

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewees: Viola Chan, Pastor Daniel Ho
Interviewers: Niky Bao, Priscilla Li
Date/ Time of Interview: February 10, 2018
Transcribed by: Niky Bao, Priscilla Li
Audio Track Time: 1:50:52

Background:

To investigate the history of Chinese Baptist Church, we sought to interview Viola Chan, known to have knowledge of CBC's early years, and Pastor Daniel Ho, the senior pastor at CBC. They provided historical background to the church, and insights into the present state of CBC and hopes for its future.

Setting:

The interview was conducted at Chinese Baptist Church. Viola Chan was interviewed first, and then Pastor Daniel Ho joined for the second half of the interview with Viola Chan.

Key:

VC: Viola Chan
DH: Pastor Daniel Ho
NB: Niky Bao
PL: Priscilla Li

Interview transcript:

PL: Today is February 10th, 2018. We're here at Chinese Baptist Church to interview Ms. Viola Chan, um about the Chinese Baptist Church. My name is Priscilla Li.

NB: I'm Niky Bao.

PL: Okay, so to get started, uh what year was the Chinese Baptist Church established?

VC: It was established October 1953.

PL: Um was it always, has it always been called Chinese Baptist Church?

VC: No, it was a mission uh Chinese Baptist Mission.

PL: Um it was a mission of which church?

VC: First Baptist-

PL: Okay.

VC: Church of Houston. They called themselves Houston's First Baptist, at that time it was First Baptist.

PL: Um and where was it?

VC: 1020 Lamar Street. Houston, Texas. Downtown.

PL: Um and when did it like become a separate church?

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VC: Okay, we became - it started as a mission, actually the actual date is April 28th, 1940. I'm sorry, that was when they met to form the church, April 28th, 1940. And the first Sunday School was May 5th, the following week, 1940.

PL: And that was First Baptist?

VC: First Baptist.

PL: Okay...um. So I guess, what made them - like what prompted them to start a Chinese mission?

VC: Well in 1937, war broke out in China. They were invaded by the Japanese. And a lot of the missionaries came back. Um some of them retired and some of them went onto other areas but uh the ones that came back, had a burden for the Chinese so they wanted to start something in Houston. And uh they talked to some of the leaders and so they met together and uh that's how the Sunday School was formed.

And then, prior to that meeting, an older couple wanted to help. And their names were Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Lloyd. And they brought the first two year old child to Sunday School she was the first one and she's still living today. And that was in 1938. And then uh different missionaries tried to help. Many of them retired and some of them were asked to come from some small town in Texas to Houston and they uh tried to uh help um by uh I don't know what they did, but there was one missionary. She was one of the ones that uh one of the members here was very impressed about because she rode the bus and at that time, the bus didn't have air conditioning. She went to visit some of these uh uh immigrant mothers - young mothers- and because she spoke Chinese, she was able to uh influence them and they were - some of them came to the Sunday School and that was started in 1948 because at that time, these missionaries couldn't stay that long, so um Dr. Joyce Fan was - she and her husband, both got their PhDs and were going to teach at University of Houston and she was uh trilingual I think or more than trilingual. She spoke three dialects in Chinese and English. And so she was the one that started uh the bilingual uh - what became bilingual because of her.

PL: And this is at First Baptist?

VC: And that was at First Baptist. [PL: Okay.] And when we uh became independent in October 1953, uh she continued until she uh retired from teaching bible class here after 57 years. [laughs] Her husband, Dr. Paul Fan, was also uh teaching the men's bible class and later he became uh deacon and trustee for our church. And then also First Baptist felt that we needed a mission pastor. And there was a Reverend, Travis W. Key and Key uh became our mission pastor in 1948. The same year as Dr. Fan...there were other workers that helped and there were a lot of English speaking Chinese - young people that came to the church also. And so when we became an independent church on October 4th, 1953, there were 150 charter members...

PL: Okay.

VC: Also um during that interim time, there were uh Sunday School teachers that were provided by First Baptist Church. And the first uh Sunday School superintendent was a lady named Mrs. Johnny Gor - she was formerly Mrs. Daisy Gee and she served as the Sunday School superintendent from June 1944 until October 1946. And then in 1946, her brother, George Gee, he was only 18, but he served as Sunday School superintendent, he was also American born and he had a lot of influence in the community so that the youth group grew quite a bit under his leadership because he formed a youth club and he also had a uh - he started a paper uh to give the uh young people uh some information as to newcomers and other

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information as to parties and different things outside the church... also this was the first Chinese church of any denomination.

PL: In Houston?

VC: In Houston.

PL: Okay.

VC: And then when we became independent church, we had Co-pastors - Reverend Travis Key and then Dr. Hong Sit, who was uh bilingual. And so uh Travis Kee served 3 months, and then he felt he needed to go to seminary. And then Dr. Hong Sit uh he served 3 years, 3 months as Co-pastor and 3 years as a regular Pastor. About 2 years, I'm sorry. And then we were without a pastor for 3 years until uh 1959, Reverend Lok-Tin Cheung - L-O-K dash T-I-N, Cheung, C-H-E-U-N-G. He came as our pastor and he stayed with us for 30 years. So that takes you up to well uh then when he retired in 1989, Dr. Victor Wong came in July of 1989. And he stayed for 5 years.

PL: Um so is there a limit- [VC: [laughs]]

VC: Okay, and then uh April of 1995, Reverend James Wong came to us and his position was Chinese Associate and then he became the acting Senior Pastor and then he became the Senior Pastor. And he served in a total of 18 years. So he left in July 2005. So then we were without a pastor for almost 7 years, and then Pastor Dan Ho came, and that was March 12th, 2012, to the present, and he'll be years. But he's still with us [laughs]. Um you ask how many members today? Uh we have 630. We have had over 1000 before, but since there's so many Chinese churches now, and you'll have to ask Dr. Ho, I mean Pastor Dan Ho uh how many churches uh there are Chinese churches because they have a Pastor's uh group - Chinese Pastors, and they meet periodically. When we became a uh church - when we became a mission, uh we moved to um 8 blocks from First Baptist, at 1823 Lamar. And uh First Baptist is the one that built the church for us and then when we moved, when we moved in 1975, they gave us the property.

PL: They just gave it to you, like-?

VC: Yes. Well they may have given it to us earlier, maybe 1970, because we purchased this property and uh it was with the stipulation that we stay uh with the Southern Baptist uh as uh as they are.

PL: Oh okay. So they gave you the land on Lamar?

VC: Lamar and Hamilton, yes.

PL: Okay, and then you - but the church bought like this land that it's on currently?

VC: Yes, yes.

PL: So why did they move from Lamar to here?

VC: Do you know the George R. Brown Convention Center?

PL: Yes, mm-hmm. Oh, yes.

VC: They wanted to buy our property and you know where the entrance is? That was our property.

PL: Oh okay. So you guys had moved because George R. Brown came?

VC: Right.

PL: Okay. Um I guess, a question I had was what exactly is like the difference between Co-Pastor, regular Pastor, and Senior Pastor?

VC: Oh okay. Uh Co-Pastor - the reason why we had the Co-Pastor was because Reverend Key only spoke English and uh Dr. Hong Sit, he spoke Chinese and so uh Reverend Key would minister to the mainly the English whereas Dr. Sit could mainly minister to the Chinese, but also to the English because he uh he got his degree as an engineer but he went to seminary and got his doctorate. And then, many of our members, they - at one time we did have over 1000 members, and they pledged to um to pay for the property here.

PL: Who's "they"?

VC: The members.

