

# Centennial Conversations

~ interview by Ben Martin

## Meet Terry Gock



Next year, Terry Gock will celebrate 30 years as part of the All Saints community. His faith journey includes study of and practices from Buddhism and Judaism, and he has been drawn to All Saints from the start for its reverence for all religious traditions and paths. Born in 1951 and raised in Hong Kong, Terry attended a Roman Catholic parochial school where he was influenced by the “service to others” lessons that permeated his secondary education.

Terry came to the United States for college and then stayed -- attending Cal State Chico, which he chose because “a schoolmate of mine from Hong Kong was going, and I said, OK, I’ll apply there too.” He drifted from church at college — describing that time as his “desert of faith years” attributing part of the drift to the lack of focus on social justice in the churches he attended.

Terry came to Los Angeles for his post doctorate work in forensic psychology in 1980 and hasn’t left. In his professional life, Terry has made a tremendous imprint on the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and LGBTQ communities and beyond, founding a behavioral health service provider for Asian Americans and as a leader in the American Psychological Association’s turn toward acceptance of and support of LGBTQ individuals.

Terry remembers first coming to All Saints in 1995. His ex-partner, David, asked Terry to go — and Terry recalled that he had been to All Saints before and it seemed to be drawing him back. This time, he says, was different.

“For the first three months of then Rector George Regas’s preaching, I could not stop crying. It was more than the words — it was Regas’s conviction and tone — it was the

first time I heard someone preaching with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, so to speak. Everything was relevant; it was both social justice and pastoral.” Terry resonated with that intersection of theological principles that were transforming of one’s inner space with the emphasis on action in the world for justice. “What touched me was not just the words — it’s not rational, it’s in the heart. I started learning a lot from Regas and all the other priests and deepening my faith.”

When Terry came to All Saints in 1995, he was studying under a Buddhist monk. A few years later, Terry thanked the Buddhist monk for bringing him back to Christianity in a way — “because Buddhism was getting too hard for me,” Terry explained, laughing. To this day, though, Terry describes himself as still having a lot of Buddhist concepts in his faith, such as non-attachment and impermanence. Moreover, Buddhism had opened Terry up to hear Regas, and his understanding of and preaching of Christianity. It really helped me to hear that “I didn’t have to check my brain or any part of me at the door.”

Terry would go on to serve in the lay leadership of the church, including one term on the Vestry in the early 2000s and participation on four discernment committees. Through being of service in this way, Terry observes, “we participants also got a lot for our own spiritual and faith development.”

One of the aspects of All Saints that stood out for Terry from the start was its hospitality and inclusiveness: “There were only a few churches that were so welcoming and inclusive.” Terry was also involved with events for GALAS — Gays and Lesbians at All Saints. With his professional experience as a therapist, Terry helped with the pastoral care at All Saints, including helping start the lay counseling ministry.

Terry observes that his experience at All Saints was directly connected to the work he did in the broader community, even if it was translated from the language of faith to a more secular stance. “What All Saints did — music, preaching, liturgy, prayers, community — was to give me a model that gave me a lot of inspiration for my work. My colleagues knew and saw this, and some of them who were not particularly religious would encourage me to go to All Saints for inspiration. All Saints taught me faith-based social justice, and I translated that into value-based social programs. All Saints gave me the foundation”

Terry retired in 2020, but he hasn’t retired from All Saints or his own lifelong spiritual growth and formation. He’s in year three of the Education for Ministry (EfM) program right now at All Saints and he serves as a Lay Eucharistic Minister, taking Communion to people who are unable to come to church for health or other reasons. “It’s a holy honor

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to serve in that capacity,” he says.

Terry and his partner Michael Zeldin belong to one church — and three Jewish temples. Terry describes himself as a “Christian with a Bu-Jew streak” (Buddhist-Jewish.) Terry says he has really been learning a lot from the Jewish community — participating along with Michael has really deepened my faith. “Michael was worried when we first met that ‘this Jesus guy would stand in the way of our relationship,’” Terry laughs. But in fact, when Michael came to All Saints, he found, Terry said, that the faith and the social justice are so similar” to the reformed Jewish tradition.

Michael and Terry have been together for 16 years and live in Encino. One of Michael’s daughters lives across the street from them, with three of their granddaughters. Michael and Terry had a blessing of their house and of their relationship a month before lockdown in 2020, with All Saints priest Susan Russell and a Rabbi officiating together. “We’re very lucky,” Terry says.

“I love All Saints for allowing me to experience all of this, and not having me check any part of me outside.”

### **Question 1: What’s one thing you’re the most grateful for about All Saints Church?**

*“I am deeply thankful that All Saints offers me a loving community in which I can be fully myself and deepen my faith journey.”*

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

*“There are so many favorite memories. If I must choose one, it would be the first session in 1996 of my Covenant Class (now “Getting Connected”). Rector Ed Bacon was introducing All Saints to our group, and I asked Ed in the Q & A how our church would see other religions. Ed gave an answer to our class that was filled with respect, reverence, and humility by echoing [author and philosopher] Huston Smith’s response when that eminent scholar of world religions was asked about what the great leaders of religious traditions would do if they were all put into one room. Huston reportedly said that he believed they would all be silent and in awe of each other. “I remembered thinking to myself at that moment that I could hang out at All Saints — and I did, and I have, for almost 30 years since then.”*

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

*“I hope that All Saints will never stop pushing the envelope of inclusion, listening, and learning, so that God’s version of justice, love, and compassion for all can become closer to reality. At All Saints, we have a history of expanding the table in ways that could be challenging to us, especially when we listen to those who are marginalized, instead of thinking that we know the answers. To be open to hearing what the Spirit is saying to us and to doing what is uncomfortable — that is often challenging. But I truly appreciate All Saints for always trying to do so. My greatest hope for All Saints is that we will never cease to expand the meaning and practice of inclusion, even if what we are called to do might make us uncomfortable.”*

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