

# GOING FORTH!

Romans 1:16

# 新型コロナウイルス

## DID YOU KNOW...?

The "Corona Virus" in Japanese is called, "Sheen Gata Korona Weeroos," (written at left) which means, "NEW FORM OF CORONA VIRUS," from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS Co-Vi2). Medical terms used in Japan come from the German language, so "Virus" is pronounced the German way, "wee-roos," "cast" is "gibisu (from gipsbein, pronounced "gee-boo-soo in Japanese), "x-ray" is "röntgen" (pronounced "ren-toh-gen").

In these uncertain times, our family has been encouraged by on-line messages, sermons, and devotions shared by pastors, youth leaders, and members of our support churches in America. Recently, a teenager from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, IN, shared a verse that gave him hope. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." (Psalm 46:1-3)

Even though the numbers affected by this virus (shown on colored maps like the one of Japan above) fluctuate up & down each day like sea waves, and jolt us in surges like earthquakes, and it feels like everything is falling apart, **our God is our Strength.** What comfort that verse is! Many thanks to those of you who share your devotions online and help us to feel closer to family and friends.

When Japan's Prime Minister announced on February 27 that all schools nationwide were to close beginning March 2, the Urawa Lutheran School (ULS) administrators swung into action. Final exams leading up to the close of the academic year on March 19 were just ending, so parents were quickly notified that all students were to return to campus one more day to receive their test results so that final grades could be calculated.

Our school doors closed on March 3 to students, while all the faculty continued to commute into work on a staggered schedule. As report cards were prepared (something that is traditionally still done by hand at our school) the administration masterfully and creatively organized a way to still hold a graduation ceremony

for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 9<sup>th</sup> grade & 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. At the bottom of this page you see the official graduation of the Twelfth Graders, in their traditional kimono, but with masks & "social distance" between graduates and families.

Students were only allowed two seats for family members, disappointed that more extended family could not attend, but so happy that the ceremony could still be held. (Rental of the kimono, early morning salon appointments, & photography studio sittings couldn't be rescheduled, so parents were grateful that they could share this special day.

## APRIL UPDATE!

On April 7, Prime Minister Abe announced that 7 prefectures, including Tokyo and Saitama, where we live, are under a State of Emergency. All going out, unless necessary, is strongly recommended against. School children will remain home from school until the middle of May.

ULS teachers had made many plans for the beginning of the new school year from the first week in April, making elaborate schedules allowing only a couple of grades at a time to come to school for a few hours to collect textbooks and homework. (Each student would only come to campus one day a week.)

After Mr. Abe's announcement, teachers had to REscramble the schedules to mail all of the books to students' homes with notes for the weekly homework, empty self-addressed envelopes to mail in the completed homework, and set up of a few online options for at-home practice.



Having a school that houses Elementary (gr. 1-6), Junior High (7-9), & Senior High (10-12) together on one campus is extremely unique in this country, so this annual "Commencement" ceremony has always been held with great pride. Not being able to honor our students, especially the high school seniors who have graced our classrooms and halls for twelve straight years, would be a great shame, so the leaders went into action and produced a scaled-down version.

Only the three graduating classes – 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, & 12<sup>th</sup> with 2 family members – were allowed in the gym on March 19 for the celebration, which was followed by a short send-off of the seniors in the ULS chapel. It may not have had all the pomp of other years, along with special guest speakers, but many parents expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the school leaders that this special event was NOT cancelled like so many other traditional gatherings at other schools throughout Japan. 🌸



**PHOTO at Left:** At the Commencement Ceremony, one Elementary student representative for her class (*wearing a dusky brown uniform*) and a Junior High student (*in brown and plaid*) wait to receive a diploma for all.

Later in their individual classrooms (**see PHOTO below**), students received their individual certificates from their homeroom teacher.



For the last several years, Japanese people have been seen wearing masks in

public, almost a part of the culture. Here is a list of the common reasons given when asked.