PL: Oh the members like of-

VC: The church.

PL: The church.

VC: Yes.

PL: They pledged so that you would have money to buy the property [VC: Right.] where it is right now?

VC: Right.

PL: And this is what year [VC: 19-] that you guys moved here?

VC: Oh. We bought the property in 1970, but we moved here in 1975.

NB: So how much in total did you spend for like buying this property?

VC: It was um - I don't remember. [laughs] [NB: It's okay.] But it was a steal at that time because it was 5 acres, and uh uh we bought it uh at a very nominal price. We couldn't afford it now because it's worth a lot.

NB: How was the pastor chosen?

VC: Oh uh initially Reverend Key was uh chosen by his church to be our mission pastor. And then Dr. Hong Sit was chosen by the members. We had a business meeting and voted on him to come.

PL: So what church did Dr. Key go to?

VC: Dr. Sit?

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PL: Oh you said - I forget, Pastor Key or Pastor Sit had been chosen by his church to be Pastor.

VC: Oh Reverend Key.

PL: Oh Reverend Key.

VC: Yes. His uh uh members of his church or his Pastor I don't know which. And for Dr. Sit, he was chosen by our members. But Reverend Key had a good influence over the English speaking youth. It's very very nice and his wife was very winning also.

NB: So like as time went on, how was the Pastors after them chosen? Like-

VC: Oh from the church members.

NB: Oh still?

VC: Yeah, we have a personnel committee and we - we choose uh we go - we let the personnel committee do all the work and they bring it up before the congregation. And usually we invite them to speak to us. So that people can uh hear their sermons and get to know them a little bit before they decide.

PL: So who usually makes up the personnel committee?

VC: Um actually uh we have to vote on them. [PL: Oh okay.] But they are usually volunteers. They're all volunteers. And then we uh we have more than a Senior Pastor, we have a larger staff because of all the activities that we have.

NB: So like for the years without a Pastor, so like what happens? Like did the personnel committee like not have a great candidate?

VC: Well no it was hard to find somebody to fit the - the things. When we were without a Pastor during the times that Reverend James Wong left in 2005, we had a Chinese Associate Pastor that stayed on until Pastor Dan came, and then he left. And now we have a Cantonese Pastor, and we have a - well we've had a Youth Director, and now beginning - I think last Sunday, we now have a Pastor for the young adults. And we're looking for a Mandarin Pastor because we have three services now. English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. And I know you're going to ask Pastor Dan when all of them started so I'll let him do that. And you were asking about job...uh running the church? It's all by donations.

NB: From the church members?

VC: Yes. And also from other uh it could be other people that are not uh members like uh when a person passed away, a lot of times if they're a member, then in lieu of flowers, they'd rather have donations given to the church. So that's how we generate money for our building fund. Because we still - we have a new chapel - I mean a new sanctuary, and that's not paid for yet.

PL: Oh okay. Around how much still needs - do you know how much still needs to be paid?

VC: I wish I knew [laughs].

PL: Oh okay.

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VC: But all the - most of the leaders in the church and uh our volunteers - our Sunday School teachers, our treasurer, our assistant treasurer, our financial secretary, but the paid workers are the secretary, and then we have several that are on paid staff - we have a Chinese secretary, and um someone that's oversees the um the activities. And then we have interns - youth, or young people who would like to go into Christian service. Then they can um if they're interested in the youth, then they are mentored by the Youth Pastor, and so forth. We are looking for a Mandarin pastor now.

PL: So in the beginning, um were the pastors - they spoke Mandarin or Cantonese?

VC: Cantonese.

PL: Cantonese. It was all Cantonese?

VC: Yes.

PL: Okay.

VC: Do you speak Cantonese?

PL: Um I can understand it.

VC: Oh good for you. I'm supposed to understand it. [laughs] I only know it - know it when they speak - when they talk about me [laughs].

PL: Oh [laughs].

NB: So you said like the church was based on one language and then it changed to bilingual because of one of its pastors. So like-

VC: No it was changed in 1948, because it was mainly English speaking because even though we had the missionaries, they would only come for a certain short period of time, because they were retired. Because the ones that were not retired, the mission board sent them to other places that were needed. So uh some of the retired missionaries did not live in Houston so First Baptists Church would ask them to come to help uh build up the ministry. And so that's how it was mainly English speaking because there were a lot of American born Chinese that came from different places like California and then from the south, Mississippi, Arkansas. And then I came from Chicago and so different people moving here for different reasons. And um mainly uh when I came in '52, many of them had mom and pop grocery stores. That's how they made the living because they didn't have the opportunity to go to school so they had to um uh support their families and for their children to have a good education. So a lot of those mom and pop stores, when I came, there were over a hundred, and now there's very, very, very few uh because all their children are grown, and they all became professionals or became financially independent. So that's the main, main reason why they um have their own mom and pop stores, and it was usually in the depressed areas, or where the um blacks or Hispanics were.

NB: So would you say the church played a role in like helping them like helping them like I guess, not raise their children [laughs] but like help them escape from the - their situation?

VC: Well uh the Pastor played a great role in helping them. Because, sometimes, like the immigration would call for a translator, and that was Pastor Lok-Tin Cheung. And sometimes, late at night, there would be an emergency among the families, somebody was in the hospital, somebody was killed,

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somebody was hurt, somebody was uh just needing a translator like one lady, her husband had a heart attack, and she had 3 young children and so the Pastor had to take her to social security, help her with a lot of the paperwork, because she couldn't speak English very well. And then, she finally moved to California because she had relatives there. But basically he had to do a lot of things, that a lot of people don't even realize. Because, early days, there weren't that many people to help translate, or have the time to do that and so I think the church was very helpful to a lot of them. And then we had people um that were retirees that would go and visit at the store that would invite them to come to the church, or invite the children and then there were members of the church who would go and pick up these children at the businesses to take them to uh Sunday School here and I remember one lady before the seat belt rules, she had 17 people in her car. 17 kids in her car and then uh uh another person, he had a truck and he would put um uh little stools or something for them to sit on in his [inaudible] truck and bring them to church. And also uh the kids were taken for uh fun activities too 'cause I remember this one Sunday School teacher he took his 10 year old uh kids to um go crabbing and fishing and then he would need somebody else to help drive because he had a full car. And somebody else would help him so they had a lot of planned activities too outside of Sunday School with their different teachers and also uh the youth had programs.

NB: So like when you first started, when it was mainly English, uh were like most of the members like English speaking - uh were they Chinese?

VC: Yeah. Chinese American born or they were students and um Dr. Joyce Fan started a bilingual Sunday School class to teach the immigrant mothers English - conversational English as well as citizenship and uh and she was well respected. She was teaching chemistry at University of Houston and later she was the founding professor over at Houston BAPTIST. And she did a lot of things early on, she did interpretation for Reverend Key while we were a mission, and when we were a church and got Dr. Sit and he did his own translation. But she still taught a bible class in Chinese and then taught them English and citizenship as I said. And then she was - she started a choir and she played the piano, she played the orga. She was a motivational speaker and one of her colleagues at University of Houston, when I went to visit her, this colleague said that Dr. Fan is a chemistry evangelist. 'Cause she really lectures like uh like a preacher. [laughs] Anyway, she was our uh building chairman, for 25 years. And she was our bible teacher for 57 years. And then George Gee he was uh at first he was a grocer man and then he later went into uh uh financial planning. And he was very influential not only in the church, but in the community, so um those, those laymen really helped the growth of the church while we were in the younger stage.

PL: So what exactly was the benefit of becoming a separate church from being a mission to the First Baptist Church?

