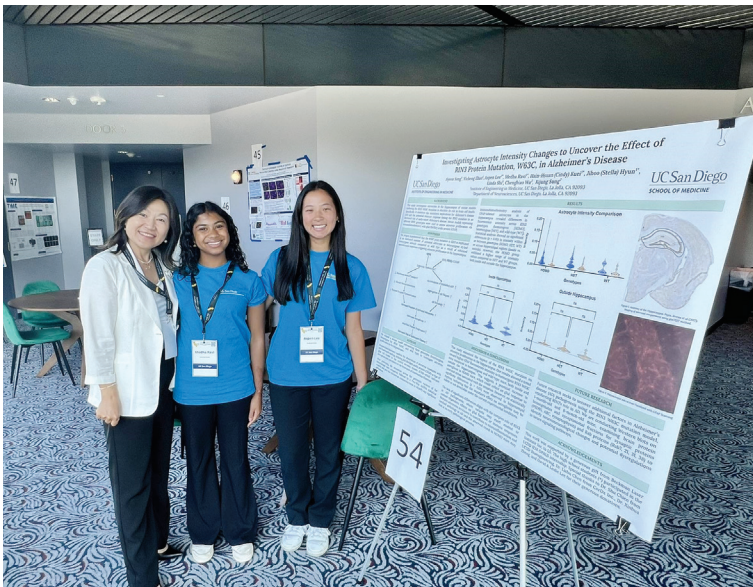


Student Reporter

The Ins and Outs of the Bioengineering Conference



Aspen Lee  
Grade 11  
Santa Fe Christian School



My advisor guiding me and my groupmate in setting up our poster for our presentation at the BIC Conference. [Source: Dr. Shi]

This year, the University of California (UC) Systemwide Bioengineering Symposium was held at the University of California, Irvine, and consisted of topics focused on "Molecules to Medicine: The Continuum of Biomedical Discovery." Once a year, various labs from every UC campus come together to present, share, and discuss their newest conclusions and ongoing research with one another. This in-

cludes professors, undergraduate students, PhD students, and even some high school students. The Bioengineering Institute of California (BIC) Conference invited distinguished professionals from the bioengineering field to host lectures that include emerging research ideas from their labs. In total, there were six sessions on different major topics in the bioengineering field. Among

these were Synthetic, Systems, and Computational Biology; Neuro, Cardiovascular, and Organ System Engineering; and Regenerative Medicine, Tissue Engineering, and Biomaterials. An established individual from their respective field led every talk, accompanied by professors or students from UC labs, who spoke on their current research. The conference provided various coffee and snack breaks that allowed for a time to connect with the other people attending and to prepare for individual presentations. Although one of the purposes of such a conference is to expand one's knowledge in their field and stay updated on emerging conclusions, another key takeaway is the connections made along the way. Director of the Biophotonics Technology Center at UCSD, Dr. Linda Shi, emphasizes that she "makes an effort to remember at least two people from every conference" she attends and to send them an email after. In particular, the BIC conference welcomes booths from every UC school, biotech companies in the area such as Johnson&Johnson and Element Biosciences, and medical technology-manufacturing companies like Braun Medical. However, the highlight of BIC this year was the poster sessions.

On both days of the conference, UC students or interns were able to present their research through a poster symposium focused on bioengineering. Through an application period months prior, a team of professors and researchers accepted a total of 136 posters and abstracts. Each group or individual had a section of the floor and could set up their poster to present to anyone who came by. Through an internship at UCSD, I had the opportunity to attend and present at this conference as well. Over the past few months, my group and I worked to identify the varying function and intensity of astrocytes, a type of glial cell that is a large part of our nervous system, when a specific protein mutation, RIN3, was present in Alzheimer's Disease. Although I was unable to fully understand all of the lectures and presentations, it was inspiring and memorable to hear from recognized people in academia and industry. As a result of this conference, I met PhD and undergraduate students who were from places across the world, from study abroad programs in South Korea to my hometown, San Diego, who are on the same path that I hope to walk on in my future.

