

young or inexperienced. Think about the things that you can do today for the church. More importantly, think about how to motivate yourself so that you don't have to wait for someone else to invite you to get involved. That is the true spirit of serving God.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



In order to be able to carry out the mission of the church, there are many things we need to do to prepare ourselves. It is not just simply jumping in and serving God whenever or wherever. Since it is our responsibility, we need to take our role seriously. We need to be diligent in Bible reading, church attendance and unceasing prayer. We need to seek after the filling of the Holy Spirit, and grow in spiritual knowledge and power so that we have spiritual maturity. That way, we can be the salt and the light of the world and be equipped to preach the gospel to fulfill God's plan of salvation.

Lesson 1 1

The History of the True Jesus Church (USA)

Listed Scriptures

not applicable to this lesson

Lesson Aim

- 1) To learn about the organization of the True Jesus Church in the United States as well as the histories of the local churches
- 2) To recognize the holy work we can be a part of locally and globally to help spread God's message of salvation

Memory Verse

"...the whole building, being joined together, grows into the holy temple in the Lord." (Eph 2:21)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Psalms 51-55

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The True Jesus Church in the United States was first established in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1930. A doctor named Ai-Chen Li of Honolulu believed and received baptism in the True Jesus Church while working in Shanghai, China. After her baptism, sister Li mailed a copy of the "Holy Spirit Times" back to her hometown in Hawaii. The publication caused some of this sister's friends and relatives to become interested in the Holy Spirit and the truth. As a result, one of her friends, Mrs. Ho, also traveled to Shanghai by boat to receive baptism. After this, sister Li realized the importance of saving souls. She quit her medical practice and returned to Honolulu in May of 1930. Her desire to preach the gospel led many to come and believe and the True Jesus Church was thus established in Hawaii. However, spiritual activities in the continental United States remained dormant until Dn. John Wu and Dns. Anna Goo Kim Yue attended the First World Delegates Conference in Taiwan in 1967. Inspired by the conference, Dn. Wu and Dns. Anna gathered

together church members when they returned to the United States. As a result, family services were held for the first time in both the east and west coasts, where the majority of the members had immigrated.

There is additional information on the history of the True Jesus Church in the west, including other countries and continents, in the next J2 textbook (Year 2 Book 2).

W A R M U P



What do you think is the most interesting thing you have learned in history class? (students respond)

History always seems more interesting when it is about famous people and far away places. But have you thought about the fact that every moment we are alive, we are actually writing our own history? Although our stories may not be printed and published in textbooks worldwide, our legacy of faith should be an important message to everyone, including our next generation. That is why it is vital that we learn about the history of our church. Not only can we strengthen our faith to know about the members of the past, but we can also be inspired to continue the work of Christ. We are all members of one household and each of us counts as we write this piece of history.

B I B L E S T U D Y



The History of the True Jesus Church

When members talk about the history of the True Jesus Church, it usually covers the period from 1917, when the church first emerged, to the late 1940s, when the church spread throughout Asia and was brought to other continents. Even church documents that cover the expansion of the church in other regions are generalized to continental history. Today's focus is on the history of the True Jesus Church in the United States. More specifically, it will cover the local churches and how they began. The purpose is so that the church becomes more "real" to the students, many of whom grew up in the west and sometimes find it difficult to relate to the early period of history.



A. Church Organization

There were many members of the True Jesus Church who lived in the United States, long before any churches were established. Many were university students studying in a foreign land. However, because they were spread throughout the continent and there were no real leaders at the time, spiritual activities remained dormant. But around the year 1967, Dn. John Wu and Dns. Anna Goo Kim Yue were inspired to gather members and hold family services (see Bible Background) in the east and west coasts, respectively. Invitations were extended to the members whom they knew resided in nearby areas, especially when special spiritual events were held. The response was overwhelming. Although many members had to fly or drive long hours to specified meetings places, they were determined because they longed to join together with other brethren. Their thirst for the truth and enthusiasm to worship God and serve Him in this new land made them desire even more to attend these meetings. From the mid-70s and on, there was an influx of immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong to southern California and New York, thus boosting the membership in these two areas.