VC: Well when we became um uh independent, church we were uh not only autonomous, but we were self um self sufficient.

PL: Was there any like opposition, like anybody disagree with making a separate church?

VC: Uh I don't think they had a choice [laughs].

PL: Oh.

VC: Uh I think because we were growing so much and First Baptist provided us a uh the land and the church. Then we uh uh we became independent.

PL: So how many charter members were there?

VC: 150.

PL: 150.

VC: Mm-hm. They came from First Baptist. Transferred their membership to Chinese Baptist Church from First Baptist to Chinese Baptist Church. You have very good questions.

NB: So would you say it became more CHinese - or more like diverse as like time went on like as you start to grow, uh like the chinese Baptist Church itself.

VC: Say it again.

NB: So at first, you said like there were like uh 150 uh charter members transferred from First Baptist Church so like were they mainly - were they Chinese or like, as time went on, were your church like the Chinese Baptist Church became like more and more Chinese - like you start to accommodate like more American born Chinese and also like non English speaking like Chinese?

VC: Yes, yes. Yes, some of them were [NB: Okay.] uh because of Dr. Fan, they understood how to become a Christian and they were - they became Christians and they were baptized, and they became a member. And some of them who had came from China, were already Christians. And so they were happy to have a Chinese church and then at that time, uh somebody wrote that there were only like 300 Chinese in Houston. And then as I told you, they all moved from different places, especially from the south. Mississippi and Arkansas. And even now, the children that moved here with their parents from Mississippi that were American born, they're still active in the community and some of them um are still here. And whenever they have activities, uh they have uh uh a reunion of um people from Mississippi, they all gather and get together. 'Cause recently, there have been several authors who have written about the veterans from um Mississippi delta, and I went. I'm not from Mississippi, but I wanted to see what they had. And uh so one of their own, who now lives in Hong Kong. She's an English teacher, she wrote um and also did a video of - and interviewed these people that were veterans of World War II, and Vietnam, and Korean War. and she has a video and um some people have written books that are of Chinese descent. I don't know if they're American born or overseas born, and went to school here. But a lot of people who came to school here, in the 40's could not go back to China because it became Communist in 1949, like Dr. Fan, she came here in 1948. Uh I don't know if she was thinking of going back, but uh I know uh there have been some people who have wanted to go back, but couldn't go back because they were training here. 'Cause I met them and they had planned to go back. They were doctors, MD's that wanted to go back, but the door was closed so they could never go back until Nixon, President Nixon opened the door to go to China.

PL: How do you spell Reverend Travis Key? I just want to make sure I'm spelling this correct.

VC: Okay. Uh T-R-A-V-I-S. And then K-E-Y.

PL: Okay, Key. And how about Dr. Hong Sit.

VC: Uh H-O-N-G. And S-I-T.

PL: Okay. And you mentioned R.C. Lloyd, in the beginning?

VC: R.C. Lloyd.

PL: Lloyd.

VC: Yes. Uh the elderly couple. Mr. and Mrs. R.C. Lloyd? L-L-O-Y-D.

PL: Oh okay. Um so I guess like the beginning of becoming independent was kind of smooth in that First Baptist Church gave you guys the land and a place?

VC: And the building.

PL: And the building [VC: Yes.] to get started.

VC: Yes.

PL: Um do you remember any like challenges that the charter members faced in the beginning?

VC: No 'cause I didn't go until 1952. [laughs]

PL: Oh.

VC: But I have not heard any. I just know that Dr. Joyce Fan is everything in that church.

NB: So like when you start to get involved in the church, what was like your impression of like the church?

VC: Um I felt like I would like to serve there and even though I couldn't speak CHinese, but there were many English speaking. And I heard about Dr. uh Fan because she went - initially went to Wheaton College and I lived in Chicago and I met people from Wheaton College and I heard about them and then I worked part time a Christian organization and one of the ladies knew Dr. Fan so she was telling me about her because I was telling her I was going to Houston and she was telling me uh be sure to look up Dr. Joyce Fan. And so when I - the first Sunday I came, I ran into her [laughs]. And then we became very good friends.

NB: So like there were no other Chinese Baptist church back then?

VC: No this was the first and only Chinese church.

NB: So it was like very powerful in the Chinese community?

VC: Yes, yes. And then some of our members felt like they needed to minister to the Mandarin speaking students. So they formed their own group and they met at our church for a while and then they went to South Main Baptist Church. And they uh they used South Baptist Church - South Main Baptist Church for a while. And I still know some of the founders uh it became the Houston Chinese Church on South Main - have you heard of them? They're very large.

NB: So like there were like actual Mandarin speaking [VC: Students.] before like there was an actual one?

VC: Yes, they, they - they got together and invited - uh it was a small group from our church that uh invited these students they felt like they should uh help them and and to understand Christianity. And so

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they formed their own group and eventually it became larger and larger and one of couples that was there - I heard that when they sold their home here in - they were students at first, and then they became professionals. And then uh they lived here uh for a while until the church was established. And then when they sold their house and they made a profit, they donated all that money for - to build the church on Main Street. They bought the property and built the church. But interestingly, I read their history and it has no mention of these founders, which uh was very interesting to me. But I haven't - I haven't seen this couple for a long, long time. I remember their names, but there was another couple uh several times I've seen them um in uh some of their meetings, um and uh amazingly they recognize me [laughs].

PL: So it was too big to stay within Chinese Baptist Church? Because I understand now they have a Mandarin congregation. So like they just felt like it was too big to continue staying at this church?

VC: Yes, yes.

PL: Okay.

VC: But now we have a Mandarin worship service. yes.

NB: So like from your point of view, what are some of the changes that happened to this church like during those years, almost like 60 years?

VC: Well people kept moving in here - moving and the outreach was more and more. And the challenges were more. And because we're a city-wide church, it's hard because people either don't drive or they don't - I mean public transportation is not very good in Houston, unless you live in an area where there's a lot of public transportation. But for, for our outreach, sometimes it's very difficult for people to drive uh that long way. I mean we have people from Pasadena, NASA, uh um some of the people from NASA are not coming anymore. Their children like you know they have their friends in that area, so they want to go to the church that their friends go to. And, but whenever we have like marriages, funerals, birthdays, banquets - some kind of - we always see each other. I mean it's nice. Because you just don't know who's related to who until there's a wedding, a birth, a death or whatever. I mean it's amazing.

NB: So like are you saying the original members of this church are still connected with each other even though they are moving out of this church?

VC: Yes, yes, yes.

NB: What were some of the other challenges like you mentioned?

VC: Oh many of them go off to school outside of Houston and then they decide that's where they want to work, that's where they want to stay. Or they get jobs elsewhere. So that's where we really lose them, when they go to college. And uh a lot of them that go to UT Austin they love Austin so much that they stay there [laughs]. And like my neph- my grand nephew - he went to Texas A&M and he didn't want to leave there. He's working there. So you always have that and his parents live in Houston. So where are you from?

NB: Oh I'm from Beijing. [laughs]

VC: Huh?

NB: I'm from Beijing.

VC: Oh okay. Do you feel that you want to stay in the States?

NB: Uhh I don't know. [VC and NB: [laughs]]

PL: So I guess how have you felt the atmosphere at church - how's it changed throughout the years you've been here?

VC: Well um I - I feel very comfortable here. They haven't kicked me out yet. [laughs] And i know not only people my age - I know some of the younger people that I've seen grown up here. And uh there's a couple of them that I see regularly I mean we go out for lunch, we go out to other events together. I feel my roots are here.

PL: That's great.

