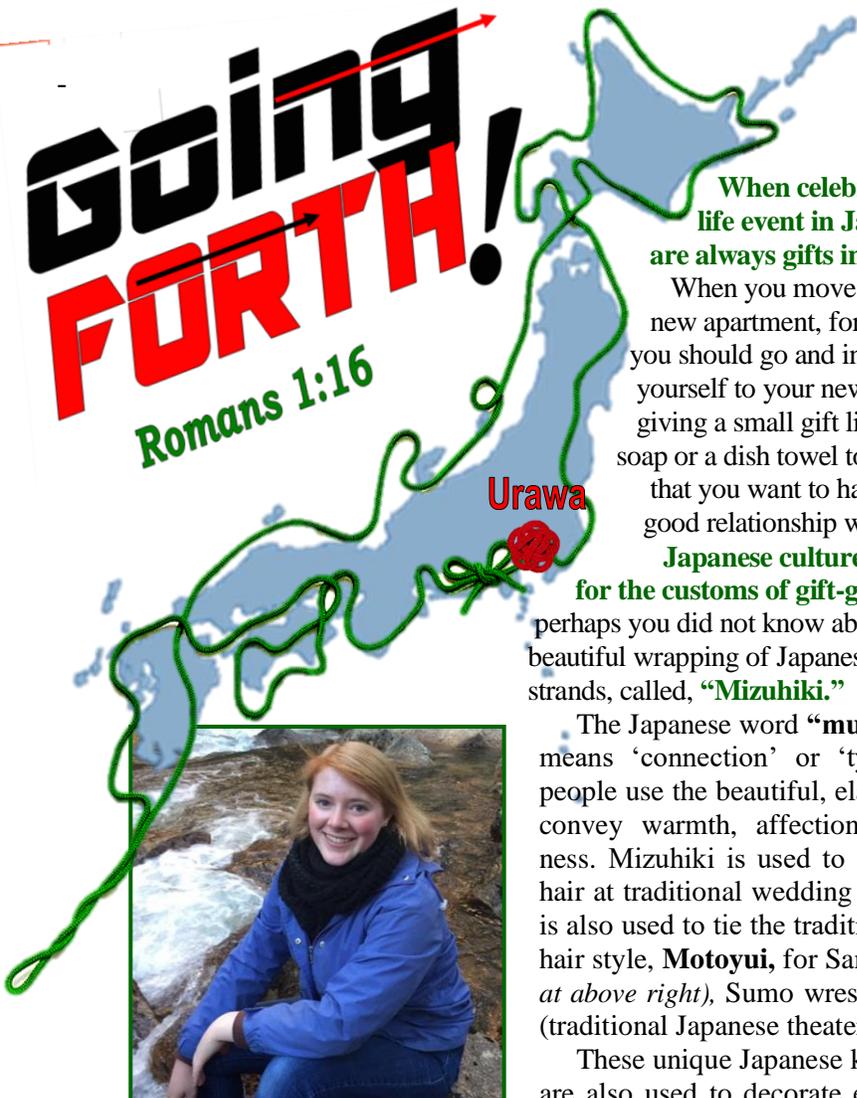


Going FORTH!

Romans 1:16



When celebrating a life event in Japan, there are always gifts involved.

When you move into a new apartment, for example, you should go and introduce yourself to your new neighbors, giving a small gift like laundry soap or a dish towel to show that you want to have a good relationship with them.

Japanese culture is famous for the customs of gift-giving, but perhaps you did not know about the beautiful wrapping of Japanese paper strands, called, "Mizuhiki."

The Japanese word "musubu," means 'connection' or 'tying.' Japanese people use the beautiful, elaborate knots to convey warmth, affection and togetherness. Mizuhiki is used to decorate ladies' hair at traditional wedding ceremonies and is also used to tie the traditional "top knot" hair style, **Motoyui**, for Samurai (see photo at above right), Sumo wrestlers, & Kabuki (traditional Japanese theater) actors.

These unique Japanese knot decorations are also used to decorate envelopes made of washi paper like in the photo at the right of a wedding celebration envelope. It is used for giving money for congratulations.

(continued on the next page).