Student Reporter

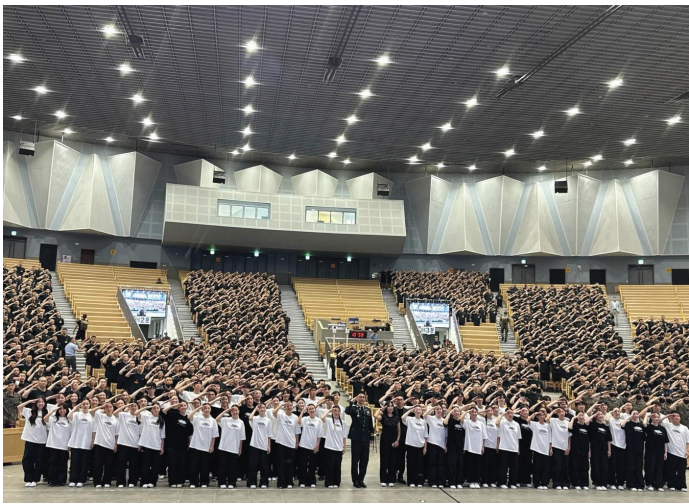
K-Tour: More than Just Performing



Kaylyn Wee  
Grade 10  
Ayala High School

Recently, I was given the opportunity to go on a mission trip to South Korea with my dance ministry and performing company. As a team, we normally had two performances daily, including places such as schools, churches, a military camp, and even a prison. This trip was known as Korea Tour (aka K-Tour), and these two weeks were more than just performances - they were a time for growth, bonding, and outreach. Through dance and music, we aimed to share the love of God, be vessels of hope, and serve the people of Korea.

Practice for this mission trip began the first week of January, meaning we had approximately six months to prepare. This year, nine songs were performed, specifically six dancing and three singing songs. Every Saturday, alongside our usual rehearsal with the whole team, the K-Tour group would practice from seven to ten PM. For the three hours, we worked on all of the sets of songs; additionally, the leaders heavily emphasized preparing our hearts. We knew we were not going to Korea to have fun, but to share the gospel. In our team's group chat, one person would be chosen to send a message, saying what kind of impact we hoped we would have, and pray for protection and unity. With all this preparation, we were ready



During K-Tour, we visited and performed at a military base. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]



There would be bonding time during meals, and the team would get to know each other. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

to spread the gospel in Korea. Along with our performances, we would prioritize worship daily. As a result, the team would do morning devotionals on the bus and partake in frequent worship sessions at night. Because of this, many people were able to strengthen their faith and come back to what was important. We would also have fun days as well; for example, we went to Lotte World, which is a theme park in Seoul, to Namsan Tower, had a spa day, and enjoyed a few shopping days. We ate delicious food at different restaurants, churches, and schools, and we went to the convenience stores to try new snacks.

Although there were incidents such as injuries and even a bus accident, as a team, we focused on our mission and strived forward. This was my second year as a part of K-Tour, and I had multiple favorite moments. For instance, I was able to connect with many of the younger members. On the bus rides, we would talk, sing karaoke, and play games with each other. I felt this tour gave me more opportunities to get to know other people that I had been training with for six months and become closer friends. I also enjoyed the worship sessions, especially the morning devotionals on the bus. After reading the Bible, discus-

sions would begin, and the team would start to open up to each other. Overall, I think this K-Tour was very memorable. Looking back, I realized this trip was one of the most impactful experiences I have had. Every moment felt purposeful, whether it was the devotionals or simple games on the bus. I grew spiritually and learned what humility was while serving others. Although there were challenges thrown our way, we remained focused on our mission. Even though it was not an easy experience, I am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to be part of something so powerful.