In order to expand the holy work, the members in the United States realized they needed to be organized. After the El Monte church was established, the first National Conference of the True Jesus Churches (NCC) was held from July 24-26, 1976. Delegates including Hoon Tom (Hawaii), and John Lin, Margaret Kini, Paul Wong, Meishi Tsai, James Wu (west coast), and John Wu, Daniel Kau, Wen-Kuang Lo (east coast) gathered together. Dn. Tsung-Tao Lin of the International Assembly, Taiwan, who was visiting the U.S., acted as advisor. The result of the conference brought about the birth of the Evangelical Coordination Council (ECC) as the executive body of the NCC to execute resolutions passed in the NCC. John Lin was elected as the Chairman and Meishi Tsai was the Vice-Chairman.

After learning about the establishment of this new executive body, members were excited about the holy work in the United States. They were generous with their offerings and funds were subsequently raised to recruit full-time ministers and to help run the administration.

In 1978, brother John Lo dedicated himself to the Lord as a full-time minister. The following year, brother Shyh-Kuang Yang also dedicated himself. During the 9th NCC, a special motion was initiated to officially invited Derren Liang (of the Taiwan General Assembly) to study in the U.S. and become a full-time minister of the ECC. The delegates if the 9th NCC also granted that a full-time Korean minis-

ter be recruited for the Korean-speaking community. The following year, Elder Eun Jin Jung arrived from Korea and became permanently stationed in the United States.

Under the International Assembly by-laws, a country which has five or more churches should form a General Assembly (GA). When the ECC was first established, there were four churches with a membership of about 200. By the year 1981, there were two additional churches. A proposal was initiated at the 9th NCC to convert the organizational name to the General Assembly of the United States of America (USGA). It was not passed. However, this proposal was revived at the 10th NCC and made effective on January 1, 1986. By 1993, the number of churches in the U.S. had risen to eleven, with four houses of prayers and a membership of about 1700.

As we study the history of the True Jesus Church in the United States, we find that everyone worked with one mind, one heart and one love for Jesus Christ. Although there was a lot of organizational work done in the beginning, all the members did everything without complaint. And once the organization was established, the emphasis of the holy work of the USGA turned to training workers and spreading the truth. Even then, everyone worked together for the good of the gospel of salvation. We know that the U.S. is a vast piece of land. We also know that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Although the USGA has its function, it is also our job to preach the gospel to all nations. Let us courageously take up the cross and work for our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Local Churches

Below is a list of the local churches and prayer houses in the United States. There is a brief history included for each one. If your local church or prayer house is not included in this lesson because it is newly established, please feel free to make it a part of the class.

Churches

Honolulu
Pacifica
Elizabeth
Baldwin Park
El Monte
Garden Grove
Houston
Queens
San Jose

Phoenix
Dallas
Irvine
Philadelphia
Chicago
Tampa
Canoga Park
Cerritos
Hillsborough

Prayer Houses

Maui
Boston
Sacramento
East Bay

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS (HONOLULU CHURCH AND MAUI PRAYER HOUSE)

The True Jesus Church in Honolulu, Hawaii was established in the year 1930. After receiving baptism in the True Jesus Church in Shanghai, China, Deaconess Ai-Chen Li mailed a copy of the "Holy Spirit Times" back to her hometown, Honolulu, where her friends and relatives were residing. Some of them became interested in the truth. In particular, a Mrs. Ho went to Shanghai to receive baptism. Realizing the importance of saving souls, Deaconess Li quit her medical practice and returned to Honolulu in May 1930 to preach the gospel. Many people believed and accepted the faith. Later, the headquarters in mainland China sent Elder Thomas Kuo to Honolulu to continue the missionary work.

In 1949 Dns. Anna Goo Kim Yue visited her birthplace, Honolulu, and found that the church had changed the mode of baptism. Instead of administering baptism in living water, Dn. Awanas used a cistern. Unable to correct the error, Dns. Anna Yue, with the dedicated members of the True Jesus Church left the apostate group and reorganized themselves.

However, the new group was not able to assume the name "True Jesus Church" until many years later. Once Dn. Awana agreed that the two groups had no connection with each other, the brethren from Honolulu were able to register with the state government as TRUE JESUS CHURCH (as opposed to the other group led by Dn. Awanas, who called themselves the True Jesus Mission of the Latter Rain). In 1974 a new chapel was purchased in Honolulu. In 1978 a prayer house was established on Maui Island. Around 1989 Kauai Island also started to have family services.

