

LANTERNS OF LEARNING

65 years ago, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) members wanted to open and bless a Christian school in Japan. **American Lutherans felt called to share the Light of Jesus with Japanese families and generously sent funds to open Urawa Lutheran School (ULS), a small school in the farm fields of Komaba.** Those who basked in the warm light of God’s love built a lantern that has shone here, and God has continued to use faithful Christian men & women to work to make our school in Misono what it is today!

One way to show gratitude to our loving Heavenly Father for bringing us this far on our journey, is to show mercy and generosity to those who have fewer blessings. The Bible tells us that when we respond to God’s blessings by blessing others, we are a witness to the Lord’s goodness and grace to us.

It is with this motivation and thinking that the concept of Service Learning came about for this academic year (2018-2019).

Using the theme of “Picture Yourself,” our desire was to challenge 6th grade students in the elementary school to consider what life would be like as a student in a poor village in a “Third World” educational situation.

The desired goal was to get young Japanese students to begin thinking “outside the box,” to imagine what life would be like without the safe, clean, & organized protective society, to live outside Japan in a place where healthy drinking water is not available in their home, food can be scarce, clothing and shoes are not taken for granted, classrooms have dirt floors and inadequate supplies, and their environment is not safe or stable.

We began this study program in April by learning about the country of Indonesia – the unique culture, people, and language of that beautiful island nation – as well as its extreme poverty. Currently about 35% of the Indonesian population is considered to be living below the poverty level which is defined as those making less than \$80 per month.

We gathered the 6th grade students to take part in a Poverty Simulation, giving them a chance to imagine living as an Indonesian family in a small village with very few resources, inadequate drinking water, scarce medical care, and challenging conditions.

In September, to reinforce the “picture” theme, each of the 6th grade students was provided with a picture frame and ethnic Indonesian Batik-style (continued on next page)

DID YOU KNOW?

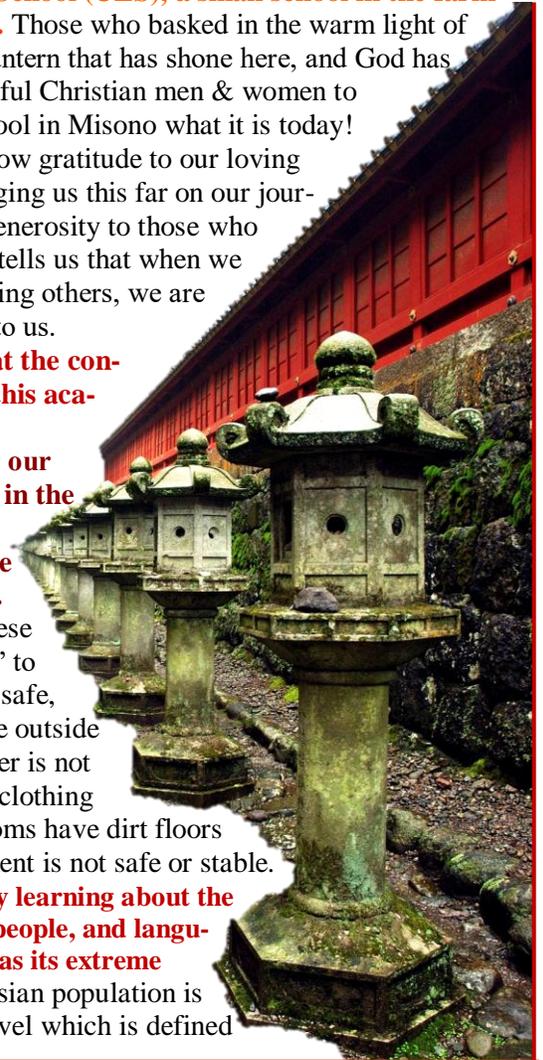
In Japan a *tōrō* is a traditional lantern made of stone, wood, or metal, (seen at the right, leading to Toshogu Shrine in Nikko). *Tōrō* were originally used only in Buddhist temples, where they lined and illuminated paths to the temple, symbolizing the path to peace being lit by wisdom. 1400 years ago, they started being used also in Shinto shrines & private homes.