Student Reporter

Beneath Seoul: An Alternate City Right Under Everybody



Robin Ryul Kang  
Grade 10  
Palos Verdes Peninsula High School

In Seoul, beneath the prominent city shone upon by sunlight, exists an alternative that is as important as the one above it. The underground is not just utilized for public transportation, as many foreigners may think, but for all sorts of things: shopping, dining, art exhibitions—you name it. Over 9.9 million people rely on it daily; accordingly, the alternate city must operate with machine-like precision, quiet decorum, and an untarnished system. Seoul's underground consists of 23 subway lines and over 700 stations, weaving through every corner of the city. It is one of the most comprehensive underground structures in the world, rivaling that of Tokyo and easily surpassing other major cities like Los Angeles, New York City, and Paris. This isn't the only upside, however. Usually, an enclosed area that is used by thousands of people every single hour shouldn't be polished and cleansed as if it were newly built. Nevertheless, Seoul's alternate city is unusual; it is rather difficult to find a single piece of litter on the ground,

graffiti on the walls, or stains on the common places. Moreover, the public restrooms are open for everybody and kept clean like a hospital. Nowhere you go can you find stench; as a solicitous substitute in some places, there lingers the smell of perfumes from retailers that sell such items. If you are looking for something to fill your stomach, the subway station, ironically, is a quality place to head to. In close proximity to several underground stations in Seoul, there are such variant restaurants that are no different from the ones above. Looking for some dessert? No problem—like a gift that comes in pairs, places where you can grab desserts, such as cafés, are guaranteed to be right next to restaurants. Additionally, after eating, you might be able to further fill up your wardrobe, because near some of the stations, especially the Express Bus Terminal Station, there are hundreds of clothing retailers lined up in a straight pathway for a whopping 600 meters. In many ways, Seoul's underground stations are not just a swift conduit from place to place;



Seoul's underground is not just a place for commuting. Therefore, anyone can stop, relax, and enjoy some savory food. [Source: Author, Robin Ryul Kang]

rather, they could be a place you arrive at, offering a satisfactory experience with food, fashion, and convenience. Technology is another impetus for the greatness of Seoul's underground. Payment is 99% of the time contactless, done using T-Money cards or mobile apps like KakaoPay. Live tracking apps are astonishingly accurate, displaying the exact location, arrival time, and even the crowding of

specific trains. Multilingual announcements help even non-Korean speakers navigate the places with ease. In Seoul, the underground is more than just an infrastructure for mere transportation. It is like a parallel city running beneath the ground, where people eat, shop, socialize, and of course, commute. It mirrors the rhythm of the city above while assertively supporting it from below.



Student Reporter

## What’s On My Plate Travels Through Time



Linda Li  
Grade 11  
Crean Lutheran High School



My mom made me Bibimbap the day I came home because I told her that I have been craving it for a long time. [Source: Author, Linda Li]



Me when I was five years old trying to figure out how to fold dumplings, a memory that will last a lifetime. [Source: Author, Linda Li]

Till this day, I still reminisce about the moment, a special gift treasured deep inside my heart: as I stepped into the kitchen, I was wrapped and embraced by the savory scent, so memorable that for all these years, I have not found an alternative. The unique experience of growing up in a multicultural household shaped me into an authentic and enthusiastic foodie. As I entered my high school years, I started to live by myself, and food became my sole solace. However, no matter how

fast I devoured the different kinds of food laid out before me, I still desired my mom’s homemade Chinese dumplings and bibimbap. Recently, I returned home and was finally reunited with my family. Together, we had tons of dinner, and of course, I was fed by my parents and thus constantly experiencing the contentment that I had longed for. As time passed, I began to wonder why I was obsessed with those simple home-cooked meals and how

much it meant to me, not me, Linda, but me as a Korean Chinese. Though my grandparents were based in Daegu, I was born in China. Growing up, I did not seem to understand this “combo,” and to answer my questions, my mom made efforts by recounting her childhood life, and this situation has lasted till now. On July 26th, my 16th birthday, my family gathered in the drawing room, and without realizing it, we started talking about our childhood memories. Honest-

