

THE AACCS ANCHOR

A Publication of Asian American Christian Counseling Service, Inc.

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Hebrews 6:19

March 2014

Marital Challenges

Ken Yabuki, LMFT, Board Member

In the last issue (July 2013) of *The AACCS Anchor*, Dr. Alan Oda described the challenges faced by married couples today both in the Christian and non-Christian communities. Until about the middle of the 20th century, the divorce rate among Christians was lower than that of non-Christian couples in the U.S. Today, however, the divorce rate is about the same for Christians and non-Christians alike, as was noted by Dr. Oda. I believe the main reason for the high divorce rate is the prevalent belief that one should not tolerate pain if there is a way out of it. When marriage causes pain, people are tempted to believe they should get rid of it by ending the marriage. This simplistic approach does not work and some people go through multiple divorces leaving emotional wreckage behind. I have found committed Christian couples do better when they are willing to work through the pain on the strength of their commitment to the Lord and to each other. In their humanness they may feel divorce may be an easy way out, but their commitment keeps them from bailing out. Through trial and error, some couples make it but others do not. I would highly recommend Christian marriage counseling for couples struggling in their marriage. I would also recommend pre-marital counseling for couples contemplating marriage so that they can prepare themselves for what lies ahead.

All marriages go through painful stages but there are ways to lessen the pain by learning a few important principles. First and foremost, we must stop trying to change our spouse. It has been found that happily married couples are those who do not try to change each other. "If only my spouse would change, I would be happy" is the most commonly heard statement in marriage counseling. It is human nature to want to change one's spouse but this is a dead-end approach. It makes things worse. There is a better way. We can stop trying to change our spouse by changing the way we respond to our spouse. The first thing we need to do is stop talking and start listening. We need to listen to our spouse to *understand* what our spouse is trying to say. We may not agree with what our spouse is saying but we need to understand and affirm what is being said by our spouse. When we do not feel understood, our emotions are aroused and it is difficult to engage in rational conversation. But when we feel our opinions have been heard and affirmed for what they are, we are better able to engage in more rational conversation. The Apostle James reminds us to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19b). When we are able to listen to our spouse and try to be careful not to contradict or disagree right away, a more productive conversation can follow.

Secondly, we need to learn to communicate with the "I-message" rather than the "you-message." All couples have differences in personality, family background, personal habits and



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Message from the Board

Eleanor Huang, LCSW, Board Member, Executive Director Consultant

I have been reflecting recently on the Parable of the Sower and Soils in the Gospel of Mark. As many of you know, this parable is about a farmer who sows seed across four different types of soil, three of which are non-productive and yield no fruit. The seed sown on good soil, on the other hand, grows and produces a plentiful harvest. Jesus interprets this parable for us by likening people to the seed.

“The farmer plants the Word. Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them. And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm. But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it. The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it. But the seed planted in the good earth, represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams.” Mark 4:14-20 (MSG)

Because there were periods in my life where I was like the seed sown in the gravel and weeds, this parable was always a bit unsettling for me. I remember needing people to help me through my questions, my doubts, and my worries; yet, I felt judged, condemned, and left out. While we should rejoice for the seed that fall on good soil, do we dismiss concern for the seed (or human souls) that were not fortunate enough to land on good soil? And, for the seed that fall on poor soil, is it a permanent loss? Is it possible for the seed to thrive in once bad soil, if the soil undergoes a season of tilling and cultivation?

In revisiting this parable, I hear something different, and I am encouraged. Despite the usual emphasis on the sower and soils, the essential element of the parable is the seed. As Jesus interprets this parable, he isn't dismissive or unconcerned with the seed that falls on poor soil but rather compassionately describes the seed as people facing special growth issues. By identifying the various soils and the conditions that challenge the seed from truly “hearing the Word” and embracing it, he acknowledges the complexities of human nature and the human condition.

This parable additionally offers us some truths about plant science. “Hearing the Word” is about germination, time, and patience. To sprout and grow, seed need good soil, but they also need proper conditions that include variables such as temperature, water, oxygen, and light. It means knowing the soil conditions, but also understanding the variety of seed you are working with. Experience tells us that seed by themselves are unremarkable; yet, with the right variables interacting together, they have tremendous potential to become something amazing and unexpected. They can grow into majestic redwoods, fragrant flowers, or grain that feeds millions. Jesus recognized the potential. He wanted his disciples to prepare for the amazing and unexpected when he said. *“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” (Matthew 9:37 NIV).*

At AACCS, we count it a privilege to be workers for the harvest, to care for seed that have fallen on hardened soil and gravel and seed that have been cast in the weeds. Because preserving faith is an important aspect of our mission and purpose, we strive to provide a safe environment and appropriate conditions to help seed germinate, thrive, and bear fruit. Our counselors and therapists are equipped to “till hearts” and cultivate soil for change and transformative living. Although ultimately it is God who invisibly works his redemptive purpose in each person who comes to us for help, we gladly serve as his conduits of love and light.