Tōrō can be classified in two main types, the *tsuri-dōrō*, hanging lamp, which usually hang from the eaves of a roof, and the *dai-dōrō*, platform lamp, used in gardens and along the approach of a shrine or temple. The two most common types of *dai-dōrō* are made of bronze or stone. The *ishidoro*, stone lanterns, look just like hanging lanterns laid to rest on a pedestal.

The bottom-most piece, touching the ground, represents *chi*, the earth; the next section represents *sui*, or water; *ka* or fire, is represented by the section encasing the lantern’s light or flame, while *fū* (air) and *kū* (emptiness, spirit) are represented by the last two sections, top-most and pointing towards the sky.

The different parts express the Japanese idea that after death our physical bodies will go back to their original, elemental form.

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The Bible often talks about God’s love being like light – warm, helpful, comforting, and guiding. **We are called to be lanterns of God’s peace & love to those around us, shedding light on the fear and evil people want to avoid, bringing those in the dark into the Light of God’s Truth and Hope.**

In Japan, many people are satisfied with religious customs that encourage them to find wisdom, hope, and peace on their own, much like groping in the dark for a familiar object. **For more information about the religious paths on which Japanese are stumbling, see page 4.**



THE LIGHT OF HOPE

(continued from p. 1)

cloth to create a traditional keepsake to be used in a fund-raising campaign. During the class periods that they crafted these unique frames, **the students continued to learn about the vibrant culture of Indonesia and its needs, especially in education.**

We are praying that these unique hand-crafted frames would help to raise awareness for the need to be in prayer for elementary students in the Indonesian Christian schools with whom we have started a relationship. **The money that is raised will be used toward the “service” efforts of purchasing various school supplies (sports equipment to use in gym class --- badminton racquets, nets, hula-hoops, skipping ropes, soccer balls, etc.) for Christian village schools in Indonesia.**

As the 6th graders were learning about the needs of poverty-stricken students around the world, we used the opportunity of ULS’ annual School Fair with its hundreds of guests to share about the Service Learning project in an educational booth. We led visitors through an abbreviated water need experience, helping them to imagine a situation where they have to walk long distances from home to find healthy water. We talked to many people about what ULS students had already learned about Indonesia, and shared with them the connections that our school already had, the 2017 Christmas offerings used to purchase musical instruments for a village Christian school in Papua.

To reinforce these specific needs and to help introduce a relationship with another Christian School in Asia, in October, we welcomed a special guest to ULS, **Miss Hanna Parapat** (see photo above right), an educator from Indonesia currently serving as Curriculum Coordinator with the **Sekolah Lentera Harapan (School of Light & Hope) Foundation**. We got to know this multitalented lady while serving with her for 5 years in Indonesia, and when we returned to Japan in 2013, we started brainstorming ways to bring Hanna to Japan. **Praise God for answering prayers through this Service Learning project!** It was a joy connecting her watching her shining present-Indonesian students, & her smile!

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At top, ULS 6th graders make frames while learning about Indonesian culture, finishing them with Miss Hanna while hearing stories about students in Papua, Indonesia.



As many of you know, the concept of “**Service Learning**” is basically a learning program that attempts to connect academic study with a service experience that promotes action and reflection upon relevant social issues. The various Service Learning lessons, activities, and service of this project were designed to foster cross-cultural awareness and to impact the 6th grade students’ compassion, compelling them to servant action on behalf of impoverished students their own age.



IN HANNA'S WORDS: HIGHLIGHTS



"This world is Yours,
My God, this world is Yours,
All You made to be Yours,
I know You love us all."

(Valentine by
Hillsong Worship)



Highlights from Miss Hanna's visit: (Clockwise from top left) teaching the 8th graders about Indonesia; with Religion teacher, Miss Igarashi, ULS Principal – Mr. Fukushima, Elementary School Principal, Mr. Kondo, and some elementary students after morning chapel; sampling delicious Japanese food with Michiko Ishii; learning about Japanese Buddhism in Kamakura with Tom (Notice the big lantern in front of the Giant Buddha); touring modern Tokyo by bicycle.

As I think about my visit to Japan, I am very grateful for the opportunity that God gave me. Praise Him for orchestrating everything so that His wonderful work can be proclaimed [at ULS].

