As an extension of their weekly classes from 3 to 5 p.m., Sundays, the Taiwanese Christian United Church of Christ (UCC) Church that meets at Keystone UCC in Seattle held a summer camp in August to teach Taiwanese, as well as enjoy the facilities at Pilgrim Firs Conference and Retreat Center at Port Orchard.

Jerry Chang, who has been pastor of the Taiwanese church since 2016, said that the camp served 105 children, youth and adults.

“We use Taiwanese in our worship services, but the classes are also open to children from other Taiwanese families in the Seattle area,” he said, noting that there are 800 young Taiwanese professionals working at Amazon alone, plus more at Microsoft.

Many, as in Taiwan itself are Buddhist or Daoist. Taiwanese people are 90 percent those two faiths. Only five percent are Christian.

“We teach the weekly class for 15 students and offer hospitality. We do not teach religion as part of it, but invite the children to attend the service where they will hear Taiwanese and feel comfortable with it,” Jerry said. “We are sensitive to those whose families hold Buddhist of Daoist beliefs, but in working together through the classes we build relationships and show love and care.”

Most of the service is in Taiwanese, but worship leaders also translate some stories into English and Mandarin.

“We thought it would be a good outreach to offer the camp. We had $5,000 budgeted to encourage all Taiwanese families to participate in the summer camp. The 18 families who joined received 30 percent support,” he said.

Then the PNC Anti-Racism Fund learned about the camp and offered another $5,000, so applied that for another five families—three middle-income families for 50 percent support and two low-income families for 100 percent off.

In total, 105 people in 23 families participated in the camp, with 12 people from the church attending on their own resources.

The Taiwanese Christian Church in Seattle was established in 1989 as part of the United Church of Christ.

Like most (95 percent) of the church members, Jerry is a first-generation immigrant. He grew up in Taiwan and came to St. Louis, Mo., for his college studies to earn a bachelor’s degree and to study at Eden Theological Seminary. He lived 16 years there, also working a few years. Most of the church members also came to the U.S. to study.

Jerry grew up Presbyterian and was a Presbyterian (USA) student at Eden, but there learned about the United Church of Christ and chose to serve a UCC church. He was ordained in 2019 after he was called to the Seattle church.

“Our members and other Taiwanese in the area want to keep up with the mother language and culture,” he said.

In the classes, the children, who are elementary ages, learn songs and dances that they can share in worship.

A University of Washington student group uses the church space for events and activities.

Jerry drives 45 minutes to an hour to the church from his home in Renton. Others come from Redmond to the east, Everett to the north and Puyallup to the south.

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