1. **Being sick** – not spreading your germs. Not being considerate by NOT wearing a mask when (even slightly) ill is considered to be rude.
2. **Not wanting to get sick** – "While it is a courtesy to wear a mask when you're sick, a lot of people don't. Especially if you have to ride the packed trains in big cities like Tokyo, it's extremely easy to catch a cold. It's so narrow, that people can't even cover their mouth or nose, so masks can help to protect you from germs."
3. **Allergies** - many people are allergic to "sugi" (杉, Japanese cedar tree) or "hinoki" (ヒノキ, Japanese cypress) pollen. Wearing a mask when you go outside during hay fever season, helps alleviate the symptoms.
4. **Air Pollution** - Japan itself doesn't struggle much with air pollution, but many are heard to claim "sometimes the bad air from China is being blown over us."
5. **Dry Air** - Japanese surgical masks when taking a long flight helps with the dryness. "The air in airplanes is so dry, but wearing a mask will keep your mucous membranes moisturized."
6. **Shyness** – Many people wear masks to give them confidence or "something to hide behind," even as a substitute for makeup.
7. **Fashion** - It seems strange to write this now, in the middle of a serious pandemic, but an answer heard often is "fashion accessory." It seems silly now to talk about following mask trends with animation characters or decorative masks used to be "cool," or for reasons like avoiding smells in close quarters like trains, but there it is. 🌸

# NO MASK ZONE!

For a couple of years, before the students would come into Tom's classroom for English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) class, they would often see written on the board in large block letters – **NMZ** – reminding them that the room was to be a **No Mask Zone** to assist in facilitating the learning during ORAL English class.

With each lesson focusing on the Listening and Speaking components of English, it is vital that the teacher can see the efforts to correctly pronounce the words and phrases along with proper intonation. This has been a source of frustration for Tom during the *Kafunsho* (hay-fever) season when the spread of pollen from cedar and cypress trees would bring out face masks leading to muffled sounds coming from the mouths of his English conversation students. Surgical and homemade masks have been worn by students as fashion statements (*as well as other reasons, see side bar at left*) for several years.

As you have already guessed, this year the NMZ strategy has taken on a whole new meaning as any efforts to enforce such policy could get a teacher into trouble with the school's administration and perhaps even the local government. With the spread of a community virus, the use of masks is not only expected, but required. In fact, as the virus has spread, unfortunately so have the zones for "NO MASKS" as the availability of masks has been practically nil here in Japan, much like the rest of the world. May we all stay calm when we see panic over toilet paper or masks. May we show those around us the peace and joy we receive from the Holy



Spirit that helps us to live as His children. 🌸





# FROM JAPAN RAILWAY TO SUBWAY

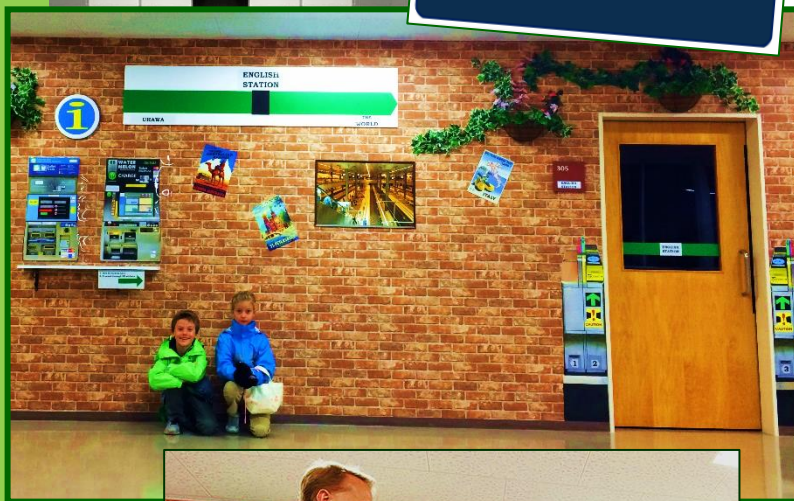
In March of 2016, a new classroom called “English Station” was designed and opened on the third floor of ULS. At the time (*see photo at right*), the ULS English Department wanted to create a place of multi-cultural imagination where students could come and engage in conversations that would open up new language opportunities. From English Station, students would be sent off into the world equipped with knowledge of others and themselves, all through the lens of the English language.

The inside of the classroom was decorated in a distinctly American style, including flags, destination posters, and many English catch phrases. The bookshelves contained books promoting creativity, adventure, and travel. After studying and spending time in ULS’s English Station, students were given a metaphorical “ticket” that would allow them access to the “train line headed toward many other English-speaking destinations.”