Thank you for praying & planning this visit so I could come, meet, and interact with ULS community. You have a warm faculty and students. I didn't feel like a stranger at all while I was on campus. Staff would smile at me in the hallways & students would wave or bow to greet me. I thank God for the many opportunities I had to speak to students, faculty, and parents... to share about the living condition in the interior of Papua which are sad to see. I am most thankful for the opportunity to share God's Word in chapel, to tell them what Jesus did on the cross to restore our relationship with God so that we can live a life that honors Him. I was quite nervous when I prepared the message. Praise God for the comfort He gave me through a song (see box, above right). I was reminded that my visit and my speaking at the chapel time was to tell the ULS community about the love that He has for the world. I was coming to see a group of people whom He created. Therefore, I should not be nervous or worry. In addition to that, God had prepared a very good translator for me, my sister in Christ, Michiko!



I can't wait to see what the Lord has in store for ULS & Indonesian schools in the future! 🏠

Dear Tom and Debi, I am very grateful for [my homestay at] the Hasegawa's [house in Kamakura]! Tsuneyo (seen above with Miss Hanna) was very kind in allowing me to try her autumn Kimono. She explained about the pattern and also putting each layer patiently. I could wear kimono helped by a wonderful Japanese lady. I learned that Tsuneyo can [put on her] kimono in 20 minutes by herself. Very impressive! Yoji drove me to the closest temple to their house to have my picture taken there. I told them I am very happy to have an authentic experience of Japanese culture in Japan. Thank you for introducing me to this beautiful couple. I am so blessed and thank God for their generosity and kindness.

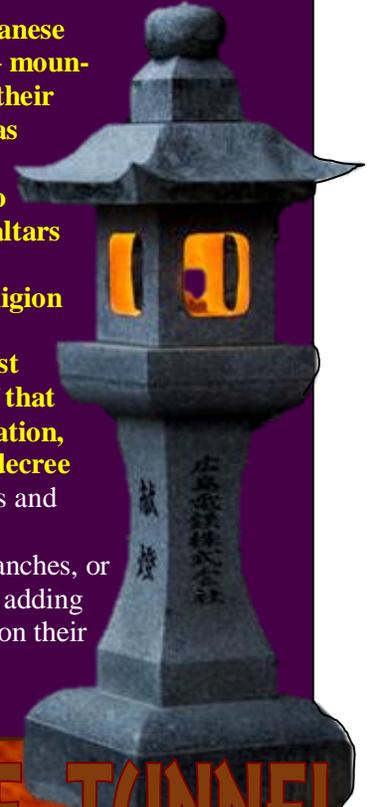
TRYING TO FIND THE PATH IN DARKNESS

Many people often ask us to explain the religion that most Japanese believe, or put their faith in, but it is not easy to explain. Certainly, Japanese people are seeking the light of peace and wisdom, but many would say that they have not found it. Most have not found the Light of Hope found in the Grace of their Heavenly Father, nor felt the warmth of the Light of His Peace, nor been guided by the faithful Lamp of His Word that lights our path. Most Japanese feel uncertain of the traditional lighted path that they are following, not certain where it is leading, and whether to trust the wisdom inside themselves.

“Shinto is the indigenous faith of the Japanese people, the oldest form of faith of the Japanese people. Since ancient times, the Japanese have worshiped all their gods of heaven & earth – mountains, islands, rocks, and trees. They have also paid their heartfelt respect and gratitude to their ancestors. There is no sole, absolute god in Shintoism, but many gods (gods of nature such as fire, wind, water, seas, mountains, rivers, rocks, and trees, also gods that appear in traditional myths, the spirits of historical figures or various ancestors). Unlike Buddhism, Shinto has no founder and no official scripture. The gods are enshrined in shrines and household altars of each house.

When Buddhism was introduced in the late 6th century, it became the Japanese state religion according to national policies. Since then Buddha was transformed into a Japanese deity, a new different form of god, and coexisted with the Shinto gods. In the 8th century, Buddhist temples were often attached to Shinto shrines; a temple was built in a shrine and a priest of that shrine would read Buddhist sutra in which Shinto events took place. Until the Meiji Restoration, people worshipped Shinto gods, while belonging to their family temple. That lasted until a decree by the Meiji government (1868) separating Shinto and Buddhism.” When separating symbols and rituals, various priests made various decisions and most Japanese people now, unless they have specifically studied the ancient symbols, do not know which symbols like lanterns, gates, tree branches, or ropes, go with which religion. You can get as many answers and explanations as people you ask, adding varying barriers to evangelism. Please pray for us as we try to shine the Lantern of God’s Word on their paths as we cross them, shining His Light of Hope and Grace.

