



June 2018, Number 13



Church Together

CHRIST, VISALIA: CLIPArts

For seven years now Christ Lutheran Church in Visalia has offered at-risk neighborhood children an after-school program called CLIPArts (Christ Lutheran Institute for the Performing Arts). On Mondays and Tuesdays from 3:30 - 6:30 pm about 60 children, ages 7-13, come to the church where five paid professional staff with experience in musical theater teach the children to sing, dance, and act in preparation for performing a musical at the end of each semester, usually two each year. This professional quality instruction is offered at no cost to qualifying families.



But there is more to the story. You might wonder how such a significant

ministry for a church to offer its community came to be. You might say it began when Lim Forgey III, Minister of Music at Christ Church for 16 years now, saw three neighborhood children playing in the church dumpster, and in them he saw himself and his siblings years ago. If you said that you'd be right. Or you might say it began when Lim, at the time a 6th grader, and his two brothers, ages 9 and 5, faced difficult challenges, and had to deal with things way beyond their ability. Life was a struggle for Lim and his brothers, three poor, marginalized children who didn't fit in. "But," Lim says, "the church saved my life through music!" Ah, so if you said it began there, when Lim was a child, you would also be correct. But you might say that CLIPArts began when Jesus was raised from death to life and turned his Spirit loose in the world to bring light out of darkness, health out of illness, and even blessing for many others out of one person's struggle and pain...and rescue!



By now you know there is much more to the CIPArts story. After seeing the children in the dumpster and being moved to help, Lim went to Pastor Brian Malison who has the gift of asking helpful questions (Why? What is next? Where are we going?), as well as an understanding of the importance of goal setting, timelines, and clearly articulating the mission. Pr. Brian's mentoring was key to putting some flesh on the bones of Lim's desire to help at-risk children. "Without Brian's encouragement and leadership, this ministry would only be a dream," Lim says. From his own experience Lim knew that these children are sometimes dealing with difficulties well beyond their ability; they tend to feel de-valued in the world; and as they grow older they are in danger of being recruited by a gang. That is the Why? of CLIPArts. What is next? Lim says, "While dance, music and theater may be the avenues we travel, our true mission is to help these marginalized kids know they are loved by Christ, that they have value, and that there is a community here at Christ Lutheran that is committed to their lives in the long term. We speak this mission and our intent openly to all - especially to the kids and their families.



CLIPArts is served by a leadership Board consisting of seven members of the congregation. In addition to securing funding for CLIPArts (church budget, grants, individual donations such as a \$300 adopt-a-child-for-a-year gift), this Board has a shepherding purpose. Once each semester, twice each year each participating child is interviewed by a Board member who says, "We want to pray for you. Please give me an idea what is going on in your life and family these days, what concerns you might have, so we can pray knowledgeably." Parents of eligible children are told in advance that this will happen; some choose not to have their child involved, while others gladly opt in. The "true mission" is also made clear to the five paid staff, and they are expected and coached to do their work in ways that "show the love of Christ" and "affirm each child's value." Finally, the CLIPArts mission and the Christ-faith undergirding it are clearly stated as the audiences are welcomed to each semester's final performances.

Last year CLIPArts presented *The Lion King*, with over 50 children involved and an audience of 900, three performances in the rented high school theater with 300 at each show. This semester's project is *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. Previous programs have included *Aladdin* and *The Aristocats*. In addition to serving as CLIPArts Staff Equipper, Lim, a classically trained baritone, directs Christ Lutheran's 40 voice choir at the 8:00 am traditional worship, and leads the bands at the 9:30 and 11:00 am services.



A wise Christ-follower, with not a little surprise, once said, "My pain to bear has become, by the Spirit's power, my gift to share." Lim Forgey III understands that, and is grateful to have been the catalyst that led to his church embracing a ministry that serves important but under-served children and families in their community.

Do you have a story that you would like to share? Send any Church Together story requests to mic@spselca.org.

Committed to being re-formed...
The Sierra Pacific Synod
9985 Folsom Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95827-6628
916-756-1665 · 800-275-3522 · 888-789-6434 (Fax)
www.spselca.org

STAY CONNECTED:

