

Location, Location, Location

“Reflections” Where are we going?



Since the opening of the 1st laundries in the 1870s, Toronto has had a Chinese immigrant community centered downtown¹. This may not surprise you if you're of Chinese heritage, but I'd hazard a guess that many younger people in our congregation don't know the stories around the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923, the expropriation of a whole neighbourhood to create Toronto City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square, or the remarkable Jean Lumb. You see, with every generation, there is often a slight disconnect with the past, a loss of historical context as families move away from the downtown core. And it only takes 1, 2 generations max to lose touch.

As a non-asian person serving in a Chinese cultural church, I find the history of Toronto's Chinatown not only intriguing, but fascinating. I love coming into downtown, walking on Dundas, or drinking a coffee on Spadia and watching the grocery ladies sell their vegetables. Chinatown is a wonderful place to visit...a wonderful place to serve.



Over the past few months, I've had the pleasure of speaking with several key people whose families were part of the 1st generation of our church. I heard stories of prejudice, but also of great sacrifice and a singular commitment to share the Gospel with the Chinese immigrants who had left friends and family to forge a new life in Canada. Indeed, I heard from several people the same heartfelt burden: "If we didn't reach the Chinese for Christ, who would?" This burden was the defining purpose that brought about the founding of our church, from several years of home Bible studies to the purchase of the old Jewish synagogue, where our building now stands at 450 Dundas St W.

¹ For a more complete history of Toronto Chinatown: <https://www.blogto.com/city/2016/12/what-chinatown-used-look-toronto/>

What I found particularly interesting was that when the time came to buy a place for worship that would be a visible presence in the community, there was a shared conviction of God's purpose and leading. While they were looking, several locations became available through contacts, and at least one was a suitable building and a good price, but the shared vision of the leadership of the fledgling church was to ask God for a place that was right on Dundas...not on a side street tucked away from the busy pedestrian traffic, but something prominently located. What makes this story truly amazing is that Chinatown had not yet extended westward to include the area where we're now located. Chinatown was located several blocks east, around Elizabeth St. What this means is that the leadership had a vision for reaching Chinese immigrants in an area where Chinese people had not yet moved into, and God honoured that by providing a place of worship remarkably located at the



intersection of Dundas St and Huron St., with public transit that could drop people off right at the door! It was the intersection of a grand vision for God and God's desire to glorify himself among the Chinese people in the downtown core of the city. And so, the founding of Chinese Gospel Church is the story of great faith, vision, and commitment to glorify God. We are uniquely blessed, dare I say *divinely located*, in the heart of Chinatown, and because of our location, we share with that 1st generation

the same vision and purpose...to make God's name known among the Chinese people. Many of us may not live next door to those who live or work near the church, but we share a common culture, common heritage, and common struggle. Who will reach the Chinese people if we don't?

Now, to top off this wonderful story of faith and divine leading, this summer a subcommittee of the City of Toronto released a study² that calls for the protection of Chinatown from the growing encroachment of high-rise development which threatens to radically change the character of the neighbourhood - the fight that Jean Lumb fought in the 70s. What's particularly important for us to note is that, in the area the city has mapped out for special recognition and protection as culturally important, Chinese Gospel Church

² The full official document can be found at:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/8875-CityPlanning-Chinatown-Tomorrow-Community-Consultation-Final-Report.pdf>

is the *only* Christian church of any kind located within the designated area. There are two other notable evangelical churches in Chinatown, but they're not located directly in the area being considered for protection. That means that we, as a church, have a *unique* footprint in the community, a very *conspicuous* footprint, a very conspicuous *divinely appointed* footprint, by virtue of God's blessing. Talk about location, location, location!

Is it a challenge to get up early and get downtown for a 9:30 am Sunday service? Is the lack of parking a challenge? And don't get started on the road closures for events, which seem to have been particularly stressful this year! Why would anyone drive into the city when there's a church much closer to their home? Simply put...a shared vision and burden for the unfinished task of reaching the downtown core for Christ. Are there other 'Chinatowns' in the GTA? Yes, but nothing that matches downtown Toronto, with the bustling streets lined with vendors and little hole-in-the-wall restaurants that have the best pulled noodles. It takes a committed believer to come downtown to worship and serve, but in truth, we have ministry opportunities downtown that aren't available anywhere else in the GTA. We need to eagerly embrace God's appointment. We have a grand vision, we have a blessed location, and we have a singular purpose...to reach the Chinese people for Christ.



Pastor Kevin

Who will reach the Chinese people if we don't?

May the Lord continue to strengthen and use you this week to bring glory to his name.