PACIFICA CHURCH

The True Jesus Church in Pacifica was the first church established in the continental USA. There were only a few families and some students at that time. The members met every Sabbath. Some had to travel for over two hours to attend service and members met at various locations. In spite of the difficulty, the congregation met weekly in joy. Thank God, as the membership gradually grew, they saw the need to have a permanent place of worship. After having moved to several locations, a chapel was finally purchased in the year 1984. The asking price of the building was \$329,000. But God made it possible for the members to purchase it within budget by paying only US \$200,000. The purchase was indeed a miracle.

SAN JOSE CHURCH

For many years, San Jose had family service on Friday evenings by rotation. As membership grew, and in order to cut down travel time to Pacifica for service every Sabbath, the members rented a room in the YMCA in Cupertino to hold Sabbath worship twice a month. Meanwhile, the members gave generously toward the building fund. After some enthusiastic search, a chapel was found in the heart of San Jose downtown near Japan Town. At that time the church still fell short of \$200,000. After the contract of sale had been signed, offerings kept flowing in, so much so that the church had enough money left over to renovate the chapel. The new chapel was dedicated to God on March 7, 1992.

ELIZABETH CHURCH

In 1967, under the guidance of the Lord Jesus, Deacon John Wu and three other families began holding family service in his residence in New York City, New York. In that same year five people were baptized. On February 10, 1969 the service location moved to Dn. Wu's new residence in Teaneck, New Jersey. In March of 1975, the church was registered with the government using his residence as the church address. Due to the increase in membership, a place was rented in a Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth for Sabbath worship. Meanwhile family services were held in Princeton, Seashore, New York City and Philadelphia. With God's blessings a chapel was purchased and dedicated to God on August 11, 1978 and the following people were ordained: Deacon John Wu was ordained as Elder, Chin-Shan Kau as Deacon Daniel Kau, Kim-Fei Loh as Deacon Luke Loh and Feng-O Yao as Deaconess Grace Yao.

QUEENS CHURCH

In 1980 about five members gathered together in Queens, New York, every Wednesday evening to hold family service. In 1983 a few members moved from other states to New York City. They started to pray to God, hoping He would estab-

lish a church in the big city. By the grace of God, that summer, five newly baptized members joined the family service. In 1984 seven more members were added to the flock. Together with the members who had immigrated from Taiwan, the total membership had reached thirty. God moved one brother to offer his new house to hold Sabbath services twice a month. In 1985, the membership grew to forty-five, therefore increasing the need to rent a larger meeting place. In March of the same year, the family service in New York City officially became a House of Prayer. In 1986 the membership increased to sixty. God provided a wonderful church with a capacity to accommodate 150 members. There are three rooms upstairs, a kitchen, a few classrooms and a backyard.

PHILADELPHIA CHURCH

In 1975, three families began to hold services by rotation in Philadelphia. In 1982, assisted by the members of Elizabeth Church, the members in Philadelphia rented a chapel to hold Sabbath worship twice a month. At this juncture, a House of Prayer was established under the auspices of Elizabeth Church. Later, God moved several overseas students from Taiwan to actively participate in the holy work. From that point on Philadelphia had regular Sabbath service. In 1990, the Philadelphia House of Prayer became a member of the General Assembly.

In 1991, the members found a chapel priced at \$200,000. But the notion to purchase this chapel was dropped because of the lack of funds. The members prayed even more fervently than before for this matter. Just half a year later, the gracious Lord prepared an ideal chapel for them. This chapel was priced at \$500,000 in the beginning. The price exceeded the members' financial capability. However, through incessant prayers, fasting and generous contributions, the chapel was finally purchased at the price of \$400,000. In 1993 the House of Prayer was converted to a Church. The chapel was dedicated to God on August 29, 1993.

EL MONTE CHURCH

Family services first began in 1968 at the homes of Bro. Tsu-Chou Lo and Bro. James Wu. By 1971 the number of families increased to six, and they met more permanently at Dn. Paul Wong's home in Santa Monica on the Sabbath. Dn. Meishi Tsai and his family were added to the southern California area in 1972. After Dn. Wong moved away, the Sabbath services were held at various homes, lasting from 1973 until 1975.

In the fall of 1975, a decision was made to purchase a chapel in order to have a permanent location to hold worship service and invite truthseekers. A church building was for sale at El Monte. The asking price was \$69,000. The price was right

and every one felt it was prepared by the Lord. Thank God, the seller voluntarily reduced the price to \$66,000 when the seller knew the buyer was a church organization. It was indeed a pleasant surprise. The chapel was put into use in April 1976. Although El Monte Church started with only a little more than 20 members, through the blessings of the Lord Jesus, the membership grew to over 100 in 1980. Since the chapel was too small to accommodate so many members, a plan to purchase another church building was initiated. In 1982, with the wonderful blessings from our Lord, a second chapel was purchased in Garden Grove. By 1985 the membership grew to 131 in the El Monte area and 186 in the Garden Grove area.