After four years of use (April 2016 – March 2020), the reputation of *English Station* has been very positive. Students have been able to study in a distinct foreign environment where they are expected to use only English. When walking through the “wickets” into the classroom, students seemed to turn on a mental switch and understood that English was to be the main language. The room was truly a space uniquely situated to provide a real-life glimpse into other cultures.

**Fortunately, and unfortunately, with the blessing of an abundance of new students heading into the 2020 academic year**, English Station on the Third floor will be transitioned back into a home-room for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In light of this unfortunate but necessary loss, it was critical for us to focus our attention on another location to create a similarly imaginative English-only environment. Through prayer and consultation with the administrators, the Lord led us 4 flights down to the basement and the ULS library.

When considering a design for the new space, it did not make sense to simply recreate the *English Station Terminal*, but we did want to maintain the “study English to GO places” concept. **So, focused on the basement location, we created a new theme, the “English Metro Subway.”** In the last few days, one corner of the library has been transformed into a space where the same expectations of healthy English conversation would apply. Although the location has changed, the English-Only “foreign environment” will not. Students will continue to be encouraged and challenged to use only English and to imagine various ways that they could confidently use the language in their future studies or employment. Down in the subway, they can “ride” several subway lines (*see list in black box*) on which to go on “Global Adventures,” use English with school guests & international visitors, stretch their English skills on the Summer Study trip, and make international friends. In those areas, English can only enhance their experiences and adventures! (*cont. on next page*)







What fun it is to creatively insert the Word of God into English classes! When discussing the topic of "Travel" in the **EFL textbook on the left**, for example, students will be pointed to Bible verses relevant to the topic and their own lives, like **Psalms 119:105 and Isaiah 30:21** (Whether you turn to the right or left, at your back, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way you should go. Walk in it.") When on the topic of "Communication & Body Language," students will be directed to **Mark 14:22** ("This is my body given for you...") and shown how Jesus was telling His disciples that He would give His life for them (and all of us) on the cross, demonstrating the ultimate Body Language!!

When discussing the popular topic of "Shopping," students will be asked to consider what it would be like if s/he were propped up in a store with a "For Sale" sign around their necks. What would be the price? Are they new or used? Any broken parts, stains or scars? Who would buy them? After a few giggles & some comments, students will be pointed to **1 Corinthians 6:19** and shown that they were indeed "bought with a price!" Not with yen or dollars, but with the blood of Jesus whose death and resurrection **BOUGHT** their home in Heaven.

Something else that will NOT change is that in every lesson **each student** in the room will hear the **Gospel of Jesus Christ!** As was done in English Station classes on the third floor, whenever possible the Bible will be utilized in addition to the regular English language textbooks. *(See examples in the side bar at the right of how we reach out to encourage students to find answers to the text's topics as well as many of life's issues!)* Our prayer is that we will take every opportunity here at school -- in the classrooms, hallways, and faculty room -- to intentionally share the Good News of God's Plan of Salvation with each student!



### APRIL UPDATE!

This year at ULS there has been some restructuring to start the new school year, so please pray for new leaders. May the Lord in His mercy guide them in their new roles, giving His strength and direction.



We have been called here to the Asian mission field as educational missionaries, supporting & supported by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), and many of you at home.

We especially want to thank the faithful team in Nebraska at **Mission Central**, Mr. Gary Thies, and Pastor Brent Smith for all of their help in telling our stories & recruiting churches and brothers & sisters in Christ to give prayer and financial support for our family & work in Japan! For more information, follow this link: <https://missioncentral.us/going/>  
Thank you!





# NOT CANCELLATIONS, JUST RAIN CHECKS!

We have heard of many cancellations of school proms & graduations, Spring musicals, vacations, and sports events from friends all over the world. We are learning to adapt to our new normal and live without things we once never imagined we would voluntarily give up, our family is also looking forward with expectation to 2 events in which we aren't able to participate during this season of uncertainty.

You may remember reading in our last newsletter about our Service Learning mission trip to Indonesia at the end of March. This was to be our family's first trip back since saying farewell to our friends, school, and ministry in Jakarta back in July 2013. We had looked forward to taking a ULS colleague, Michiko Ishii, to visit our former school and to serve some of the village schools along with a former co-worker, Hanna Parapat (pictured with us, above right, on one of our trips together). Of course, as the vicious virus took root around the world, these travels were also affected. Instead of hand-delivering solar-powered lamps to the Indonesian schools as planned, we will instead be shipping the gifts and pray that this mission trip will become a reality later this year or next.