ly, I was so focused on gobbling up the cake that I did not pay too much attention. Despite the fact that I forgot almost everything, my mom’s recollection of her favorite memory lingered in my mind. According to her description, on a specific day during autumn, everyone in her neighborhood would make Kimchi together. While the adults were complaining about how time flies, the kids put the Kimchi into a cellar designed to preserve it. “Whenever I bring up this experience, it makes my heart flutter,” she said, “I wish I could go back.” As the words echoed in my head, everything suddenly made sense, as if a beam of light penetrated the haze. “This is what I have been looking for,” I said to myself. During all this time, what I craved for was not the food, but my home: a place that holds the bits and pieces of my journey growing up, and where I matter because of who I am. Culture for us, as immigrants, is not a plain traditional dish nor a holiday that we celebrate together; it is something that helps us stay resilient amid the challenges we face far from home. It reminded us that no matter where we are, there is a piece of home that travels with us.

Student Reporter

## CO<sub>2</sub> Capture at Hanyang’s Civil Engineering Lab



Charis Kim  
Grade 10  
The Science Academy  
STEM Magnet



The AP system has a sensor (left), an air purifier (right), a power bank, and a glove. [Source: Author, Charis Kim]

The rise of carbon dioxide has been a growing global environmental problem contributing to climate change. My summer internship at Hanyang University’s Civil Engineering Lab approaches this problem through the use of activated carbon (AC) in air purifiers (AP). When put through the AP system, AC absorbs (binds to) CO<sub>2</sub>, lowering its concentration. My goal is to enhance the adsorption rate to modify the AC chemically or physically. However, before modification, we have to see the performance of the untreated AC. So, what exactly is activated carbon? Activated carbon is a form of carbon processed to increase surface area through small pores. These characteristics allow it to adsorb substances during water and air purification. With atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels around 400 ppm, AC exposed to open air quickly becomes saturated. This means it must be conditioned—essentially cleaned—before experimentation. (Experimenting with unconditioned AC will not yield any results.) The condi-

tioning machine will heat the AC and allow nitrogen (N<sub>2</sub>) to flow through, cleaning the pores. Similar to double-cleansing in skincare: clearing out impurities so the material can function effectively. After conditioning, the AC will go into the AP system—an

airtight chamber that has an air purifier, portable battery, and CO<sub>2</sub> inside. After the AC and the desired amount of CO<sub>2</sub> are inside the chamber, I run the experiment for two hours. So far, my time in Korea has consisted of running these types of experiments. Over the past few weeks,

I’ve been conducting trials and have recently begun experimenting with AC modifications. I’m excited to see whether these changes will improve CO<sub>2</sub> adsorption efficiency. Besides experimentation, I am enjoying the different, unique learning environment. My work takes place in the Advanced Materials & Chemical Engineering Building. This building has a 7-Eleven downstairs and a student cafeteria on the seventh floor. It is safe to say I’ve been enjoying the food and convenience store experience. Besides these amenities, there are many places to eat and explore. When exiting line two from the subway, you are immediately greeted by a beautiful campus. My first day was sunny, so the campus looked as if it came out of a brochure. Until now, this internship has been a great experience. I am able to travel and enjoy my vacation while maintaining a productive summer fueled with learning. I hope to gain more knowledge by the end of summer and leave with a sense of satisfaction.