The members of El Monte Church decided to relocate to Baldwin Park in 1997. With God's provision the Koreans members were able to purchase the El Monte chapel. Joyfully, El Monte Church dedicated the building for the Korean members on November 15, 1997. Currently, there are about sixty registered members belonging to El Monte Church. About thirty members regularly attend Sabbath morning services. There are eleven RE students that make up an elementary one class and a combined J1/J2 class. Recently, a senior/social youth class composed of three to five members, has begun.

GARDEN GROVE CHURCH

The membership of El Monte Church increased steadily. By 1981, the members realized it was time to look into purchasing another church building. After a first unsuccessful attempt to purchase a building, the present church property, with a seating capacity of 200, was found by the real estate agent. The asking price was \$530,500. After negotiations, the price was brought down to \$440,000 as a cash deal. The members contributed what they could and the El Monte Church also gave their overwhelming financial support to the project. Garden Grove Church was dedicated to the Lord on August 28, 1982.

HOUSTON CHURCH

In 1979, a sister residing in Jacksonville invited Dn. Paul Wong to visit Texas. That visit resulted in the baptism of a twelve-year-old sister in Christ. The following year two preachers visited Houston and established family service. During that occasion, two people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and four received water baptism. It was obvious that the Holy Spirit began to work in the state of Texas. In February of 1981, two other people accepted water baptism in Jacksonville. The following month a brother and a sister moved from Jacksonville to Houston; and one brother from Taiwan also settled in Houston. From then on, Friday night service and regular Sabbath worship began.

In June of 1981 two more sisters were baptized and added to the flock. The first Spiritual Convocation was held in July 1981. The members felt the need to have a permanent place to hold worship services. Thus the search for a site to build a chapel began. In March 1982 two more members were added to the group. The membership had now increased to thirty.

In October 1982 the church was chartered with the state of Texas. In May 1983 the members purchased a piece of land about 3/4 of an acre at Thomas Road. A chapel was erected on site and dedicated to God in November.

DALLAS CHURCH

In 1984, Brother Ho-Jung Lee and his family moved from Houston to Dallas, and met Brother Joseph Then. They started holding family service at the apartment of Bro. Lee. By May 1985, the Dallas Prayer House was established. More students and working members continued to move into the area. In 1987, there was an obvious increase in the number of brothers and sisters who moved into this area from California, Houston, and elsewhere. The meetings were held at different member's houses. The members started seeing the need for a permanent meeting place.

The Dallas Prayer House changed its status to the True Jesus Church in Dallas in February 1992. The membership was about 50 by this time. Pledges were made to raise funds for the church building project by the church members. In July 1992, Dallas Church bought 3 lots of vacant land for the church site, and started the replotting application process for the land. In November 1993, Dallas Church also bought the adjacent lot of land. The church property now became approximately one acre.

PHOENIX CHURCH

In June 1981, brother Edward Chu and his wife, sister Wu, were the first to move to Phoenix. To their knowledge at that time, there were no other believers in the area. To keep their growth in faith, they drove to El Monte church in California to join Spiritual Convocations whenever they took place. After about 2 years, they were informed that there were other believers in the Phoenix area. They were sisters Chou Mei-Mang and Chou Mei-Hung. Upon learning this great news, brother Chu contacted both of them and started family service in 1983. The Chou sisters' children also attended family services. In the same year, brother Rey Chu came to Phoenix to study. Some time between year 1983 and 1985, brother Chi-Hsin Chen and his wife moved to Phoenix and joined the family service. During this time, they continued to drive to California to attend Spiritual Convocations. They started to attend the ones in Garden Grove Church after it was established instead of the

ones in El Monte.

1985 was a critical year for the church's development. Most of the families moved away due to job relocation. Brother Chu moved to New Jersey. Brother Chen moved to Texas. The Chou sisters both moved to California. Brother Rey Chu and his wife held family service in their place. At that time, several truthseekers started regularly attending church family services on Saturday morning.