Thank you always for joining us in this mission - for believing that seed scattered in poor soil need not be permanently lost and for sharing in the hope that something amazing and unexpected can happen in the lives we touch, all for the glory of God.

21st Annual Art & Sharon Yokoi Memorial Golf Tournament Results October 11, 2013

*Thank you to the many sponsors, donors, golfers and volunteers.
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Low Gross

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Men's "A/B" Flight

1st Place—Harvey Ujimori, 62
2nd Place —Bob Okada, 63
3rd Place — Steve Choi, 65

Men's "C" Flight

1st Place — Yutaka Anesawa, 70
2nd Place — Mark Ujimori, 71
3rd Place — Ralph Ono, 72
4th Place— Yuji Kanazawa, 73
5th Place—Jimmy Lee, 73
21st Place — Vance Ito, 76

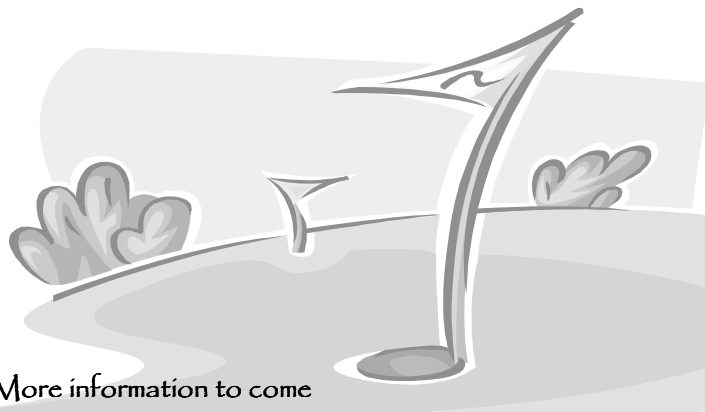
Closest to the Pin

Hole #3—Yuji Kanazawa
Hole #12—Tak Shimazaki
Hole #17—Joe Goldman

Longest Drive

Men's—Matt Todsen
Women's—Karen Woo

22ND ANNUAL ART & SHARON YOKOI MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



More information to come

October 10, 2014
Los Verdes Golf Club
7000 West Los Verdes Drive
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA
1:00 PM Shotgun Start

AACCS Member Care Team in Japan, February 26 to March 8

By the time this newsletter is received, Rie Mizuki, Ph.D., Rhonda Gee, LCSW, and Jean Un, LCSW will have returned home from providing counseling and mental health consultation to more than 60 women missionaries gathering for the annual Japan Evangelical Missionary Association, JEMA, Women in Ministry Retreat held in Nikko, Japan as well as to additional missionaries and Christian ministry leaders in and around the Tokyo area. This trip is the fourth for Rie, the second for Rhonda, and the first for Jean.

Even though Japan is a wealthy, industrialized nation, it is considered the world's second largest unreached people group. After centuries of missionary work and evangelization, Christians are still less than 1% of the population, leading to a heavy dosage of discouragement among missionaries. Counseling and mental health resources are meager in Japan, and the availability of Christian counselors is even more limited. Most mission boards must either fly their members to another country for counseling or bring someone into Japan periodically to provide member care.

With a greater openness to the Gospel in Northeast Japan since the triple disaster in 2011, Christian missionaries have worked tirelessly to demonstrate the love of Christ to those displaced and recovering. However, this sense of urgency to spread the Gospel while there is a window of opportunity has led to burn-out among these missionaries and their faith communities. Although our therapists are limited in the time they can offer a missionary or Christian worker to share their story and be prayed for, it is a much needed service so that they can carry on the work that God has called them to.

We are grateful for the ongoing partnership between AACCS and a private Christian Family Foundation which has helped to fund AACCS overseas member care teams since 2007.