Student Reporter

## Behind the Scenes of the Lotus Festival



Jordyn Bak  
Grade 10  
Mira Costa High School



Mehee hanbok models taking a photo backstage after the Lotus Festival fashion show. [Source: Ashley Choibak]

One of LA’s popular summer events is the Lotus Festival in Echo Park. This year’s 44th Annual Lotus Festival celebrated the culture of South Korea during the middle of July. I had the opportunity to be a part of the festival’s performers as a hanbok fashion model for Meehee hanbok. As a performer, I was able to get a glimpse of what it was like behind the scenes of these events. From musical performances to hair shows, I was able to see a variety of performances and even got the chance to interview some performers. I asked Rachel Park, a model for the Lotus Festival hair show and the Pageant Director of Hiteen USA, what her favorite part of participating in the Lotus Festival was, and she replied that “Seeing my girls on stage again [as models] showing growth since being in Hiteen.” Many of the performers, like Hiteen USA girls, were actually growing students. Jayne You, a high school musician from Doodream, a music company specializing in Korean traditional percussion groups called Samulnori, performed in the morning and afternoon with her group. She said, “Hanging out with my fellow team members while performing at these events brings me a great sense of community.” Despite most of the students being born in America,

groups like Doodream, who participate in cultural events like the Lotus Festival, make great efforts to connect to their culture while sharing it with the community. Although there are many joys to being a performer, it is definitely not easy. Much preparation was needed to ensure a quality show. We were all given our designs beforehand, so we had an understanding of how to present them. Modeling traditional clothing is not particularly easy and requires models to understand how to present such unique attire. Two rehearsals were also

necessary before the festival to familiarize ourselves not only with the design but also with the stage. Most of the Lotus Festival models had to arrive at a Beauty Salon hours before the show was scheduled. Some had to come as early as 9:00 AM to ensure there was enough time for every model to get their makeup done. I, however, was fortunate to get a time slot in the afternoon. Call time was 5:00 PM, while the performance was scheduled at 7:00 PM, which ended up getting delayed. When I asked Rei Bang, one of the Mehee hanbok models, what

his general thoughts on the Lotus Festival were, he said, “Pretty unorganized, but the event itself is a great message for spreading Asian cultures... I just wish it were a better-put-together festival.” I certainly agree with Rei Bang’s stance; the delayed timings for performances and backstage were a bit hectic to manage. However, the fact remains that the Lotus Festival was a great event to connect the community to Korean culture with various performances. So next year, if you’re in Los Angeles, check out the Lotus Festival.



Online Publication

## Alive and Unalive: A Teen’s Perspective



Heeyoung Kim  
Grade 10  
Dublin High School



Me, recovering three days after the accident, and excited to become a squad leader at the next camp. [Source: Author, Heeyoung Kim]

At 8:47 PM on July 24, 2025, right in the middle of my mother’s birthday song-her phone rang. A calm, flat voice came through: “Is this Heeyoung’s mother? Your daughter had an accident in the woods... Please come pick her up as soon as possible.” Her heart lurched as she saw the sky pitch dark.

I had been at a camp deep in the Redwood forest, excited to bond with my Sky Blue spaceship team. We’d spent the afternoon running and capturing the flag until the forest grew dim. Then came the blindfolded “trust walk.” My heart raced with nerves, walking into the dark woods, relying only on my leader’s voice and my teammates’ hands. We stumbled in circles around the redwoods-over

roots, beneath branches- my sense of direction slipping.

My group leader instructed us to carefully step over branches and thorns hidden beneath our feet. Suddenly, something sharp struck me. Pain shot through my leg, spreading to my right arm, which felt numb like a mosquito bite. That’s strange. I could have sworn I put on bug repellent. I am allergic to mosquito bites, so I immediately felt I had to get myself out of there. However, the pain quickly worsened, my leg grew weak, and my head began to spin. My body collapsed into the dirt, shock setting in as my mind started to fade.

The last thing I heard before blacking out was my leaders’ screams of alarm and my team-

mates’ terrified voices. I felt like a statue, rolling down a cliff, but unable to move or respond. I tumbled in shock, scraping and banging my head hard against the ground. I tried to scream for help: “HELP! SOMEONE, PLEASE! I’M BEGGING YOU!” Then, nothing but darkness.