In December 1985, truthseekers J.J. Liu, his wife L.C. Lin, brother Rey Chu and his wife went to Garden Grove Church to attend Winter Spiritual Evangelical Service. Both J.J. Liu and his wife received the Holy Spirit and were baptized. In 1986, truthseeker Mike Ma started to attend Saturday service. In May 1987, Mr. Ma and his wife went to Garden Grove to be baptized. In the fall of 1987, brother Tim Lin, his wife and daughter moved to Scottsdale. Around that time, brother Ma and his wife moved to Illinois. In the summer of 1988, Ding-Chou Lin along with his wife and daughter started to attend church service. In the winter of 1988, they were baptized. In 1989, brother Tim Lin's parents moved to Scottsdale to live with them. This made a total of 15 church members. Hence NCC passed the proposal to establish the Phoenix House of Prayer in 1989. In 1990, the brothers and sisters in Taiwan, with their great love and generosity, helped the members purchase the Phoenix chapel at 2064 N. Dobson, Chandler, AZ.

In February 1990, church services were officially conducted in the new chapel. Phoenix Church was dedicated in May of 1990. Approximately 60 church members from California came to Phoenix to attend the service. At the same time, four members of S.L. Leow's family were baptized. The number of church members grew to about 30 in 1993. During those years, Phoenix Church has hosted national church events such as RE teachers' training seminar. In 1997, Deacon Luke Loh and his wife Reahla moved to Arizona. He was the first ordained holy worker who came to Phoenix Church. His joining of the church aided the development of holy work greatly. In 1998, Pastor Meishi Tsai of the International Assembly and his wife also moved to Phoenix. He held several Bible study seminars and thus helped increase the members' knowledge of the Bible. In 2001, membership grew to over 60. The church congregation decided it was time to build additional facilities to accommodate the religious education and Bible study classes. This expansion is currently the focus of the church.

IRVINE CHURCH

In 1980 about three church families began to have family service in the Irvine area. However, between 1980 and 1982, members still traveled to El Monte

Church for Sabbath service. In 1982 Garden Grove church was established and members went to Garden Grove for Sabbath service instead. In 1990 the Irvine Prayer House was established and the members used a community center as the meeting venue. In 1992 by the grace of the Lord, brother Frank Huang offered to have his office space converted so it could be used for service and RE classes. From 1992 to 1998, Irvine Prayer House had Sabbath service at that place. The membership was about 60 in 1997.

In November 1996, the construction of Irvine Church began. Thank God, in May 1998, the Irvine Church building was dedicated to the Lord. The total construction cost including the land was about \$2.3 million. Although there were not many members, God provided everything because the church construction was paid in full without any loan from other sources. Thanks to the grace of the Lord, after the church was dedicated, the membership has since increased to more than 140 members.

CHICAGO CHURCH

The True Jesus Church in the greater Chicago area was formed in 1979. The church is located in Bensenville. The church began when the late Deaconess Anna Yu relocated from the San Francisco Bay area to Chicago to join her children, Samuel Yu and Grace Ng (and their families) in 1979. There were some seven members at the time. Deaconess Yu, already in her 80s, delivered the sermons at her apartment on the Sabbath every week. The worship services were held at other members' places after Deaconess Yu moved out of the state. The chapel in Bensenville was purchased and dedicated to the Lord in April 2000.

TAMPA CHURCH

1982 – 1983: Sis. Mei Solgot encouraged her family to gather together each Sabbath morning to read the Bible, listen to audio sermon tapes & to pray together. There were no other TJC members residing in Tampa. At that time her husband, Richard, was not a member of the TJC. Only three of her children had been baptized into the Lord (Steven, Angel & Randy).

January 1984: After the Sabbath morning family service Sis. Mei again encouraged her husband to kneel together in prayer. During the first prayer her husband saw a vision. They prayed again and he saw another vision. It was decided that they would travel to Pacifica the following July for the Spiritual Convocation.

July 1984: The Solgots traveled to Pacifica and Richard and youngest son Sean were baptized into the Lord.

1984 – 1989: The Solgots continued to keep the Sabbath together. They began to invite friends to study with them. Angel and Steven invited a classmate, Van Merritt, to join them each Sabbath. Van's mother is Vietnamese (Buddhist) and his father was American (non-believer). Van attended every Sabbath and listened intently to the sermons. In 1988 the Solgots wrote to Dn. John Lin to request a pastoral visit. Dn. Lin arranged for Pr. John Lo to make his first of many visits to Tampa. On the first evening of the first evangelical service held in the Solgots home there were over 30 truth seekers in attendance! Praise God, that from that service a few more began to join the Solgots on Sabbath morning.