Marital Challenges

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other factors that give rise to differences that are annoying to each other. Initially, those differences do not bother the couple while they are “in love.” But sooner or later they will begin to annoy them. For a while they may try to ignore those annoying differences by trying to be patient. But eventually they have to address it. Couples often use the word “always” or “never” when they try to address those issues. Couples complain to each other by making “you-statements” such as, “Why do *you* always do that” or “*You* never do that.” Those are emotionally charged expressions of accusatory nature that arise out of frustrations accumulated over time. A better way to communicate is to use the “I-statement.” Instead of saying, “Why do you always do that?” one could say, “I wish you wouldn’t do that”, which would reduce the likelihood of getting into an argument. It is also recommended that after making an I-statement, we stop repeating the statement before it turns into “nagging.” When we make a clear I- statement, the information can be registered in the mind of the hearer but when it is followed by nagging, the information is more likely to be rejected.

Thirdly, it is important to bring up the matter as soon as possible before it becomes entrenched in the interaction pattern of the couple. “Do not let the sun go down on your anger,” said the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 4:26-27). All too often, too much time has gone by and the matter has become a thorny bone of contention too sensitive to be discussed even with the use of the I-statement. It would be helpful, and highly recommended, that the couple seek marriage counseling as soon as possible if the problem does not go away. As with any illness, the longer we wait to see a doctor, the more complicated the problem can become. An ideal approach would be for a couple to have pre-marital counseling in which they are

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Marital Challenges

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coached on what to expect in marriage, followed by periodic “tune-up” sessions after they tie the knot. In some cases, however, the matter may never be resolved. The couple may continue to struggle with some issues without being able to have a breakthrough. When that is the case, it would be important that we learn to accept it and not to try to change our spouse as long as the issue is not something unethical or dangerous. There are different ways of doing things. Neither one is right or wrong; they are just different. In fact, it is very likely that the Lord has brought you and your spouse together so that your horizon can be expanded. I am a very logical person and my wife is very intuitive. There were times in the past when the differences between us bothered me but now I realize that the Lord has brought us together so that my mind can be stretched for my benefit. I have gained deeper and wider perspectives on life and I think I am a better person as a result of it.

Ken Yabuki is a licensed marriage and family therapist with AACCS. He is also on the AACCS Board of Directors. A former pastor at Union Church of Los Angeles, he has recently been conducting “listening workshops” for Christian groups in Japan and the US. He is bilingual in English and Japanese and has been married to his wife, Georgia, for 44 years.

3rd Annual Asian American Christian Counseling Symposium

Coming Together to Connect, Share, and Empower

The Third Asian American Christian Counseling Symposium will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2014 at Evergreen Baptist Church San Gabriel Valley from 8:30am to 12 Noon. This year Dr. Jenny Pak, Associate Professor at Biola University’s Rosemead School of Psychology is our guest Symposium speaker. Dr. Pak comes to us with many years of professional consultation and counseling experience in both community mental health and ministry settings. With her expertise in cultural psychology and narrative analysis, the subject of her instruction will be *Understanding Biblical and Theological Foundations of Counseling and Spiritual Maturity in Asian American Cultural Context*. Dr. Pak summarizes this course offering in the following abstract:

“Every intervention a counselor makes presupposes assumptions about human nature and human emotions. This 2.5 hour course will cover Biblical and theological foundations of counseling and competing visions of human nature, growth, and change. Recent research on emotion and human development will be examined to understand the role of emotion in the Christian life and healthy psychological adjustment. Implications of integration and spiritual maturity in Asian American cultural context will be also addressed.”

As a full-time faculty member of Rosemead School of Psychology since 2006, Dr. Pak’s instruction is certain to be rich and meaningful. She earned her M.A. in Marriage Family Therapy from Fuller Seminary and her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Southern California. Her clinical interests include identity development, post-traumatic growth, and pastoral and missionary member care. Dr. Pak has published extensively and is known nationally and internationally as an expert in her field. She is also author of *Korean American Women: Stories of Acculturation and Changing Selves*.

This Symposium is open to anyone interested in understanding how professional counselors and therapists integrate Christian faith with professional practice. We especially encourage pastors, church leaders, and students to attend. We will offer 2.5 hours of continuing education credits (BBS #PCE5107) for LMFTs, LCSWs, LEPs, LPCCs who remain for the entire course which will be from 9:00-11:30.