When I slowly regained consciousness, I heard a familiar voice calling to me: “Emily? Please get up.” My head was light and heavy at once. My body moved without me thinking-legs limping as if on their own. Opening my eyes, I saw stars twinkling above. My lungs burned out as I gasped for air, but I couldn’t breathe deeply and steadily. I was placed in a metal chair, legs elevated on another chair. Tears ran down my cheeks as overwhelming pain and panic crashed over me. I couldn’t control my body.

Then a frantic voice broke through the haze: “Oh my god, there are hornets on her leg! Someone get me a glove!” Fear flooded over me more than any bug bite I’d had before. I glanced down and saw a swollen, blistered red mark. The EMT struggled to stay calm while screams echoed outside. My heart hammered as pain and shock consumed me.

For hours, the EMT called my name, urging me to breathe with her, but my body was trapped between consciousness and shutdown. Sometimes I answered, sometimes I couldn’t. I remember her introducing herself as Lind-

say Wildlife and telling me to call my mother. The head camp leader asked me to state my parents’ names and phone numbers-a question everyone should know. I couldn’t recall. Later, they told my mother I was giving out wrong numbers and confusing names. All of this on her birthday!

When fully conscious, I was told I had screamed in fear and pain, yelling, “I DON’T WANT TO GO TO THE DOCTOR! I DON’T WANT TO GO TO THE AMBULANCE! IT COSTS MONEY!”

I was shocked by my own words, sounding like a seven-year-old.

Thankfully, the EMT monitored my vitals closely and didn’t call 911. After what felt like an endless night, I finally woke in a haze, dizzy but alive. Faith, my EMT, was relieved. She explained I had gone into shock and panic-ironically, the same day our team had learned how to help someone in shock, though none of us were prepared when it happened to me.

I felt sadness and frustration, but above all, grateful. That night, I experienced what it’s like to be bitten by five hornets, to lose control of my body and mind, and to see real rescuers in action. I was the main character of the story that I never wanted to be, but I don’t want to forget. Next summer, I’ll return to camp-this time ready to lead, to have fun, and make sure no one else goes through this crazy experience as I once did!

Student Reporter

## Squid Game US: Is It Necessary?



Yerin Park  
Grade 11  
Seoul International School

In the last 10 years, Korean culture has expanded beyond the borders of Korea through both media and music. Groups such as BTS and Blackpink were remarkable in breaking pre-established records and continuously breaking the new ones that each other set. Other than K-pop, there are also K-Dramas and K-Movies that spread Korean culture on a global scale. The movies include award-winning Parasite, and K-Dramas include All of Us Are Dead. Amidst the many popular groups, movies, and shows, the hit drama Squid Game, which was released in 2021, broke the internet completely.

With its release, Squid Game was ranked the #1 show in every one of the 93 countries that offer a top ten list. This was the first show in history to achieve this within its release week, and broke the record for most views of a show in its first three days of release. The actors and actresses had their followings increasing exponentially, with acknowledgements from everywhere around the globe. Shortly after, many began anticipating a season 2 and even 3.

After three years of high anticipation, the cast for the second season was revealed. To many



Enjoying season 2 of Squid Games: the originality and the culture are a big part that would be missed in a US version. [Source: Author, Yerin Park]

people’s surprise, it consisted of highly acknowledged and well-known figures within the industry. With many claiming that this was only natural following the success of the first series, many claimed that this choice made the season lose its original appeal and sense of realism, with the familiar faces detracting from the experience it initially gave. Many viewers also didn’t like the idea of a second season, as it would most

likely not reach the high expectations that the first season set, as well as ruin the originality of the first season.

On a better note, seasons two and three also received a lot of love for including new games that viewers did not expect. The cinematography and music were both aspects of the show that improved drastically compared to the first season, making each game more interesting to watch.

