

CHANGING PATHS

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photo credit: Johanna Heidorn

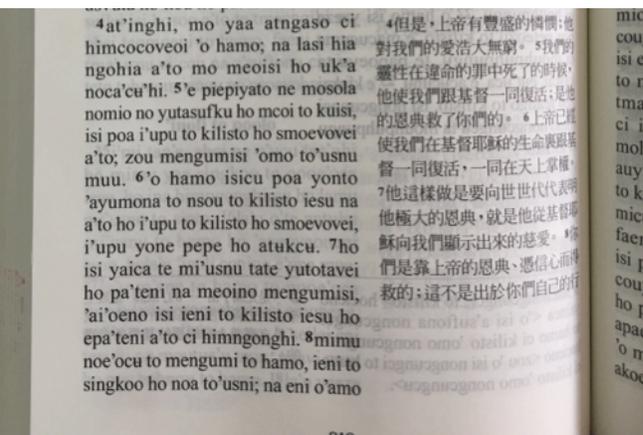
Once every two years we welcome to Taiwan or Korea a short-term mission group from Orange County, California. These energetic, flexible and open-minded students attend Orange Lutheran High School and come to serve with a level of enthusiasm and excitement that quickly crosses language and cultural borders. On the campus of our partner K-12 school, Concordia Middle School, this year's group of 14 youth interacted with hundreds of students in settings in and outside of the classroom following the Easter weekend. "But why?" you might ask. "What is the point? Why plan for months and spend the resources for such a trip?" The goal is simple - share their faith in Jesus. Exposure to a Christian, peer aged group makes a unique impact on the lives of the student body, of which only about 15% are Christian. Conversations can continue even after the team returns to America through connections that were easily made as well as through the follow up by our mission team who teaches the Taiwanese students on a weekly basis.

Over the years, we have been blessed to work with more than one hundred short-term missionaries. Ranging in age, group size and specialty, their presence serves to strengthen ongoing ministries and bear the glad tidings of the Good News. Fruit has been borne out of these opportunities as the Holy Spirit has called to faith some who heard of the life-giving work of Jesus.



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In addition to their busy class schedule, the short-term team was granted an opportunity to experience indigenous Taiwanese culture. Only about 5,000 members of the Tsou tribe remain, with many keeping old customs and traditions in the mountainous region of central Taiwan. Though Christian mission work has made some inroads, many follow some form of the traditional folk religion prevalent on the island. Lodging overnight with a local family, Matt learned about one family's struggles to maintain their identity in the face of decreasing tribal numbers. A window was opened to encourage the family's son, Pasuya, to seek the way, truth, and life in Jesus.



left - a Bible (Mandarin Chinese on right / Tsou language on left) opened to Ephesians 2; center - Matt pictured with Pasuya who gifted him a hand-carved 'wind whistle' - a bamboo-crafted shuttle that is quickly spun around a bamboo stick in order to communicate across mountainous distances; right: a Tsou woman plays a traditional nose flute.



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