As with each year’s symposium, we will provide time for Asian American Christian therapists to meet and network. A continental breakfast will be offered. The licensed professional and general public fee will be \$35.00 per person. Student fees will be \$25.00. An additional \$25 will be charged for CEU credits. More information will be online at www.aaccs.org soon, or contact Jessica Chen, at mftjess@gmail.com.

Therapist Corner...

Jesus Christ, Author of Genuine Transformation

Jane Shintaku, LMFT

Dropped off for church service. Obediently attending Sunday school classes. Singing hymns to organ music. Putting money in the offering bag. This was the weekly Sunday routine at the Buddhist church while I was growing up. College was anything but routine: exciting, challenging, up-&-down. Buddhist teachings, incense offerings, and chantings did not prepare me for handling life’s problems or how to think things through with discernment. I made unwise decisions and suffered consequences. Feeling trapped, devoting more time to studies brought temporary relief but no matter how hard I worked, there was no lasting peace.

Meanwhile, my younger sister was getting involved in a Christian church through her friends. Over time, I witnessed a miraculous, unwavering transformation in her: from a bad-tempered, impulsive, ‘wild child’ to a self-controlled, wise, confident young lady. My sister’s changed life spoke louder to me than years of Buddhist teachings. She invited me to an Easter sunrise service, where the invitation for what I thought was ‘a free ticket to heaven’ sounded good, and I prayed to receive Christ in my heart. People were more excited than I was when I responded to the altar call. I felt the same as before, and soon returned to my previous lifestyle.

My sister and others must have persistently prayed for me. Through graduate school and my first career as a pharmacist, the Lord surrounded me with Christians (professor, roommate, colleagues). Then due to my newfound interest in Christianity, an excruciating end of a long-term relationship was God’s big wake-up call. When I prayed to receive Christ’s salvation from my sins a few years back, He took me seriously. I realized the Lord wanted me to leave my old life, ‘sitting on the fence,’ and unproductive ways of thinking behind, never to return.

Thus began my ‘nonlinear’ new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:16-21) with a new family in Christ, new purpose (Rom. 8:28-29), and true peace was leaving my pharmacy career medication use, and becoming a family therapist. It is a privilege colleagues to offer Christ-centered families and churches in coming relational and emotional issues, *“Thus began my ‘nonlinear’ new life in Christ...”* of counseling patients on proper Christian licensed marriage and to be serving at AACCS with my counseling. We do so by assisting alongside distressed clients with guiding them to the Wise Counselor (Is. 9:6), the One who truly heals and restores through His Spirit of truth.

Another key change is the Lord’s renewing my mind through His Word and prayer. What a contrast to the Buddhist chants that did not help me. Jesus Christ heals and saves through His Word of truth and His Spirit. I now have assurance that the Lord is in control no matter what, suffering is not for naught, His wisdom is best, His comfort is real (e.g., my sister’s and grandmother’s passing), and the ‘impossible’ can happen (my grandmother saved; forgiving others from my heart). My Buddhist parents don’t know Christ yet, so this story goes on...

God’s greatest miracle is a new birth in Christ: receiving His gift of salvation from sin, a dead spirit resurrected and united with His Spirit. The next best miracles are His assurance of salvation, overcoming trials in His power, and a transformed life, to His glory. Following Christ is not easy, but it is so worth it. May you and yours know real peace that comes from Jesus.

For more information: The booklet Differences Between Buddhism and Christianity by Patsy Oda is available at www.awomansspecialtouch.com. Patsy and her husband Walter’s testimony from Buddhism to their life in Christ is in her book Heart’s Desire. Contact the Odas at: pwoda@cctonline.net.