In July of 1989 the Solgots drove to Garden Grove to attend the Spiritual Convocation. During that visit Richard and Mei spoke with Elder John Yang seeking advice on whether Richard should accept a job offer in Los Angeles or stay in Tampa to continue with the sacred work. Elder Yang encouraged the Solgots to stay in Tampa and to put their faith & trust in God that He would guide and provide for them. He encouraged them to remain strong in the pioneering work in Tampa. The Solgots decided to take Elder Yang's advice and remained in Tampa.

1989 – 1992: In 1989 Bro. Solgot retired from the USAF. During this time the Solgots moved out of military housing and purchased a small home. During the first Sabbath prayer service held in their new home, Bro. Merritt saw a vision of blood being poured out and covering the entire Solgot home. Another sister saw a vision of two very large angels coming through the corners of the house and standing next to Bro. Richard while he led the service.

1993: Since membership had continued to increase from a family of six to 25 in just 4 years time the Solgot's home was beginning to become too small to hold worship services. Bro. Alex Kuo offered the use of office space on the second floor of a building he owned. Services were held there for 1 year.

1994 – 1997: The Solgots opened a computer wholesale business and had their office space reconfigured to accommodate holding services in their facility. It was larger and would accommodate more people. During those years the membership grew to approx. 40. In 1997 efforts began to find a permanent church location.

1997 – present: The Church Building Committee located a church for sale. The asking price was \$140,000. Thanks to the grace of God and His arrangement, the property was purchased for a total of \$99,000. After much renovation (approx \$100k), the church is quite charming and very suitable for their needs.

Unfortunately, from 1997 – 2000 the Tampa Church experienced a loss of 29 members due to relocations for jobs, school and marriage. Although they were greatly affected by the loss, they continue to persevere in our faith, preaching the gospel and in pastoring His sheep. The current active membership is now at 20 members (active = minimum of once per month) and 6 active truth seekers. May the Lord continue to guide the truthseekers into all truth and understanding of the right way of salvation.

BALDWIN PARK CHURCH

When El Monte Church was established in 1976, there were only 20 members. Under the guidance of God, the church grew and in 1980, there were well over 100 believers. Between 1985 and 1996, the number again increased from 131 members to 180. The church could no longer accommodate so many people. After a congregational meeting, the search began for a new church building.

When the present Baldwin Park church was found, some members thought that the area was not the best locale. The believers continued to search but after a few months, no other building matched that of Baldwin Park church. It could accommodate 350 people and had 8 classrooms. By the miraculous guidance of God, the original asking price of \$950,000 was reduced to \$700,000. After another congregational meeting, the church was purchased successfully. Baldwin Park church was dedicated to God on April 4, 1998. At present, there are 230 members.

Like most churches, it is divided into several regions. The west region is quite a distance from the church building and because there are usually truth seekers from that area, a prayer house was established there in the year 2000. There were 35 members and 10 regular truth seekers. But due to the increasing numbers, Canoga Park church was established there in 2003.

CERRITOS CHURCH

Because of the increasing number of members in Garden Grove church, Pastor Derren Liang proposed the possibility of adding a prayer house. But many years of discussion went by and no prayer house was established.

The year before the proposal for a prayer house was passed, two brothers (brother Lee and brother Wu, who are now members of the Cerritos church) who were seriously ill, were miraculously healed by the grace of God. These miracles demonstrated the power of God and greatly encouraged the faith of the believers.

In September 2001, Garden Grove church passed the proposal for a prayer house to be established in Cerritos during the congregational meeting. Thanks to the guidance of God, in November of the same year, Cerritos prayer house was able to rent the Lakewood chapel to hold services once a week during Sabbath. But because the chapel was rented and the use of space was limited, the holy work in the area was somewhat affected. Therefore, the members began to pray for the purchase of a chapel.

Thanks to the grace of God, in March of 2003, Cerritos prayer house became Cerritos church. Due to the guidance of God and the faith of the members, Cerritos church was able to purchase the rented Lakewood property in October of the same year. Now the name of God could be praised without any hindrance in the Cerritos area!

After the prayer house and subsequent church were established in the Cerritos area, members who had not come to service regularly were provided with a place closer to home. They were contacted via phone calls and visitations. Church publications were also mailed to them. Thanks to God and the prayers of all the believers, the membership has continued to grow. May God bless His sheep so that we may do God's work and many more people can come into the fold.