New games, such as Mingle in season two and Jump Rope in season three, also added to the appeal of the later series. The last scene of the last episode of season three hinted that Squid Game is continuously taking place in different countries, one being in America, with many believing that this hints at the possibility of a new series of Squid Game based in the US.

While this may be a new experience as well as a way to show off the diverse childhood games that the US has, many, including myself, believe that this season shouldn’t be made. Firstly, it is the cultural dilution that this show would result in. Deeply rooted in Korean culture and the language, having a new US version may misrepresent what the global viewers had resonated within the first three seasons. The new show would also be redundant, as three seasons based on games and a similar storyline have already been aired, and viewers might begin to lose interest quickly. It is also evident that they are choosing profit over the message, and that the main purpose of creating another season in the US is for success rather than preserving the message that the first three seasons gave.

Student Reporter

## Hanbit Church Praise Team “Sanctifice”



Kristine Park  
Grade 10  
Del Norte High School

First established in 1989, Hanbit Church has been located in San Diego for over three decades. Since its establishment, it has grown to have multiple ministries, such as the youth, adult, and college ministries. Amid the youth ministry is the Hanbit Praise Team, a group of student leaders and musicians who dedicate their time, talent, and dedication to leading worship for both middle and high school students every Sunday. Not only do these high schoolers play instruments, but they also make it their mission to serve in their ministry to strengthen their faith with God as well as their fellow peers.

The praise team uses instruments that people would usually find in a worship group: 2 piano positions, electric guitar, bass, acoustic guitar, drums, and vocals. Weekly assignments for songs generally remain the same throughout the season. This year, the High School praise team is led by leaders Kristine Park (Grade 11) and Elliot Yang (Grade 12).

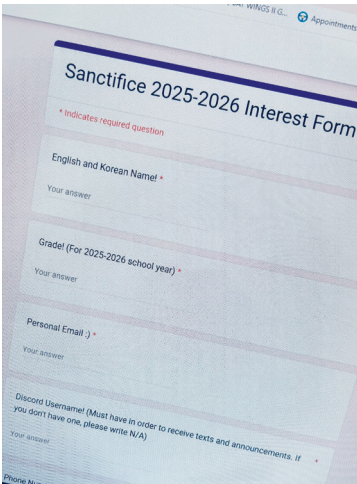
They’ve dedicated themselves to helping team members feel more comfortable with each other while also welcoming new faces into the group. Each member in the team is encouraged to grow as a spiritual leader and to model what it looks like to worship on Sundays with a pure heart.

Every week, the praise team leaders select three songs to lead worship with. The song setlist consists of an upbeat song and two quiet ones performed by singers such as Chris Tomlin and Elevation Worship. Song selections also focus on creating a story to ensure transitions between songs and to continue building a narrative for the youth ministry to follow. Many of these pieces are also related to the sermon, giving them a deeper message.

Right now, for the high school praise team, it’s audition season, one of the most exciting yet nerve-racking times of the year for auditionees. Students interested in joining the team are required to fill out a detailed application

form and perform two worship songs in front of the leaders. It’s a process that uses musical ability and spiritual readiness to determine acceptance into the team. However, auditions aren’t all about playing the right notes and wowing the people with your musical abilities. It’s also important to find students who make a good first impression and truly show their understanding of the importance of worship leadership and an eagerness to help guide others in their faith. As a leader myself, I also agree that while listening to auditionees, we don’t look for perfection. Elliot Yang says, “As leaders, it is our mission to make sure we can look for people who are willing to grow in our church’s environment.”

Joining Hanbit Church’s praise team has been one of the most memorable experiences at church. I’ve personally seen how much this team is built on care, commitment, and a shared sense of purpose within the members, and have also personally felt my



Before playing in person, auditionees need to fill out a form to join the Hanbit Church praise team. [Source: Author, Kristine Park]

faith growing stronger through these bonds. For Hanbit Church, the praise team is not about having a perfect performance; rather, it’s more about supporting each other and understanding what it means to worship with sincerity and joy.