Presentations/Events

- 08/02/2013 "Compassion Fatigue and Burnout," NGO/NPO Workers, Tohoku disaster zone, Yamada, Japan - Joseph Ozawa, Ph.D.
- 08/02/13 to 08/03/2013 "Stress and Resilience Building," Yamada Community, Tohoku disaster zone, Yamada, Japan - Joseph Ozawa, Ph.D.
- 08/02/13 to 08/03/2013 "Stress and Resilience," Staff and Survivors, Tohoku disaster zone, Kesenuma HOPE Center, Kesenuma, Japan - Joseph Ozawa, Ph.D.
- 08/07/2013 "Praying for Hong Kong, 1995-present," Hong Kong, Christian Network - Joseph Ozawa, Ph.D.
- 08/08/2013 Intercession for Hong Kong, "Ending Well / Assisting the Aging / Elderly in Hong Kong / China," and "Stress and Burnout," Hong Kong Revival Fellowship Seminars, Hong Kong, - Joseph Ozawa, Ph.D.
- 08/11/2013 "Parenting Special Needs Kids," Evergreen Baptist Church SGV, La Puente - Peggy Wang, LMFT
- 09/29/2013 "Parenting Special Needs Kids," Evergreen Baptist Church SGV, La Puente - Peggy Wang, LMFT
- 10/13/2013 "Parenting Special Needs Kids," Evergreen Baptist Church SGV, La Puente - Peggy Wang LMFT
- 10/26/2013 Panelist for documentary by Vanessa Yee: "Laundromat: Asian American Mental Health Issues," UCLA - Carol Miyake, LCSW
- 10/30/2013 "How to Deal with Difficult People in Your Group," Day class of Fullerton Women's Community Bible Study, Fullerton / Core Group Leaders -Jean Un, LCSW
- 11/10/2013 "Courage to Speak", INHERITANCE Magazine's 5th Anniversary Dinner, El Monte, CA - Eleanor Huang, LCSW
- 11/15/2013 "Good Grief! Lessons from Charlie Brown," Anaheim Free Methodist Church, Anaheim, CA - Rie Mizuki, Ph.D.
- 02/15/2014 "Parenting Special Needs Kids," Evergreen Baptist Church SGV, La Puente - Peggy Wang, LMFT
- 02/16/2014 "Can We All Just Get Along?...Building Teamwork in Caregiving," Tender Loving Caregivers Ministry, Evergreen Baptist Church SGV, La Puente - Arlene Yee, LCSW

Welcome to New AACCS Clinical Staff

June Sano, LMFT, Clinical Director

AACCS is pleased to introduce three new MFT intern clinical staff members, Katina Laib, Eun-Hyey Lok and George Takeda. All three graduated from Fuller Seminary with a Master's in Marriage and Family Counseling. They all interned at Lake Avenue Church for their clinical experience hours, while in their Master's program. They worked with individuals, children through adults, couples and families. They are certified in the Prepare and Enrich Program, which is used with dating couples, premarital and married couples. They have all been involved with overseas missions work. Katina is available at our Cerritos location, and is limited Cantonese and Mandarin speaking. George is available at our Cerritos and Alhambra location and is limited Japanese speaking. Eun-Hyey is at our Alhambra and Torrance location and is Korean speaking. We are blessed to have them on our clinical staff.

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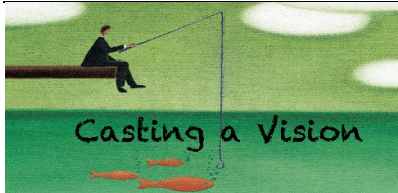
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Coming Soon: The 10th Annual Afternoon of Kindness



AACCS will be celebrating its 10th Annual Afternoon of Kindness Luncheon on Sunday, April 27th at Almanson Court in Alhambra from 12:30 to 3:30pm. When we originally launched this event, we never imagined it would continue with such enthusiasm from our many friends who have faithfully joined us each year. The luncheon has become a special time of reunion, blessed fellowship, and generous giving.

This year's theme is "Casting a Vision." Will Tseng will be sharing his experience with us a co-founder and visionary of *INHERITANCE Magazine*. Now in its fifth year, the mission of *INHERITANCE Magazine* is to network Asian American Christians across North America and beyond, to help develop their faith and identity, and to mobilize them for action in their churches and communities in obedience to God and His Word. The magazine achieves all of this through featuring articles, both in print and online, about faith, life, culture, and responsive action. Will and his editorial team give each issue a bold theme, substantive articles, and attention grabbing graphics with original art that powerfully illustrate the stories they feature.

Please join us to hear the story behind *INHERITANCE Magazine* - how the founders were called to action by their faith and love for their generation and community, how they crafted and casted their vision, and how they have impacted thousands around the globe in a very short period of time.

At the luncheon, we will also be honoring, for the fourth year, the winners of the Ryo and Jean Komae Scholarship Fund which supports the graduate education of Christians of Asian American decent or who have an interest in serving the Asian American community in the mental health field. We continue to appreciate the generosity of the Komae family for their investment in developing vital human resources for the Asian American Christian community.

All proceeds from this event will go to subsidize the discounted fee program of AACCS. For additional information, or if you would like to help underwrite this event as a sponsor, please contact Eleanor Huang at ehuang@aaccs.org. We look forward to sharing an "afternoon of kindness" with you.