HILLSBOROUGH CHURCH

The Hillsborough Church began as a branching project of the Elizabeth Church in 1999. After much consideration by the Elizabeth Church members, a 15-acre plot of land in central New Jersey was found and then purchased by the church in August 2002. Some church members began refurbishing the purchased land and house, while approval was obtained from Hillsborough township for the construction of a new chapel. Sabbath services began in the Hillsborough House of Prayer in October 2002. In November 2003, the prayer house officially became a church. A 11,000+ square foot chapel and facility is beginning construction in the spring of 2004, with an estimated completion in 2005. There are currently approximately 60 members who participate in services and activities.

CANOGA PARK CHURCH

In the year 1998, Bro. Lee Kuo Chung worked as a chef in Thousand Oaks, (which is about a 40 minute drive southwest of Northridge). Unable to attend the Sabbath services, a brother volunteered to pick up Bro. Lee each Tuesday to attend the family service down at Baldwin Park Church. This weekly drive of about 4 hours, in the heart of rush hour, continued for about half a year. Due to the long and tiresome drive, the Bible studies were relocated to Bro. Lee's place. During the first

meeting, only three people attended. But the Lord had promised that when two or three gather in His name, He will be in their midst. Later, upon discovering that Sis. Lee and her son Alex also lived in Thousand Oaks, the services were moved to Sis. Lee's house instead. This continued for another half year when eventually the services were moved to Northridge, allowing other brothers and sisters in the area to also participate. Thank the Lord, this marked the beginning of Tuesday evening family services.

As time progressed, brothers and sisters began to see the logic of gathering on Fridays for Sabbath service instead of battling the heavy traffic. Thus, each Friday, brothers and sisters gathered for a Hymnal/Testimony and Prayer session. The hymn singing, sharing of personal testimonies and 30-minute prayers formed the backbone of what was to be the Northridge House of Prayer. Gradually through God's guidance and blessings, the Lord added to their number as truthseekers and other believers moved to the area.

Gradually, Saturday Sabbath services were introduced. The frequency of Sabbath services increased from once a month to three times a month. In March 2000, the members rented the West Valley Unity Church for worship. As the numbers continued to grow, the members felt the need for a place of their own. While searching for God's will, members began to look around for other places to rent as well as chapels for sale. In February 2001 when still nothing came up, letters were sent to all the neighboring churches to inquire if any were selling privately. Out of the hundreds of letters that were mailed out, two replied positively, one of which was the West Valley Bible Chapel, the property we have today. Although the congregation had decided to make an offer to purchase the chapel, West Valley Bible Chapel later informed the members that due to some internal disagreements, they were not ready to sell.

In February 2002, exactly one year later, West Valley Bible Chapel, having sorted out its internal affairs, informed the members that the chapel was for sale. After a unanimous vote, the members decided to continue the purchasing of the chapel with an offer of \$500,000. At that time, there was only \$104,000 in the church construction fund. Despite this, God moved the brothers and sisters to have faith in His providence. Instead of taking out a bank loan, the members unanimously agreed to borrow \$80,000 from the GA Revolving Fund, and to rely on donations to make up the outstanding \$316,000. From the start, the hand of the Lord led the members through the entire transaction. In the 90 days of escrow, the members of Canoga Park witnessed the reality of the words that God had said to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zech 4:6).

With faith, the members saw how God stirred the hearts of the brothers and sisters from many different churches to contribute generously to this holy work via donations, prayers and encouragement. With all this support, not only were the members able to raise \$500,000 for the chapel, there was almost \$50,000 to spare for renovations. The spirit of offering of the brothers and sisters was heart-warming and encouraging. One elderly sister when thanked for her contributions said, "Don't thank me, this is the Father's money, and should be spent on Him." Youths who were saving up for their own personal plans and dreams postponed them and instead offered their savings to God. Youths of another church held garage sales and washed cars in the heat of the day, with all the proceeds given to the purchase of the chapel. Through the bountiful grace of the Lord and the love of the brothers and sisters, the purchase of the chapel was smoothly completed on June 7, 2002.