VC: And I feel uh there's a great need here um I mean people are sick um I go and visit them in the hospital or uh they will call me or I will call them. There's so much need of people uh some of them need help and so I just - just feel like uh you know I like it here.

NB: So like do a lot of church members do what you do like go beyond the church to help other members I guess?

VC: I think there's some. I mean... I don't know that a lot of them do it. But I do know some that do it. Yes.

PL: Um I think that I read in your interview, that you volunteered to get guest speakers from outside the - the church to come to the church to speak-

VC: Yes for our senior meeting. Uh I just pass on the information to uh a younger person who has taken over the leadership. But I'm always on the lookout for special speakers. Uh help us grow or help us stay in better health. Or help us improve and better life.

PL: So what are some examples of speakers that you've specifically look at for?

VC: I got psychologists to speak on insomnia. And anxiety.

PL: Do you see that mostly - do you focus on it because you see it mostly on the - in members here in the church? Like how it's affecting their lives so you wanted to reach out?

VC: Well it's because people are very confidential to me and I feel that I know the needs and also I'm always trying to learn new things. Like the most challenging is uh health and uh mental health and also dementia.

PL: So has the church been able to I guess integrate what the speakers have brought to these lectures - have they integrate that into different activities that the church may host?

VC: Um I think it's mainly for their - for the seniors to improve or get help for their lives. And also - we also have day trips that they can uh they can attend. Like the county bus is free to seniors and um the - the leader who uh who does all of that. She's been planning all of that. I've already given her all my ideas, and if I have another idea I just uh pass it on to her. Have you heard of the Cistern?

PL: No.

VC: It's the um the Buffalo Bayou. They - it's something new.

PL: Oh okay.

VC: I saw it in the paper so I just passed it on to her so our group went and uh if the bus is full, I just let someone else go in my place, so I never went. But it's okay. [laughs] And when they have special things like at the Museum of Fine Arts, uh you know I let them know uh...I don't always read the paper - it's just somebody gives me the paper and then I [laughs] check it or if I hear something, I just pass it on.

NB: So like does this church connect with other Christian churches?

VC: Yes. We're a member of the Southern Baptist Convention so we participate in some of the activities. They have- or we have some of our own activities like uh one year we had a family retreat and we invited uh 2 outside speakers and it was uh was held in uh one of the colleges - I don't remember where, but not too far from Houston. And it was a couple of days so it was real nice. Except the dorm - [laughs] it was too noisy...oh from our church, two of the pastors that I know formed their own church after they left here.

PL: Do you know why they...? Or they moved to different places?

VC: No, no. In Houston.

PL: Oh okay.

VC: Because it could be the area, because one of them moved to Missouri City, and I guess he had enough members that lived out there, that followed him. And that's fine.

[interview is paused and then continued with Pastor Dan Ho]

PL: So we are here at Chinese Baptist Church for the Houston Asian American Archive, interviewing Ms. Violan Chan and Pastor Dan Ho about the Chinese Baptist Church.

PL: I'm Priscilla Li.

NB: I'm Niky Bao.

PL: So I guess we could start with what information you would like to share about Chinese Baptist Church that you would find worth explaining.

DH: I think Viola has probably already filled you in all the history, right?

PL&VC: Yes.

DH: I think it will be better probably you just ask me questions. I went through the sheet already, so...

PL: Okay.

PL: Who do CBC serve?

DH: 55 years ago, Chinese Baptist Church served the Chinese immigrants particularly, but also Chinese families of Houston. It was established as a Chinese church. It is a church in the purpose of a church, but the focus was on Chinese people, particularly Cantonese-speaking people, which were the immigrants back then. That was it started out as. And more throughout the years. It was the first Asian church in Houston and second in Texas. But as the immigration progressed and the population of the Chinese people grew, but not from one source after a little while, the church adjusted and all the churches had to adjust. If they didn't adjust, many of the churches would close. The Cantonese immigrant population, especially after 1997, diminishes significantly. So they either adjust or they start shrinking and die. So Chinese Baptist church was good. They made some adjustments earlier. The administrative targeted second generation. A lot of Chinese churches didn't do that. Immigrants don't do it. They see the population in America like an oasis. It's a place where their people gather away from the desert of America and they want to keep it that way. And all immigrants do that, not just the Chinese, but they don't realize the generations that are coming after are different kind of people. They may be Chinese inheritance, American in culture, and actually, they are called Third-Culture people. They are different. They are a mixture. If they don't administer to them, they won't come anymore obviously. So more than 50%, about 55% I think, a percentage I'm not sure right now, I didn't do work on this one, about 55% of Chinese Americans are Chinese Americans. They were born in America. Less than 50% are immigrants. The average age of a Cantonese immigrant to the United States from Hong Kong is about 53. That's the average age. I mean they came 30 years ago, you know. So our church changed and adjusted, and most of our people now are second and third generations. Chinese people along with other non-Chinese people. We still have immigrants, but not in that number, not the percentile anymore.

PL: When you say they have to administer (59:41 ?), how so?

DH: Well we are a church and because of that we believe that our most important thing is to share the love of Jesus Christ with anybody. So particularly being a Chinese church we focus a lot on Chinese people, their friends and families, which is why we changed a lot in the last 50 years, because their friends and families are not just Chinese. Once upon a time, they were all Chinese. You were immigrants. You opened a grocery store. All your friends and families barely speak English. My mother and my father never spoke English. They had never learned English. They didn't have to. So all their friends were Chinese. But now it's different. You know, you grew up, you study, and you are an engineer, you are an IT person, all your friends are nerds. You know, you got the Indians, you got the Southeast Asians. Or you studied something else. You are a nurse or a doctor, all your friends are somebody else, nothing to do with Chinese but are your friends. So what we want to do is to minister, when I say minister, we want to share the love of Jesus Christ. We believe in Gospel message, which is that, and it has nothing to do with Chinese or American or anybody. Jesus Christ is some God that came and died before a crowd for us and HE was resurrected and believed in at the time he was alive. That was the love of Jesus Christ, John 3:16 if you know the verse "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." So that's what we do. That's the main thing. So we do that in Chinese and we do that in English. That's what we do as a church. In order to do that, we care about people overall. We care about the family, what's going on with the children. If there's something we can help them with, the young people growing up, we have sports ministry to fill their lives with meaningful things and relationships, and not just a credo. That's really important to us, but our faith is the relationship with God and our lives are full of that. So that's what I mean when I say minister, okay? long answer sorry for your question.

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PL: How have you expanded...? I guess this question is not really appropriate. I'm not sure if you can have an answer for it. But it's how has CBC expanded its services to people outside Chinese Baptist Church?

