

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

A common witness of the Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries, a covenanted ministry of the United Church of Christ

You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Creator will give you whatever you ask in my name. —John 15:16



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Judy Chan

**I chose you.
—John 15:16**

While growing up in the Baptist Church in Mississippi, I often heard of exciting adventures of missionaries serving in faraway exotic places such as Africa and Asia. Like all extremely devout Sunday-school children, I made an inner commitment at some point to go wherever God wanted me to go—even to the mission field.

It never occurred to me that where I was at that moment was already pretty exotic for someone with a Chinese name and face.

My parents came to the United States from southern China around 1950. They lived first in California and then moved to the delta of Mississippi where there was a small Chinese community. My family operated a grocery store where you could find me behind the counter after school and on weekends. My childhood years coincided with the civil rights movement and desegregation in the Deep South. As one sociologist has described it, the Chinese in Mississippi lived in a world “between black and white.” It was a lonely world at times but one that my family assimilated into as much as possible. At my father’s funeral many years ago, the funeral home was filled with people of all races—white, black, and Chinese. That rainbow of friends was a testimony to me of what he had accomplished in becoming a respected and beloved member of the community.

My own journey involved leaving Mississippi and going to university in Texas, doing mission work in New York City, and attending seminary in Connecticut. Subconsciously I was always searching for a more diverse environment, both in terms of culture and religion. I was searching for a place I

Last Sunday at my church we baptized three infants and promised to nurture them and teach them about Jesus. I feel lucky that my church has a strong Sunday-school program and such a great youth program that my two teenagers usually insist on attending even if they’ve been out late Saturday night. (I am indeed a lucky Mom!) But I wonder if we’re nurturing “extremely devout” Sunday-school children, as missionary Judy Chan describes herself. How many of our children make “an inner commitment” to go wherever God wants them to go—“even to the mission field”? As I read Judy’s story, I can’t help but think how blessed she was to grow up with the powerful example of her father, committed to living not “between” other population groups but “with” them, and with the message from her Sunday-school teachers that if she was willing to go where God sent her, God would “appoint [her] to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John 15:16). May you also find inspiration in her story.

belonged. While I was in seminary I decided to make the Presbyterian Church my “spiritual home” and to seek ordination. During a year of clinical pastoral education, I met Rev. Dr. Tso Man-king, a Methodist minister and senior pastor of the Chinese Community Church in Washington, D.C. Dr. Tso was instrumental in convincing the church to hire me as their first associate pastor, and I am grateful to this day for his opening many doors. It was in this wonderful church that I learned the basics of ministry and was exposed on a day-to-day basis to Chinese people from all walks of life.

I appointed you to go and bear fruit

In 1986 I was given a year off to fulfill a dream—to live in Hong Kong. No one, including my mother, quite understood why I needed to go for a whole year, but the yearning was so great that I could not do otherwise. I knew that the experience would change my life, and it most certainly did! Not only did I fall in love with Hong Kong, I fell in love with a handsome young man from Hong Kong who became my husband.

My husband Joe and I lived in the D.C. area for the next six years, knowing that if the opportunity came to return to Hong Kong we would go in a minute. In 1994 that opportunity arrived in the form of an invitation for me to work at the Hong Kong Christian Council through the Common Global Ministries Board and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

My initial assignment was to develop an ecumenical communications network in the “run-up” to 1997 when the sovereignty of Hong Kong reverted to the People’s Republic of China. I developed the 1997 Global Prayer Chain in which over seven hundred members from forty countries expressed their concern for Hong Kong during the transition through the exchange of letters, songs, prayers, poems, pictures, banners, and even personal visits. It was an exhilarating and rewarding project. Of course, the handover itself was an extraordinary time—a great moment in Chinese history that I was privileged to witness.

Since then I have been coordinating the ecumenical radio ministry that airs over the government broadcasting station RTHK. These daily programs are sponsored by the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Roman Catholic Diocese with participation by the Protestant, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. Being in charge of this ministry has been a theological education in itself as I work with Roman Catholic priests, Pentecostal ministers, seminary professors, Charismatic Christians, and of course, many Protestant clergy and laypeople. This is truly a unique cooperative ministry, reaching thousands every day over the airwaves in Hong Kong.

. . . bear fruit, fruit that will last.

When I look at my life today, I realize that I have come a long way from Mississippi. Yet the issues that were raging when I was a girl—poverty, racism, discrimination, equality, freedom—are relevant in every time and every place. These are all issues in Hong Kong, and I know the way I deal with them here is shaped by my upbringing in the United States. When we are sent out into overseas mission, we are called by God to be shaped by another culture and people in order to love God and our neighbor more effectively. That’s why I am in Hong Kong—to be molded by God so that I can love God and my neighbor even more. There are still many things I need to learn, and some are difficult lessons. Yet each day I rise with confidence and joy, because in my heart I feel this is where I belong. Whenever I face problems or am discouraged, I remember these words of Jesus to his disciples: *You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Creator will give you whatever you ask in my name* (John 15:16).

Questions for Reflection

1. How does your church nurture “extremely devout Sunday-school children”?
2. Who in your community lives “between” the major population groups? How is your church reaching out to them and including them?
3. Who has opened doors for you in your life as Dr. Tso did for Judy? How have you expressed your gratitude?
4. Do you, like Judy, rise each day with “confidence and joy,” because in your heart you feel this is where you belong? If not, how might you change your life so you could?

Prayer Opportunities

- Judy and Joe Chan and their work in Hong Kong
- The listeners of the radio show Judy broadcasts daily on RTHK
- The Hong Kong Christian Council
- Our children and those who nurture their growth in stature and faith

For more information about the work *you* do through Global Ministries and Wider Church Ministries (supported by your gifts to Our Church’s Wider Mission), contact Jan Aerie, executive for mission education and interpretation at 216.736.3204 or explore our Web sites at <www.globalministries.org> and <<http://www.ucc.org/wcm/index.html>>.