(quotes taken from: visit-miyajima-japan.com/en/culture-and-heritage)



LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Recent Open Houses and informational meetings at our school have been standing-room only due to a new partnership that was formed with a prestigious university in Tokyo, Aoyama University. This new tie-up has caused quite a stir among families with 5-year olds, soon to be six, who have found out that if they enter our school beginning in the 1st grade, they will have a guaranteed entrance into each “step” up the educational ladder. Of course from elementary to Junior High and then into Senior High, but also acceptance into Aoyama University! This has been a HUGE move for our school, like never before!

For the last four years, ULS had been sending out teachers to preschools & kindergartens, strongly encouraging families to come to our school. Over these years and months, we have asked you (our partners on the other side of the Pacific Ocean) to be in specific prayer for the Lord to send new students to ULS’ doorstep to fill the many empty desks. It was often stressful for the ULS team of leaders as we waited for the Lord’s response.

It seemed like we were in a dark tunnel, with no end in sight.

After announcing the new Aoyama University connection in July, and later the many subsequent informational meetings in August and September, we had a record number of families for our campus, almost 3 times the number that sat for the exam one year ago.

So now our school is expecting a much larger intake next academic year, perhaps even up to 75 new 1st graders! Yes, your prayers have been answered and this means that ULS

can continue being a bright Beacon of Hope in Urawa!



THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE



Do you remember the Sunday School song in the box down below? Do you remember sticking up your index finger to be a candle and waving it above your head to show how proud you were of your Light of God's Love that you were so excited to share?



This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it SHINE,

All around the neighborhood, I'm gonna let it SHINE!

Don't let Satan (POOF!) it out! I'm gonna let it SHINE!

Let it SHINE!
Let it SHINE!
LET IT SHINE!



Clockwise from left: Presenting the Creation debate to high school classes; giving his testimony with translator, Michiko Ishii, to the junior high chapel; introducing his home church, **St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Columbus, IN**; touring Tokyo by bicycle, stopping to eat ramen noodles with cousins, touring the famous streets of Ginza.

Recently, our 15 year old nephew, Sunday School graduate, **Caleb Wettsturack**, came to visit and let his Light SHINE! He came prepared to speak in English class and chapel to the ULS students. He participated in our Praise Worship night with his guitar, brought greetings from our home congregation, and taught seminars about Creation vs. Evolution to ULS students and our homeschool fellowship group. He ate everything we put in front of him, had adventures to traditional and modern sites, used his talents of friendly leadership, opportunities of enthusiastic music, and the little-known facts of God's Truthful science to raise His candle of God's Grace HIGH! What a joy it was to host him and watch him grow in humble service and cross-cultural ministry!

family corner



For most of the Fall, Debi & the kids have been in California helping her mom through her third round of chemotherapy for leukemia. Lord willing, they will return to Japan in January 2019. Tom has continued to

faithfully teach classes & minister at Urawa Lutheran Church and School. We are so thankful for FaceTime and Skype, which we use a couple of times a day to keep in close touch! **Please pray for us as we are apart and seek the Lord's Will for our family.**

Debi



Tom

*Isaac
Megumi*

Tom & Debi Going shine the Light of Jesus as educational missionaries for the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod in Japan with their 10-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.



San Diego field trip: While in CA, Debi and the kids continue to homeschool as they merge their schedule into Gramma Bush's regular hospital visit schedule. A recent day aboard the USS Midway, the longest-serving aircraft carrier of the US Navy, was a treat! Before touring, we did not know that in 1973, the Midway was put into Yokosuka Navy Base, Japan, the result of an accord between the US and Japan. Megumi was excited to find the seals for Atsugi Naval Air Facility and Yokosuka down in the Officers' Dining Hall (see above), along with many Japanese souvenirs scattered around the ship. After 18 years in Japan, the Midway was decommissioned in 1992, and became a fascinating museum open to the public.