DH: Okay, sure. Now I can tell my experiences. I have been here as full-time senior Pastor for six years, and I think you will interview me later I think right? But I was in New York City and pastored for 28 years before that. What we have done here, when we first came, just my experience here, there's no positive or negative evaluation of the past. We had two congregations. We had an English congregation and a Cantonese congregation. When we came, I think we did, about 9 months or so, 8 months, we started a Mandarin congregation. Now the reason for that is this. You guys are from Rice, you know, one of the teachers came and told us. I don't know who it was, a graduate school for Chinese that enrolled in a class in one year, I think it was 103 people that were Chinese and enrolled. Two of them were from Hong Kong, Cantonese-speaking. One was from Taiwan. A hundred from China. So if you are doing business, which I guess you can say I am in the business of church, what do you think about? A hundred, two and one. Okay, we are going to start a Mandarin congregation for Chinese people from China. So we started that. So that was the third congregation. Okay? All these are Chinese people, but we are getting a bit non-Chinese people as well getting in. You know my wife is not Chinese. So you know there's a lot more people that start to be mixed marriage and so forth. We have been married for 40 years. That's a long time. We're a mixed marriage. Back then it wasn't you know the (? 1:04:00) thing to do. But we just started a Russian congregation. Why? Because there are over sixty thousand Russians in Houston. And many many Russian-speaking people are coming, particularly students. Because Houston in the South is becoming the place to go to do your study because it is much cheaper than New York, Boston, California. So Kazakhstan, Kurdistan, Tajikistan, all the stans are coming here because it is cheaper and they begin to really like it. Once they lock in to a place, they start to flood in. So Houston became the place where they lock in to. You know, it's kind of like Sacramento, (01:04:41). When Russians and Ukrainians first came in, the Little Odessa Brighton Beach in New York, families come and lock in, and everybody goes there. You know, that's where they go. It's like the Chinese people. You know, they go to New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles. That's where they go, right? Now that Russians start to come to Houston. So in 2005 the stats was that there were over two, oh, sixty thousand Russian-speaking people from all the 15, the Soviet Union countries. Now I'm going to say in two or three years, there must be a lot more, maybe another ten thousand, and we had a lot of students. We used to have a bible study with students from ACC, from UH and so forth. From Soviet Union. These are just college kids, so anyway, we started a congregation. We just started it, you know, about a month ago. We have about 60, well probably about 70, including children that are coming to our church. So they are not Chinese. Some of them are Asians, because if are from Kazakhstan, they are Asians, just not our kind of Asians. You know, not Eastern Asians, but they are Asians. So we are doing that. And we have a Portuguese fellowship meeting, about 25, people from Brazil. What we've been doing is, they love soccer right, we have soccer training for children and they've been coming. Once a month, we have a fellowship. A fellowship is a group of people that come, if you are familiar with church, they just come together, a lot of things to eat, you know, a lot of Brazilian food. And they get together once a month. We hope to have a congregation. We have four congregations now. We have a Thai group coming in too. They kind of partner with us. They are not a part of our church, but they use our facilities. We know them pretty well. Most of them are Thai women. Unfortunately, some of them are married to you know American men old and not attractive ones you know. You know how that stuff goes. Sometimes it's trafficking, sometimes it's just green cards. It's what they do, and Southeast Asia has a lot of that. We minister to them. We help them do what we can. In the past it has worked out. So these are multi things that we have been morphing from the Chinese base that we started with.

PL: Do you feel like a lot of intermingling among different groups?

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DH: Oh yeah. They mix in. All of people are great people. They are very friendly. You know there's a phrase. Birds of the same feather flock together. It's true, the homogeneous principle. We kind of like. But you know what, what we believe in is, we Christians care about other people, people beyond ourselves. And so we want to touch the lives of other people. So whether black or white or brown or whatever color make no difference, and the cultures. And I think when we came to adjust to say we understand, you know, they don't like to eat that kind of food, we will make sure we get something else, or that kind of thing, or maybe this isn't what they like to do. It's funny. We've done this a lot. When we were in New York, we had a big Spanish congregation up in New York when we were there. We hope to have one here too eventually. And Spanish folks are really expressive. You meet them, you know how they are. Just they hug you and kiss you on the face. Well Eastern Asians, Chinese, Korean and Japanese, we don't do that. So sometimes it's kind of difficult. You know I'm a pastor, and I go to different congregations, and they greet me differently. And I got to make sure I'm in the right kind of congregation, or I'll get in trouble. I can't be hugging, you know, Korean people, or you know, that's not acceptable. You got to have space there. But for Spanish folks or Brazilian folks, they just really embrace you. That's their culture. Doesn't mean they love you more. It's just the culture and they express that way. So that's the nice thing. It's interesting. The food is good. You get to eat all kinds of different things.

PL: So I guess with the CBC's mission, I guess, what's your mission?

DH: What's our mission?

PL: Yes.

DH: Well, our mission, to summarize in one sentence, is to reach the unreached. What we mean by that is we want, as I said before, as a church, as Christians, we want to share our love of Jesus Christ to those who don't know. So we want to reach, the unreached meaning those who have never heard. We want to do that, but we have. We try to do... Chinese people like acronyms, CBC. For CBC, we break that down into three parts. The first one is to celebrate the king, which is just worship services. You come down to our services, we celebrate, we sing, we have a good time, we have a time together. Then B is become like Christ, which is teaching. We teach the word of God, the bible, to people. And so hopefully they will learn. And C, the last C, is to connect the lords. That's what we do. We have events, we do different things, but we meet people, we bring people, we share the love of Jesus Christ in some way. Non in an offensive way. We don't wanna bash them on the head or anything like that, but we share how much we really love being Christian. And if they hear us, we believe good things are going to happen. God can do some good things for people. So that's our mission, alright?

PL: So when you first came here, was that the mission? So I guess, how have you helped change the...?

DH: Well I think that was the mission when I first came. It was there before me. Just the CBC thing. I don't know if they put in the terms of reaching the unreached, but that's why I came here. Any church I have been, I have only been in three churches in my life, I've always done that. That's always my mission. If not, I'll be an engineer, which I used to be. I wouldn't be a pastor otherwise. So that's the whole purpose of church.

PL: What's CBC's relationship to other Chinese Christian churches in Houston?

DH: We have great relationships. I meet up with them once... These are all the Chinese churches in Houston, this is my fifth year. We meet together once in two months. I try to make it there. We have a good fellowship with them. We have a good working relationship. Our young people get together to do different things, sports ministry is with them. And also we are baptists, so we have a baptist fellowship

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too. So the other month, every other month, we meet together as well. Next Monday, I'll be going to University of Baptist somewhere there, and we have a fellowship. You know, the pastors, we meet together, we are great friends, so we get together, do things together, (?? for hobby, we did a lot of things for hobby), this church did. We cooperated with a few others. We are the biggest baptist church in houston, because of that, our resources go out to help others as well, that kind of things. We have a really good relationship. We have no bad relationship that I know of within all these Chinese churches so...

PL: I guess, besides the specific events like Harvey, how has the Chinese Baptist Church gone out to reach the Houston community?

DH: Well, we have done a bunch of things. For instance, we will go to colleges, UH, we have things. We serve lunches there, right? We actually have people going there. There's also another thing on a Friday night, all these Chinese people from China particularly, they gather together downtown in the presbyterian church and we've been a part of that. Helping them with funding and also sending people there to help with a lot of the immigrant and student ministry there. Also, we have a school here. We have a homeschool called Trinity Classical School. We let them use our facilities for free. We don't charge them anything. So they do a lot of local things. There are a lot of Asians in that school too. It's a homeschool type of thing, where they have two days they go to classes, and the other days they are homeschooled. So we are doing a bunch of things. We do partner with some of the Chinese things, like for instance, one of our members is the president of that Chinese thing, where they ran the Chinese Pageant, Chinatown Pageant.

VC: CACA?

DH: Yeah yeah.

VC: Chinese American Citizen Alliance.

DH: Also they use our facilities to show films. They recently have one, pretty famous filmmaker here, some famous Chinese guy, I'm not sure what his name is. And then we are going to have another one. So we do this kind of things. We try to open ourselves up to help the Chinese community if they ask for. And it's not just the Chinese community. We do have other communities. We had African congregation using our place for different things. We have done sports ministry, like tournaments, things like that. So we try our best to be a part of helping. We know we have pretty good facilities, and we want to make use of it now, to bless the Lord. We want to do things for our God and also the bless of community. You know if they need it, so...