BOSTON PRAYER HOUSE

In 1979, the first Boston family service was held, consisting of two families, Br. Hsu's and Sis. Chen's (about eight members in total), and two visiting pastors. A year later, Br. Chu and his family moved to the Springfield area. The family services started on a regular basis, once every two months, since families lived 1 to 2 hours away from each other. In 1983, Br. Percy Tsai came to study theology at Harvard and a few other students came to study at universities in Boston as well. Family services started to meet once every month in 1985, and a pastor or deacon from the eastern region was assigned to lead services every three months. Br. Chu and his family moved close to the Boston area in 1990, and family services were then held every two weeks. In the following years, the number of Boston members slowly began to increase as families grew larger and as more college students arrived. By 1995, the youth group, made up of students from neighboring universities, began weekly Friday night Bible studies and weekly Sabbath meetings. The next year, all members started to meet at alternating houses once a week to keep the Sabbath.

Spiritual Convocations were held every spring and fall since 1996 with the help from visiting pastors and deacons. In 1998 the number of members became too large for members' homes and the number of truthseekers also began to increase. Consequently, the decision was made to rent out the basement of St. Mary's Church in Newton in December 1998 in order to accommodate all the members, and also in order to have access to classrooms for religious education. In April 1999, four truthseekers were baptized including Br. Vuthy Nol-Mantia and his wife. In June 1999, General Assembly of USA approved the Boston area family service to form the TJC Boston Prayer House. In October 2001, members voted to purchase a chapel for worship purposes. In May 2002, Boston Prayer House was officially reg-

istered as a non-profit organization with the State of Massachusetts. Currently, there are about 20 plus members regularly attending services each week, and about five truthseekers attending Bible studies and Sabbath services. Since January 2002, Pastor C.H. Chou has been assigned to be the resident pastor for Boston Prayer House and is making monthly visitations to help out the holy work in the area.

SACRAMENTO PRAYER HOUSE

Sacramento is located close to UC Davis where True Jesus Church members had come to study, graduated and left; however, there were some members and families that moved in to the area and decided to start the weekly Wednesday Bible Study service. Then the monthly Sabbath service was introduced. As members in the area increased, the weekly Friday night service was also added, and Sabbath service was increased to bi-monthly.

By the end of July 2002, the brethren in the Sacramento area decided to form a house of prayer, and at the same time also increase the frequency of Sabbath service to thrice a month. During this time, the Northern district of California has been sending people to assist the sermon-speaking work every month. Then Sabbath service was increased again to every week, except on the first Saturday of the month.

As the number of sermon-speakers increased because more members moved into the Sacramento area, on January 10, 2004, the Sacramento Prayer House finally decided to have Sabbath service every week. Not including visitors and truth-seekers, the Sacramento House of Prayer has 23 active members.

EAST BAY PRAYER HOUSE

The East Bay members are composed of members from San Jose Church and Pacifica Church who are living in the East Bay area. Both San Jose Church and Pacifica Church gave their support to the East Bay brothers and sisters in Christ to branch out.

June 15, 2002 was the first meeting of the East Bay members. At the initial stage, the members met once a month; gradually the meetings increased to twice a month; finally, on August 23, 2003 the members decided to have worship every Sabbath in East Bay and have been doing it since. By the grace of God, on June 14, 2003 the congregation passed a resolution to establish a house of prayer in East Bay. Besides regular Sabbath meetings, East Bay members also hold Bible studies on Tuesday evenings. The brothers and sisters in East Bay have a sense of mission that God will utilize them to preach the gospel of salvation to call back the lost sheep to His fold.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

Share two things you learned about the history of the True Jesus Church in the United States that you did not know about before.

2

Share one thing about your local church development that you learned today.

3

What is one specific thing you can do today to help your local church grow: a. spiritually and b. physically?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



How Much Do You Know?

The summaries of the churches in the United States in the previous section have been brief and by most accounts, incomplete.

In addition, churches in other countries, including Canada and the UK were not included due to space limitations. It would be a great opportunity for the students to learn more about how their local church came to be. Invite a brother or sister or board member who was a part of the entire process to share his or her testimony or experience. If that is not possible, obtain the history through talking with members so that there is a more complete and well-rounded picture. As an activity, ask the students to create a poster of the important facts concerning their local church and have them display it so that other members can be educated about the wonderful work of God in providing for all our needs.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



The history of the True Jesus Church, no matter on which country or continent, teaches us one very important lesson; that all local churches are built up because of individual fervent believers. And as a result, the gospel of truth is spread to many more places. Each of us should continue the work that has been entrusted to us because every word and action really does count.