories, but how can we sustain things that have for you know, decades have been around to serve like everyday lives. So to be able to surface this information, I think it's really important to Chinatown in our work about you know, it's not sort of just the signage that's on all of the different stores that keep coming in or the restaurants and bars, it's really sort of the the places that have been crafted by

community members to serve a very explicit needs and priorities that people who live here are deeply connected to these places. So the context study that was just talked about the Asian American historic context study is setting a real like, initial foundation. This is an inaugural context study for Asian Americans in Washington, DC. We just spent, the DC preservation league had finished one for African Americans for the LGBTQ community. And this is sort of embarking on that next study which identifies these places, and not just Chinatown, but there's also places across you know, Florida market, Union market to that have that have connections. So this is also a call to action to as we continue to move forward and more public engagement and more conversations. You know, we know people have deep histories and in the city even though you may not live here anymore, and for for better for worse right now, this zoom platform is a great avenue for us to come to the table to surface those histories. So for the next few months, We're going to be kind of doing similar sort of conversations and profiles of different sites and places in the city and also Chinatown specifically. And yeah, if we're looking for interviews, conversations, photos, too. So it is all sort of interconnected. And Chinatown has really been sort of a very important place for us as as a beginning. As 1822 Foundation, our brick and mortar to is right up against the church in the service center. hope that's helpful, Stan.

Stan Lou 1:05:41

Oh, no, thanks. Thank you, Jenn. I know, I didn't mean to take over facilitator Mia, you're doing a great job.

Mia Owens 1:05:53

Thank you, Stan. You're a great facilitator. I agree with Jen. Um, I think we had a question in the chat from Sojin asking about. I don't know if anyone would be willing to answer it. But it says, oh, gosh, I lost it. Are there relationships or activities, formal or informal, that connect religious institutions and the Chinatown downtown area? And then she said the presentations have referenced relationships with the Calvary church in the past that I continue today. I don't know. Michelle, you would like to answer that, or if anyone else would like to unmute themselves and speak to kind of the relationship with other religious institutions in DC. Feel free to please comment on that, too.

Michelle Wong 1:06:50

So there is this kind of I don't know if I would call it a formal thing. But there's the downtown cluster of congregations, which most of the area churches are part of. And I think the the biggest relationship that the church has had, as is with Mount Vernon in place. Because we've shared spaces on three separate occasions with Mount Vernon, and with him. I guess then, there are some renters. Um, so that I wouldn't say there's necessarily anything formal, um, but there besides the downtown cluster, but there's definitely, um, there are definitely those relationships still exist today. They just might be a little bit different than what they were in the past, especially since those churches are much older than the Chinese Community Church. So at one point, they were almost like, parent churches adopting this, you know, little fledgling thing. But now, now, each

church has its own entity.

Michelle Wong 1:08:07

Any other? Yeah, I think that I think I answered that question. Do you have a sense of the numbers of new Chinese immigrants moving into DC recently, based on those who reached out to the church in a service center? That's probably a.

Shirley Woo 1:08:27 You can speak. Oh ok. Actually, actually, I don't really know. We don't have that many people. We don't think anymore. Like, we used to. There are less people at Thompson school that used to come. And it's becoming difficult to live in downtown Chinatown, DC, you know, there's more expensive housing. And then most immigrants, if they save enough money to buy their own home, it probably won't be around here around DC. At least are not around Chinatown. So they'll move to you know, montgomery county to silver spring, Wheaton, or they'll move to Virginia to Springfield or somewhere. So I don't know how many we don't have that many new families and then recently because of the pandemic, and then we've only had to cause transfer to this. The the other Michelle, who works at the center her home, and I think only so far I can tell there's only been the usual people, but not new people. And I don't know when we open or that happened well, when people start coming out, want to see us in person, because I think most people like to do that better than calling on the telephone. So I don't know if there are so many people really yeah.

Rita Moy 1:09:59

From my understanding in past, all the Chinese call it Chinese American churches in the DC area, the ministers all know each other, because I think at what I know, they still have, but they get together every so often to exchange notes and experiences. so forth was like, example, we have, you know, ministers that substitute for our minister, every so often. And another fact that to you let you know, rev and CC Hung started, Call it what is known as the a call at a conference of all the North American Chinese churches called con fab, which met every three years. Well, we no longer have it, but I think the last one was in the early 2000. But you there were churches from Canada, as well from San Francisco, Philadelphia, and of course Washington, DC, and members, as well as the ministers attended this conference to exchange notes and just to get together of the different churches, at different locations, every three years. So this was a good way to know, what was what Dave says, of the Chinese American churches in North America was?

Mia Owens 1:11:59

Yeah, thank you, Rita, for sharing that. That's really interesting. Um, let's see. I think another question that kind of came in, was asking how the church as a community center has kind of responded with, like, the events in the past year, like relating to things like, you know, Black Lives Matter, and like social justice movements. And there's the question just kind of asking, if, like how that's, you know, affected the church and how that's kind of, you know, if that's led to any, like needing to change or respond in some type of way. If no one wants to answer

that. That's fine, too. I think it was just a question that came in.

Michelle Wong 1:12:51

I think their their response was go back to the Bible about what it's what God says about loving other people, and with black lives matter with the political unrest with the shootings of the in Atlanta, and of the Asian women, it's, I think, the stance has always been, what, what does God say about it? And how would God try to love people in this broken world? And and I know the messages anytime an event happened, and unfortunately, it happens very frequently, or so was portrayed in the news. Not that it was necessarily more frequently than before, it was just more prevalent than news in the last year and a half or so that we have to respond as Jesus would respond. And that's the consistent message that has been preached from the pulpit concerning any type of unrest or social injustice. It's what is what is God's justice? Hopefully that answers your question. And you can go back to past sermons on the church's YouTube page.

