

# Centennial Conversations

~ interview by Ben Martin

## Meet Bob Sukhanusasna



If you sit on the left side of the All Saints sanctuary during service, facing the altar, on any Sunday you've probably met Bob Sukhanusasna. He might have handed you a liturgy. He might have guided you for Communion. Almost every Sunday, he's pitching in on the ushering teams, and that's his favorite, dedicated location. Bob, 73, grew up far from Los Angeles, and he wasn't religious for the vast majority of his life, but in the last eight years, he's become a pivotal part of the All Saints community.

Bob grew up in Thailand and his grandmother wanted him to have the chance at a better life. "She loved me very much," Bob says, so she helped him emigrate to the United States in 1968, when he was about 15 years old. His uncle and aunt were already in the Bay Area, so he stayed with them, in Berkeley. He finished high school, even though "I didn't like high school," he said. "In fact, I'm lucky I finished."

Bob shares that he has been sober for 22 years now, but his active alcoholism caused challenges that reverberated down the road. In 2016, after being homeless for about a year he joined a program lasted for six months and gave him a bed and food — and asked him to attend regular 12-step meetings and to attend church on Sundays. He became baptized at another local church and found a sense of faith, he says. That's when Bob discovered All Saints. He came to All Saints for 12-step meetings on Thursdays — and was in the neighborhood a lot for meetings at other nearby churches as well.

Through Union Station, Bob started the process of getting connected to stable housing. The first housing situation was difficult, Bob said. It was in the heart of Skid Row downtown and was a "closet" of a room where many of his neighbors were struggling with active alcoholism and addiction. That situation lasted for three years. In 2021, Bob qualified for

better, subsidized housing, and he found a place in Koreatown. It's an apartment with its own bathroom, its own kitchen — and "it even has a patio." Bob loves it, he says. "Nobody bothers you!"

The geography makes it challenging to get to Pasadena. Bob has an hour and a half commute each way by bus and train to get to Pasadena. But he does it every Sunday, often waking around 4 a.m. Director of Liturgy Melissa Hayes, who coordinates usher leaders and teams, asked Bob if he wanted to help with ushering, and Bob says he readily agreed. In fact, he makes a point of arriving early, almost every Sunday, to help with the 7:30 a.m. service and the 10 a.m. service.

While Bob lives by himself and his remaining family is not close, he has become a permanent resident of the U.S., and All Saints has become his chosen community — and family.

### **Question 1: What is one thing you're most grateful for about All Saints Church?**

"The people here are very generous," Bob says, both in terms of compassionate spirit and pragmatic acts. From the first time Bob set foot on the All Saints campus, staff and parishioners have shown interest in his well-being. The Church welcomed him into the community and gave him a place to get his feet on the ground, while he waited for his own housing to come through. Even once he had found a stable housing situation, Church members continued over the years to ask after him — and offer a hand if he needs it, no strings and no questions asked. "People will ask me how I'm doing and if I'm short at the end of the month on my rent," helping him with dignity, so that he can stay housed.

### **Question 2: Tell a story of a favorite memory of your time at All Saints Church?**

Bob reflected on one of the ways he found to pay forward the generosity he received at All Saints. "I loved to come help out and provide food for the homeless with Erica Tamblin (the Vestry member who helped organize meals from a local restaurant for people in the Pasadena area in need during the pandemic.) "That's why I got up early, at 4 a.m., rain or shine, for three years, to get here to help make sure people had food. I knew they needed help."

### **Question 3: What is your greatest hope for All Saints Church as we move into our next century at 132 N Euclid?**

Bob hopes that All Saints will continue to do more and more to help people experiencing homelessness, especially helping people to get into permanent residences. Bob hopes the attendance at All Saints will continue to rise, as it has after the pandemic, both for the vibrancy of worship and community, and to be able to support robust ministries in the community.