

Biography Statement: Rodger Y. Nishioka**Childhood**

I was born the second son to Richard and Alice Nishioka in Honolulu, Hawaii, where my father was serving as an assistant pastor at the Makiki Christian Church (United Church of Christ).

My earliest consistent memory is of waking up and walking into the living room to see my Dad reading the Bible. Later, when I was seven or eight years-old, I asked him if he was what was called a “slow reader” because it was taking him so long to read the Bible. I remember he smiled and said that he was reading the Bible over and over. When I asked him why, he told me it was because he loved the Bible. That was the first time I heard him say that, and it has instilled in me a similar love for the Bible.

At 11 years-old, my father was called to be co-pastor of the Japanese Presbyterian Church of Seattle. That move was significant in that it dramatically changed my worldview. Until then, I thought being Japanese-American was normal in the United States. I also thought the sun shining every day and going to the beach to swim on Christmas Day was normal.

Adolescence

I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained as a ruling elder at 17 years-old at the Japanese Presbyterian Church.

I attended the Presbyterian Youth Triennium at 19 years-old and experienced for the first time the breadth and depth of the Presbyterian Church nationally and globally.

Adulthood

After graduating from Seattle Pacific University, a Free-Methodist affiliated school and my first “Christian” schooling experience, I served for a year as a Volunteer in Mission in the Youth and Young Adult office at the Program Agency of the United Presbyterian Church in New York City. I continued to learn and grow in my faith and experience the wider church.

After teaching public school (middle school English and Social Studies), I joined the General Assembly staff in Louisville, KY, as a church school curriculum editor for youth and eventually as coordinator for youth and young adult ministry. I served for 13 years as national staff. During this time, I earned my theological degree from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

I then was called to teach at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. I earned my Ph.D. in social and cultural foundations of education at Georgia State University and received tenure and was elected to the Benton Family Chair in Christian Education. I served for 15 years at Columbia.

In April, 2016, I was called to serve as the director of Adult Educational Ministries at Village Presbyterian Church here in Prairie Village, KS. In May, 2017, the Session voted to change my position to “senior associate”. I continue to marvel at how God’s grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9) in all ways and it is by that grace that I seek ordination to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament as a teaching elder.