PL: How did CBC help out with Harvey?

DH: What we did was that we had a bunch of teams go out to mud out things. They did. They went all over. Some are related to our church, some not. And then afterwards, we continue to help. I think something like 30 something families still helping them. We raised a ton of money. We probably, I'm not sure exactly, but I'm going to say at least sent the neighborhood giving out money-wise was seventy or eighty thousand, not counting other things. And we helped relocate people. Families have put other families in. Some have lived in... We have a parsonage here. Temporarily, they have stayed here. Also, I work with Baptist student ministry. These are the college students that are a part of the baptist. I've been working with them. In fact, they will come in here in June, because it's continuous. They are gonna be a team of a couple hundred college students. Not true. I'm sorry, that's not the college students. The college students, they have been coming. It's the high school students that are going to be coming. They are called world changers. They actually are going to live in our house, I mean, in our church. They are going

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on to help those families with whatever they can do. So that's going to happen in June. So we have done those things as far as Harvey, so funding resources. People here have given. They have given enough that I had actually to tell them to stop. The reason is because we just couldn't keep on taking it. Not that people didn't need it, but we got to a place we were like okay this is what we are going to help with people and the other things are going to be FEMA and all that. And we got people all over the country actually sending money. I got a bunch of friends from New York that sent me tons of money just to help out. And so we did. We took whatever and everything that was given. Actually we gave more than we got. But it's okay. So we don't keep any, there's no write-up or overheads like that. So that's been good. We helped people with transportation. And the initial was terrible. I walked through some of this muddy water. It was horrible, getting into their apartments and houses. It was pretty horrible, but it made a difference. A lot of people, some of them we didn't know, started to come to church now actually. They weren't coming before. I see a couple of families are coming in every week.

VC: Great!

DH: You want to add anything to this? I'm just kind of rambling on. I kind of talk fast.

VC: No. I think you've covered a lot. I'm learning too.

PL: It's more towards the administration side. What's the structure of church in administration?

DH: It's very baptist if you don't know that. We have a church counsel which is like a governing board of a corporation equivalent. That's where we make decisions. Then we have deacons. Deacons are people that we follow, people like a principal, where they serve and minister to families and needs. They help visit sick people and so forth. Then we have a lot of committees. The baptist are known to have a lot of committees. Committees are everything, so... Sometimes it gets a little bureaucratic. But they are good people and they work hard. That's kind of what we do. I think a church is different from a company, because a church is based on volunteers, people who volunteer. It's not like companies. If you don't do what I tell you to do, you are gone. Not church. Doesn't work that way.

VC: But you do have paid staff.

DH: We do have some staff. We have paid positions. You can see our website. We have paid staff, we have pastors, administrators, secretaries and so forth, and we have a bunch of interns. Interns, they learn here, and they really help a lot. They are doing a good job, especially the young people.

PL: Do members pay annual fee?

DH: No. There's no annual fee. People, they come to church, they give offerings pretty well. And of course, they get taxes write off that kind of thing, but no, there's no fee requirement at all.

PL: Okay. And you mentioned, Ms. Chan mentioned that you guys had a new worship area.

DH: Yeah.

PL: Are you still paying for it?

DH: We almost paid off. There's a little bit left. We have a five year pledge. Yeah, we have a five year pledge. It was about 3 million dollars that one. The newest building. We have three buildings connected

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together. Pretty nice. I think we only have about 200 in change. Which is pretty quick. It's three years old. We are going to pay it off. People here don't like any debt at all.

PL: Which outside organizations help fund you guys?

DH: That funded us? No, we self funded. I don't think... Churches are not like that. We actually fund them. We send a lot of money to a lot of other organizations. I would say about, actually about, 300,000 a year, we send to other organizations. Nobody funds us, except the people.

PL: More towards Chinese as a language, and how you guys have a Chinese school. When was it established? Do you know?

DH: You know right? You wrote down actually.

VC: Yes. I wrote it down.

DH: It was long before I was here. It was established. A lot of churches do that. 1980. Viola is the historian here. Chinese language schools started in 1958 actually, I'm sorry. With 200 enrolled. These were Cantonese. And then 1980, parents wanted kids to learn Cantonese reading and so forth. So it got established again. So we still have it. We have about 40 kids or so. And you know it's... Chinese community centers would do that, because they want the kids to retain the language. I wish I went, but I wouldn't go when I was young, so I lost too much my Chinese, but anyway they wanted to do that, and as a result, it's something we can serve to Chinese community and bring them to church. Now again our purpose is to share the love of Jesus Christ. Our purpose is not to teach kids Chinese. That's something we would like to do. We don't mind doing that, but that's not our main purpose. You know, we always keep our purpose in mind, so right now I'm struggling a little bit because of Cantonese. The immigration is not there anymore, so we have been talking about some our transitioning to Mandarin. You know, because the Mandarin population is the one that's coming, but we haven't done it yet. We don't have a (01:21:36??) with the Mandarin congregation yet. We don't have that. We will, by God's grace, but not yet.

VC: But I think it's mainly the parents want their children to learn Cantonese.

DH: Yeah. I think they are doing a good job.

VC: Yes. Yes. So we have the staff to grow from the 10 in the beginning to now we have 20 on the staff. But the enrollment is about the same, about 40.

DH: I believe they volunteer.

VC: Yeah, they're all volunteers.

DH: They are good people, good men and women who sacrifice their Sunday afternoons.

VC: And it's from 1:30 to 3:45.

PL: I also noticed that there were medical ESL classes. Did the church find a need to establish these ESL classes?

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DH: We have a lot of doctors in our church. So some of them, I want to say, it was about 4 years ago that they started. When we started our Mandarin congregation, students started coming. These are graduate students, doctors, many of them doctors. They spoke English. That's how they can enroll in medical center area. But they want to learn better English, particularly in medical terms, so we have a few doctors that got together and say you know what. They didn't speak Chinese, they are Chinese people, but they don't speak Chinese.

VC: It's Dr. Ho.

DH: Yeah. Johnathan. Johnathan Ho.

VC: He's the one that started it.

DH: So they got together and they did. We have had a lot of people coming. People come and are gone because they are students. Some of them have graduated and went back to China. So they come and learn, not only English, but medical terms. So that helps them a lot in the studies. So we have that. We still have a ESL as well in the afternoon. They are doing it in different ways. Tomé is a missionary. He is a Brazilian. He speaks Cantonese, Brazilian, French, et cetera, et cetera. Really talented guy.

VC: He has retired from...

DH: He has retired. Yeah. He is with the missionary.

PL: What's the process of choosing a pastor?

DH: Well since I came, we look at our needs and what they are. Then we try to... We have committees, multiple committees. They try to find out people that can fit. We have, I have been very successful since I have been here.

VC: Accepting Oleg.