Mia Owens 1:14:18

Yeah, thank you, Michelle. So I think we're hitting past 12:15, which was a scheduled program. So I guess concludes like the formal scheduled program part if anyone wants to stay on and ask any other questions, or has any other comments that they want to share? We'll stay on here for you know, the meantime until everyone has their questions answered and everything Um, let's see. I think I had a question

Jenn Low 1:15:04

from Sojin. Can you talk about your research with the Charles River school and museum archives? What sorts of materials Did you review? And what resources Did you find that support your research?

Mia Owens 1:15:19

Gotcha. So that was actually a different practicum groups, um, projects that we worked with today. And so you Foundation, I believe their project was motion cloud, you guys remember was that the one related to collecting stories from educators? Yeah. So I think their project was they were trying to collect stories of educators about their experience with the pandemic and how that kind of impacted their personal lives and experiences in the public school system. Um, so I don't know if they have collected any yet, but that will be a forthcoming project. Do you guys everything else about that I'm forgetting.

Claudia Vinci 1:16:05 I think you hit everything. Yeah. Like you said, it was about kind of getting the stories from the teachers themselves. So it kind of shows just like our public history, practicum class was kind of hoping to emphasize the community members and us getting experience with community engagement. And obviously, you can tell that was a prime part of our project. And I think that was another highlight of theirs as well. Getting stories from the teacher. So

Mia Owens 1:16:38

Lets see a question from Julia asks, do you have a sense of the numbers of new Chinese immigrants moving into DC Recently. Did we already ask that question.

I can't remember. Based on who reached out, it might have been on message. I'm sorry. Um, let's see. Yeah, that might have been all the questions. Unless you guys see something that I can't see. Awesome. Thanks, Julia. Yeah, thank you so much, Michelle, for talking to us about your research. Could you I was wondering when you're giving it like how have you been able to like kind amass all this? Is it just out of your personal interests? Or was it kind of just, you know, documents that the church that they already had? And like how that kind of work when you're putting together a presentation?

Michelle Wong 1:17:43

Great question. I think been working. So my uncle Lindy, he wrote the bulk of the material as far as the written history. He sent it to me, I edited it, and started adding to it based on so I don't remember when he was last the historian. But I started adding the years after he finished adding years, and then there's, our church historians have in the recent past, have started putting together pulling together pictures and videos and other items. And so we have our archives in the church building. And so they've been painstakingly scanning and putting, pulling all this, all the all this information into a digital format. And so I took some of the pictures from there I was, I was able to be at church in the last few months. And so I was able to pull some other pictures just for my own personal records. I was honestly looking for pictures of my family members. And so, um, and those are just scanned myself and saved onto my computer. So there are some pictures that were definitely just because they had my family and the ones that were in their presentation. And But yeah, I love history. And so being able to I actually, my first research paper was on Chinese American history, and the 1800s. And so this has long been and I was in high school A while ago. So this has been a long, long been a passion of mine and an interest of mine. So and it's just it's fun to learn about your own history and how you came about to be where you are, and especially in the context of the of global history. It was so fun looking at Reverend Hung being part of the president Truman's inaugural activity committee, because that's I mean, who can say that they worked on you know, the innaguration committee especially, in that time, he was obviously the only Chinese person on that in that in that list. So

Mia Owens 1:20:11

that's a really cool image. Sorry, go ahead. No, that is our hope that answered your question. Yeah, that was great. What was your first paper about, um, it

Michelle Wong 1:20:22

It was actually about on the railroad and how the how the birth of the railroad. So I basically started in 1848, with the gold rush and how that prompted a lot of Chinese to come to the United States. And that was prompted by my own history and hearing about my great great grandfather wanting to come work on the railroad. And he unfortunately, never made it to the US. He got shipwrecked on his way from China and ended up in Canada. But thankfully, he obviously he was still alive, otherwise, I would not be here. But um, that's that's what prompted it. Because it's, it's always interesting for me to see what, what, where

I come from and my paper was specifically about Chinese women in that era, because there weren't a lot of women in that time, timeframe.

Michelle Wong 1:21:34

But thank you, everyone. I do have to go now. But thank you. If anyone does have questions after I leave you, you can email them to me, and I will try to get the answers. Thank you so much, Michelle. My pleasure. You all have a great rest of your Saturday. Bye. Thank you, Mia, thank you Claudia, thank you Mengshu. Thank you. Thank you.

Stan Lou 1:22:00

Yeah, I want to thank everyone, too. You guys made a great presentation. Michelle. Thank you very much. Mia, Claudia, and Mengshu, thank you so much for for all your work you've done on this. Jen. Also the behind the scenes people here, Kenny and Julia, thank you for for facilitating the conversation today. And it was a great conversation. I really think it's very meaningful to keep doing these, these events, and maintaining the stories that are there and need to be told and remembered. So thank you, everyone. On behalf of the 1882, Foundation, Since Ted's not here. I guess I can speak for Ted, in that regard. So thank you so much. And we look forward to your further research on everything. So I don't know if our are we concluding the meeting?

Mia Owens 1:23:01

I think so let's see what else have something they want to say. But I guess officially conclude now. But yeah, thank you guys so much for being here. It was great to hear Michelle's presentation. We'll hear from all of you who spoke so yeah, thank you thank you everyone. Also record

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