## APRIL UPDATE!

Some have said that one reason that the virus is not spreading as rapidly in Japan is the culture of bowing rather than hugs or handshakes. Follow the link in our e-mail teaser to read more!



To date, the biggest influence the

virus has had on Japan is in regard to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The games' postponement will have a huge impact on Japan's economy, but not as much as if the Olympics had been totally cancelled (\$6 billion versus \$40 billion according to the Japan Times newspaper). Delaying the Opening Ceremonies until July 23, 2021 will mean having to rebook all the venues and area hotels, along with ticketing. The change directly affected our family as Tom had been accepted as an official volunteer for the 2020 games and had just a few weeks ago been assigned to serve at the two basketball venues. **Now we will see what the Lord has planned for these two exciting opportunities in the future!**

**PHOTO at Left:** You can see the disappointed anticipation of a postponement on our faces when we visited the official Olympic Clock in front of iconic Tokyo Station one day before the announcement. Isaac & Megumi are frantically trying to unplug the clock to give us more time! As you can tell by the **photo above** with the beautiful five Rings and brand new Olympic Stadium looming behind us, we are excited to be involved in the global sports event, even in 2021. **At the top right,** a wonderful memory of an adventure to Kalimantan in October of 2012 with Miss Hanna Parapat. We can't wait for the next opportunity to serve with her again! May the Lord guide our steps to Indonesia to finish our Service Learning projects and start some new ones!

During these uncertain times of daily updates, watching maps (see Japan's current Corona map on p. 1) update us on numbers of infections and clusters of patients,

we want to encourage each other to keep our eyes on God's mercy & grace. In the Bible, the Lord says more than 350 times, "Do not be afraid," and He reminds us that He will always be beside us with strength, peace, and comfort. He has a Plan in human history & it is going forward, to bring glory to Himself, but more importantly to Him, to bring us to know His love for us!

Debi has been homeschooling the kids, so their schedule does not change much, aside from sports and music classes being cancelled. Scout & club meetings are done online. For some kids, this might be a time that they are happy to have a holiday from school, but when your mom is your teacher, you don't get a break! When the new school year was planned to have begun on April 7, Debi plans to start school at home, even if Japanese kids aren't going back to school yet! ULS will be starting school mostly online and with a drastically adjusted schedule, with only a couple of grades coming to school each day. Pray for the ULS teachers as they put the educational & SPIRITUAL needs of their kids FIRST!





# OVER THE YEARS

This year, 2020, marks thirty years since we first left America for the mission fields here in Asia! It was 30 years ago, April of 1990, when Tom was led to St. Louis to interview at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis in the office of Mr. Les Schmidt.

That meeting with Les was a vital turning point in Tom's life, sending him to lay-missionary training that June and later to Concordia Portland for ESL

training and on to Tokyo to join the Volunteer Youth Ministry (VYM) program.

Exactly three years later, Debi sat in front of the same missionary recruiter, not in his office, but rather at IHOP near Concordia's campus in Irvine, California. Debi walked into the breakfast meeting with her heart being pulled toward Africa to fulfill a dream to serve the Lord as a missionary in a rural setting. She was stunned when Les said, "I see you in Japan." That surprising decision from Les' mouth turned out to be wise leading from the Holy Spirit that brought us together through the VYM program and to an engagement at the summit of Mt. Fuji and later to a life commitment at the throne of God exactly 25 years ago on March 25, 1995. ♥

## NOW THEN

## THEN

## THEN

## NOW

## NOW

Speaking of graduation, Debi's two students have just completed their Elementary School studies and are now moving up to Junior High! They are enthusiastic Scouts, avid sports fans, budding musicians, and diligent students! We enjoy every day serving on the mission field with them!!!



**Tom & Debi Going** serve as educational missionaries in Japan for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod with their 12-year old twins, **Megumi & Isaac.**

They served in Japan from 1990 – 2006, then in Indonesia from 2008 to 2013 and returned to Japan in 2013 to teach north of Tokyo at Urawa Lutheran School.