DH: Oleg. And also recently we have a youth pastor here, Justin. He's still here. He's doing a good job. We hired a Cantonese pastor. The Cantonese pastor left when I came, not because of me, some other reason. Then we finally got another one about a year ago. And then we just hired a young adult, college and young adult pastor, Oleg. He is from Kazakhstan. Chinese from Kazakhstan. Great guy. Speak Mandarin, Russian, and pretty good English. He's here. But it's hard to find them, you know. Believe it or not. Are you guys familiar with church at all? Either one of you? Not really. There's such a lack in staffing in churches. Because you can go into any Chinese church or American churches, and they are looking for staff all the time. All the other churches, if you talk to them, they are looking for staff. Because it's really hard to find them. Not many people qualify educationally. Because you have to go through... You have to get at least a master's degree. It's a whole lot of work. It's like being a doctor. You know, four years after you have a Bachelor's degree. So there is a lot of cut offs. People just don't work out. And not only that. People that go, the skill set is very different. You study being an accountant, or whatever you learn certain things, but being a pastor, a big quality skill set is your social skills, your relational abilities. Because that's who we work with. When I was working with a computer, I would work with an architectural chart. I was a civil engineer. So I know all those things. They are fun, easy. They don't yell at you. When you work with people, it's different. People have different temperaments and all. That's a real difficult skill set. And along with that, you have to have communication skills and you have to be on call 24/7. There's no such thing as 9 to 5. We have meetings at night. We visit sick people at hospitals, at their homes. All that kind of stuff. If you are preaching, pastors preach, you have to

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have pretty good skill set in communication. And not everybody has that. It's really hard to find them. Also if you find pastors, if you are looking for one, most good pastors, guess what, like most good workers in companies, guess where they are? They are already in churches. It's not like they are floating around being available. And the difference between... We don't have too many headhunters for pastors. I mean we have to cross lines if we want to get some help. These are real good pastors, go get them. You can't do that. That is not right. You can't go to another church and say I'm going to take your staff from you. You can't do that. We don't sneak around. We are honest people. We don't do those kinds of things. So it's very hard. It's hard to find real good staff. So what we do sometimes is we bring the interns in. They go into studies. They study. And we have them learn the experience. As we look at the capacities, what they are good at, we say why don't you think about ministering this way? It's not the same. Some people are really good teachers, some people are not. Some people are really good with music, some people are horrible. So you can't just throw a pack, usually a pastor has to do everything, we can't do everything, not well anyway. We may try to do everything, but not very well. Just to give you the idea, it's hard. That's one of the things we have been looking at. We have positions open here now, but we just haven't been able to fill them. And we are very happy we just filled one. Yeah, last month, and that was Pastor Oleg.

PL: How have the interns helped shape CBC?

DH: The interns? I don't think they have shaped CBC. I think they just help. Not all the time. A decent time, they are pretty helpful, but we want to help them. I mean that's what internship is, right? We want to help them develop. Not all of them are going to be pastors at all. Some of them just want to work for a while like that and see how it is. If they think that's what God wants them to do, then they will go and study. We kind of have mandatory, requirements educationally, because you know, as a pastor to be, they need to learn basic things. I don't think it's necessary for them to have the highest education. I think sometimes too much education is not helpful. But they have to have some. It's going to be more than a bachelor's degree.

PL: What changes are made to CBC besides introducing the Russian congregation?

DH: I think it's growing. We have a number of new people, a lot of new people actually. We look at adding congregations like that. We want to reach the diverse community of Houston, so... We just started one. For instance, our English congregation at 10 o'clock. It's a houstonian congregation, but it wouldn't minister to all these diverse congregations, people groups of Houston, especially those that need different languages. Sometimes you know you like being there, but you don't understand a thing, that doesn't help. So we are changing in that way. Also, my target is the younger people. I think the younger people are looking. They don't find religion interesting to them anymore. It's not meaningful. We believe our faith is very meaningful, they just need to understand it. So we are trying to figure out how we can best get that message to them and help them have a great experience at our church. Because we are a church. But I always say my faith, my belief is not about a religious things, it's about relationship, a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a personal relationship that once people have it they will be amazed about how wonderful it is. That's what we want to do. Young people are looking. One of the things I do is that I work with an organization in our baptist community called Baptist Student Ministry. I don't know how many campuses it may be. 30 campus maybe in Texas or more. What they do is they encounter students. These are people that... And students love to talk. They are willing to talk. They may totally disagree with you but they will talk to you. They might even be not very nice to you, but... I'm not going to say they are open-minded. A lot of the times, they are. But if you can give them a reason for them to talk to you. So that's what we want to do. We want to have young people, say hi, you know, they are interesting. Let me find out more about why they are around. That's the kind of stuff we try to do. As a result, we will be doing things that we target, I won't say, millennials, because you guys are not even the millennials

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anymore. You guys are the next generation. You look like it anyway, but you may be. The next generation is like 20, 19, 18, they call a highlander. You guys know about that, right? Sociology or whatever. Not a highlander, a homelander, I'm sorry. Different generation, but...

PL: Do you have any question?

NB: So how does the church impact its members?

DH: I think we impact our members. It depends, you know, on if the members want to be impacted. Some members just come and go. Churches are just something they do. I hope not. But hopefully, the other, most of them, are involved in other things. Remember the thing we want them to do is teach the word of God, the bible. So that changes them. It gives us more spiritual and moral directions. Also families. We have young people, the youth, the children, we have the things we do with them. So they entrust them to us, whatever it is, on the weekends or during the week. And we do different things with them and help raise the children up in the right way. We have something called AWANA. On Friday, it's a organizational, nationwide, but we are a part of that, and the children come and they do a lot of stuff. They learn good stuff, so we do a lot of things with children and youth and families as well. We have a lot of what we call fellowships, that's when just families, groups gather together in Sugar Land, Pearland, Katy and so forth. You know, they just have a great time. They get together and usually have some food with them. Sometimes it's like 10 people, sometimes it's like 40 or 50 people. And they do things like that. We will do things together. Like for instance, we are gonna have a big banquet, Chinese new year banquet in Ocean Palace, so we just invite friends and families. We just have a good time and so that's a good gathering for families. Sometimes you know people like to do things like that and it's a wholesome thing. It's a Christian thing that we do. We have lion dance go on, it's kind of fun. We have a big lion dance and children lion dance. It's going to be little kids running around.

VC: Oh, really?

DH: Yeah. And we have a lot of fun, games, stuff like that. There are prizes. There's no cost to that other than... That one we have a cost of whatever it costs for a ticket, just for the meals. Our people invite their friends and families. Buy a table. Invite your friends. And they do and they have a good time. I think we impact our people a lot. I think the church experience here is very important, very meaningful for our members.

NB: Also I see our website that you broke the programs into a lot of specific things such as children, youth, college students and seniors, so like why did you think this church did that? Divided people into different groups?

DH: Sure. So I think part of this church... I think we do things in a lot of different ways. One of the ways is age-appropriate. So we have a senior fellowship. So the older folks do things that senior people are interested in. Age-appropriate things help a lot, and I think... It works that way. But sometimes it's not. We don't do just age-appropriate. We do cultural-appropriate. We have a Mandarin fellowship, that kind of thing, or we have a, like I said, a Portuguese fellowship. So we have cultural and linguistic appropriate things. Sometimes we just do everything together. Like for instance we will have a Chinese new year banquet, but we will also have a Fourth of July picnic. We started that. We usually get a six or seven hundred coming out just to have a good time, celebrating the Fourth of July. We have a lot of neighborhood people come, we have a big barbeque, and then, we have a great time afterwards and see fireworks. But we do those kinds of things, whatever it seems like the parameters appropriate. Age sometimes is very helpful. That puts a lot of pressure on some of the parents and our workers, our children ministry, because when we have it for children, we got to...obviously, we need a lot of adults

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working with them. So...We are increasing our children too. When I came, I think there were only about 15 children or so, now we are approaching 75, 80. So we need a lot more helpers to work with them. Sometimes we just assume young people are good with children, but they are not really. So we try to get the young people and older ones too.

NB: So you said two changes happening to this church is that you're targeting more Mandarin people and more younger people, so what is the future of CBC in your mind and how will CBC serve in the future?

