

About Rock Chinese Church

Rock Chinese Church is pastored by Rev. Jacob Zhang. His wife, Joan teaches the younger children.

Jacob is 31 years old and Chinese born and bred - he speaks English very well but with a Texas accent (we shouldn't hold it against him). All of this can be said of his wife, Joan.

Jacob is the son of two pastors. He was raised in their underground house church. After the Chinese Cultural Revolution, his father suffered and continues to suffer persecution as a follower of Christ. Jacob remembers little of his father growing up because his dad was an itinerant preacher and for most of Jacob's young life, dad was either preaching in villages and homes other than his own, a fugitive from State police or a State prisoner. Jacob is very proud of his dad because as a State prisoner although isolated and tortured, he never gave up the names of Christian friends and leaders the State wanted to question and imprison. Jacob recalls as a young man visiting his dad in prison - finding a man of Christ buoyed by his personal faith but also letters of support from Christians around the world - many from America.

Jacob left China on a business visa to study to become a preacher he intended to return to China after completing his degree. He landed at Dallas Baptist University (thus the Texas accent). Completed his degree. Met and in 2011 married Joan. Like Jacob, Joan completed her degree at DBU but in Christian education and followed up with doctoral work at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She is not a co-pastor - that's Jacob's job alone. Joan was a private school teacher in Shanghai. Here, she teaches the 3-6 year old Rock Church children.

So, why Bellevue? A pastor-friend of Jacob recently returned to China to preach and found that State authorities were cracking down on Christians. He was unable to preach as he wanted. The friend returned to the US and advised Jacob that the Seattle area would be fertile ground for teaching Chinese about Jesus - he said 11% of the Bellevue population was Chinese who did not know Christ. Jacob and Joan prayed. They say they both wanted to stay in Texas or go to Virginia or Boston. But Jesus had a different plan. There came a time when they had to apply for a visa extension - their choices - business (remain and work in Dallas) or religious worker visa (go to the Seattle mission field). They sent both applications forward. The result of their prayers was a quick approval of their religious worker visa! Approved in 2 1/2 weeks when their advisors told them to expect a year long process. They took this to be a miracle, Praise The Lord! Two years ago they packed their bags and moved to Renton, WA. They have been renting space at the Lake Hills Boys and Girls Club for two hours of worship on Sunday mornings. They relied on others for space for Sunday School, ESL and other church activities. Their lease with LHB&G expires on New Years Eve 2017.

So, a little about the Rock Chinese Church. Jacob says that his church is called Rock Chinese Church not Rock Chinese Baptist Church. Notwithstanding Jacob's DBU education he does not think of himself and church as Baptist, rather he believes in the Creed and is a firm believer in the love and saving grace of Jesus Christ - just as he learned Christianity in his underground house church from his dad and mom in Shanghai.

Jacob preaches in Mandarin. The Church is 30 members strong - all of them converts to Christ since the church's founding in 2015. Last year Jacob baptized 21 souls in Lake Sammamish in the summer and in other churches' baptisteries in the winter. Rock's adult members are all older than Jacob - 40-50 years old. Mostly mothers with children. One of their lay leaders is Rock's English As A Second Language teacher. In this regard, Jacob says that his members may appear stand-offish but that's only because they are self-conscious - do not speak English. But they are very grateful for Aldersgate's mission outreach - providing a single place to worship and learn English!

What a blessing for Aldersgate - as mission outreach we are helping Jacob and Joan take Jesus Beyond Our Doors!

So, What Has the Core Leaders Approved?

- 90-day provisional partnership agreement
- covenant relationship with Rock
 - use of the sanctuary and nursery or preschool classroom from 1-3 pm Sundays
 - use of an adult classroom for ESL/Communication on Friday mornings
 - and of course use of restrooms
 - in the future perhaps - use of fellowship hall and the kitchen

They covenant to treat our spaces with respect and to clean and return the Sanctuary to its normal configuration.

They want to be excellent rent-free "tenants." Jacob and his group of leaders will meet with Brad and others for a tour of Aldersgate - so they can tell us about how they will use Aldersgate and to see us and hear from us - our expectations.

Let's welcome them as we overlap services on Sunday afternoons and as we share space on Friday mornings.

Jacob & Joan are not shy! They are on fire for Jesus – they ended our meeting with a quiet – God Bless You!

One last note: For anyone who is concerned that our mission outreach with Rock Church will somehow conflict with our own (read that as the United Methodist Church's) church planting in Bellevue in the person of Pastor Thomas Yang, consider this:

- Jacob's two-year experience in Bellevue is with native speaking Chinese converts to Christ. Rock has an immediate need for worship space.
- Thomas speaks Korean – his aim is to attract Asian-Americans - churching to the unchurched. Thomas will rely on the conference and Bellevue cluster churches for supporting a new church plant in Bellevue and thus has no immediate need for worship space.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Joe Lee, chairman of the Core Leadership Team, at jLeeinWA@LeesinWA.com

God Bless You!