DH: Well we hope the CBC will be a valuable member of our community in Houston overall, certainly within the Chinese community. CBC is not going to probably spearhead the Chinese community in the sense of linguistically. There are churches like Fort Bend and HCC. Those churches are better in their Mandarin services and all. But we don't know. We don't know where we are going to go. We certainly want to do. We are going to do anything we can to minister to the Chinese community, especially the ones coming, the immigrants. But we know we can minister to the second gen, their children, now the children aren't that young anymore you know. You have second and third gen. So we want to continue to be able to make an impact in that way, in a good way, be helpful with the families, their cultural understandings, the community, the Chinatown area and so forth, but also maybe help Chinese folks understand that this part of what's the third culture experience. It's hard. It's hard for a lot of people. They don't even understand what it is. When you were born here and your parents were born in China, and you grew up here, you think you are an American, but you look Asian, people look at you and their first thought is can you speak English, do they have a grocery store? Meanwhile, you can be a rocket scientist for that matter, you've never been to China ever, but yeah, you have these things. There's something about that that brings a lot of anger. I think it's real good if you capitalize it, but sometimes you can't. My nephew, he was in New York, and one time, he was just walking down the street, and somebody just yelled out, really, that was really terrible, "Go back to your homeland." You know, really mean to him, you know, he came home, he says, "I was born here. Where do I go?" He was born in that hospital in that town. He said just get over it. No, they don't get over it, because we get that stuff all the time, not talking about racism. It's not even about racism. It's just an understanding of culture and can they capitalize that to say hi, I'm not gonna let that become something negative, I'm gonna turn that into something positive. Because I got something they don't have, one thing, I probably speak two languages and they can only speak one. Even speak three or four for that matter. And I'm smart, because my Asian families made me that way, on and on. So we want to do that, as a church, we want to be a part of helping families go through this kind of struggles, because there are some struggles, because for instance you know you grew up in a Chinese family and you were born here, you are an artist, you want to draw or paint. Are you kidding? You better be an engineer or doctor or else. You know how it is in a Chinese family. You are in trouble, but you know what, you might be an engineer or doctor, but you hate your job, because you really are meant to be a painter, or a musician, or something like that. Why live life that way? We believe that God has made us special, each one of us, and he has given us great capacities to enjoy lives and live our lives well, and it doesn't have to make a lot of money, because there are a lot things that are far more important than money. Sometimes the Chinese families are like that, so we want to be of help in that way. If young people come here, they can thrive here, and the families can know that they are doing great here.

PL: How do you help in that way? It's difficult to... I guess the church provides a safe place for them to be an artist or to be whoever they want, but how do you go about mitigating the relationship between a parent and a child?

DH: I think this church is pretty good. The parents here are very supportive of their children. I really like that, but that's saying...parents still have an idea of what they want their children to be. Typically, especially in an Asian culture, we want our kids to do well, we want them to be highly educated, make good living, be safe, live in a great community, you know that kind of stuff, all the stuff that the American

dream, so what we want to help do is we are not saying it is a bad thing, not necessarily. We are just saying there are better things even, because we believe that as I said before, every person is made in the image of God, and HE has great plans for us, and your child can be just so great if he or she discovers what that is. And God will let them, help them to do that, and how much money they make has nothing to do with happiness and certainty has nothing to do with eternity, so we want them to understand that. So when they come here, they are not going to hear me lecturing the kids about how they got to have straight As, I want to tell them that they should do the best they can. If a C is all you can do, praise God. That's wonderful. But if you can do a B and you are doing a D, you better get home and do some work, alright? That kind of thing, but I don't want to put expectations on them when they are not there. I have talked to a lot of young people in my life. In tears, the young people are. My parents all they cared about is for me to get straight As. You know these Asian Fs. An A- is really horrible, because they don't ever feel like they are loved or they are meeting expectations if they do anything short of being a valedictorian. But they need to understand that doesn't do anything. That doesn't make you a better person. That doesn't make you happier. If anything, it just puts pressure on you that's going to crush you in life, you know. And so we want to help our people understand what's really important, what's the most important thing in life, and that's really to discover who Jesus is, and love Him, and live out the life he has designed for us. You know, part of it is because I discovered that. Because I was the same thing. You know, engineering, straight As, on and on and on, everything that Chinese families want. Then I discovered no, God wants something better for me. And better doesn't mean (01:45:03??) is better. It's better for me. Being a doctor or an engineer wasn't better for me. It was the wrong thing. You know, everyone has to discover that God has something really better for them if they can catch that. I hope the families can really understand that here.

NB: So how do you communicate that to the families and the younger people?

DH: Well, we communicate. Since I am the Senior Pastor, I am a preacher. I preach that. I go through the word of God, I teach the word of God, I preach it in the word of God. You can find that. Because it's not about making money, money is worthless in eternity, your happiness comes in knowing God. I preach it and I teach it, and hopefully, I live it. I always tell people never focus on the resources of things, I know Chinese people are big on that. We are known to be prosperous, always do well with finances, I don't focus on that at all. And I don't live out that way. I don't live that way. I mean I live modestly, so I hope by my choices, my actions, they see. And I'm always happy. My wife and I are very happy people. And it's not because suddenly the stock market going up. I told them I'm not in the stock market. I don't have it, and the reason is I made a choice and most Chinese people do. I made a choice because I do not want to be thinking about money every day of my life which is what people do, open the stock portfolio every single day. I won't do that, so I'm happy. I don't care if it goes up or down. It makes no (01:46:48 ??) to me at all. You know I believe that as long as the Lord is taking care of me, I eat, I have a place to sleep, I'm happy. But I can make other things. My father is a millionaire. He passed away already, but he left a big foundation for me to handle. There's all kind of stuff I can do, but I won't do that. I'm just going to handle it and give it away. So you see... All I'm saying is that I preach it, I teach it, and I live it, is what I'm trying to say to answer your question.

PL: Is there anything else you guys would like to add?

VC: Well, I'd like to add that not only members but people in the Chinese community have many problems and they will find help here and I think some people... The major thing is loneliness and I think people like to have relationships. Our people are very friendly, very welcoming, so we all have to work together. It's not just one person, the Pastor, but everybody working together, especially our deacons, which have their specific duties to assist the Pastor.

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DH: Yeah. I think our team here, our volunteer teams, they do a good job. We do have, since this church is 55 years old. Is this 55 or 65?

VC: 65.

DH: 65 years old. Sorry. 53 is when we started out. We do have older folks. I think since I have been here, about 50 have passed away.

VC: At least.

DH: That's only 6 years. That's a lot. Two years ago, not last year, but the year before, I think about 40 that year alone. It's probably more like 70.

VC: Because of their age.

DH: And they are losing a lot of friends. I mean, these are friends for life. So our seniors are that way. And a lot of them still come, as much as they can, because they love the church, they love the people here, they want to be here. Some of them can't. There was a time when I was just visiting people, 3, 4, 5 people a day, senior citizens in hospitals, nursing homes, whatever. And most of them have gone to be with the Lord. We are not afraid of death, and they aren't afraid of death, because we see it just as an open door for promotion to Heaven, which the bible promises us. So we are not afraid of that, but still tough, for the families.

VC: And we still have people that are homebound.

DH: That's right. The homebound ones are tough. I mean, all these Chinese people, not a lot of them would put their parents, their grandparents, in nursing homes. So they are home, which causes a whole lot of stress on the families. I know that. My father and mother were both in that situation. But the church is a big home. People care here. They keep them in prayers, and we believe in prayers and we visit them.

PL: Is there anything else?

DH: Is there anything else?

VC: Thank you for coming.

[interview ends]

01:50:52