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- Meet Emily Crosby (above)!
 - More Knots
 - String Alphabet
 - Connections to Church
 - Going Kids are Eleven

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It all began in 1978, when a Japanese confectionary company introduced "Marshmallow Day" as a means of promoting their marshmallows specifically towards men, encouraging them to buy return gifts for Valentine's Day. In most nations, it is the women that are spoiled on Valentine's Day, in Japan it is the men that receive gifts of chocolate. On February 14th, only ladies are allowed to give gifts to men. Traditionally, they are required to give tiny impeccably & daintily (usually red or pink, often wonderfully handmade) wrapped boxes of chocolate to their bosses or favorite teachers. In 1980, Japan's National Confectionary Industry Association created, "White Day" as an answer to Valentine's Day in February.

It is not until March 14th then, White Day, that men can choose to return the favor with their own small (usually white with blue or green) boxes of chocolate. It is typically expected that men who are in a relationship will spend more than the amount that was spent by their partners on Valentine's Day, and in some cases, more than double or triple what was spent on him!

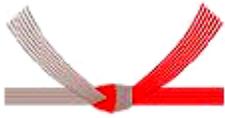
While marshmallows were the original White Day present, other items have surpassed the white, fluffy sweets as preferred gifts. Cookies and white chocolate are the most popular presents, and each March, department stores and shops in Japan are brimming with a variety of delicious and lovely cookies, presented in beautiful blue packaging. (see photo at above right).





花結び

何度も繰り返してよい意味を込めて、お礼、出産、栄転などに用いられます。



結び切り

二度と繰り返す事がないようにとの願いを込めて婚礼、全快祝い、吊串に用いられます。



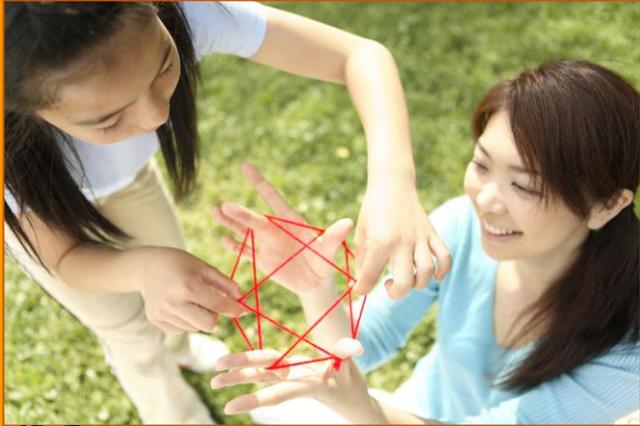
あわじ結び

末永いおつき合いの意味で一般的な慶事、吊串の両方に用いられます。お見舞い、婚礼などに。

In Japan, the tradition of knotting is well known and remains much alive especially in wedding customs, gift-giving and wrappings, festive occasions, shrine and temple ritual contexts, agricultural practices. Children are still taught how to tie mizuhiki though it is no longer as well practised as string games (shown at right), like the cat's cradle (shown below left).



Japanese washi paper is made from the inner bark of several Japanese bushes, seen at left. The fibers of the inner bark of these bushes are much longer than other fibers, and the longer the fiber, the easier the fibers mesh together to make strong paper, making Washi one of the most durable and strongest papers in the world. To make Mizuhiki, washi is cut into long strips and twisted together to produce a strong twine.



(continued from page one)

The first knot (above left) is called "Hanamusubi." This can be UNTIED, so it is used for events that are desired to occur repeatedly, such as a baby's birth or an admission into a school. The second one is called "Musubikiri." This CANNOT be untied, so this style is used for events that are not desired to occur again, such as a wedding or a funeral. The third one is called "Awajimusubi." It means that "people will have a good relationship forever and it is used both for happy events and sad events."

(026.co.jp/mizuhiki/sitec/englishindex.html; www.mamalisa.com/blog/gift-giving-in-japan; minopaper.wordpress.com)

実を結ぶ

BEING GRAFTED TO JESUS

Jesus said, "I am the True Vine, my Father is the Gardener, and you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. Bearing much fruit, you will show yourself to be My disciple." (John 15: 1, 5, 4, 7, 8)

It is interesting that the Japanese idiom for a fruit tree making fruit, "bearing fruit," MI O MUSUBU (shown in Japanese, vertically at right) is literally, "to tie fruit to the branch." The kanji's left side (third letter down) is a string or twine, and adds to the meaning "to bind, join, or tie." Fruit hangs on branches and vines from stems that often look like twine.

The verb "musubu" that we have been using for tying knots and now bearing fruit, is also used in the word for marriage (in English, "tying the knot!"). All of the English phrases, "close a bargain, conclude a treaty, contract friendship, enter into a relationship, form a connection, make a contract, be bound together by love, ally in league with, join hands with" – all use this Japanese root word "to tie, bond."

What a powerful picture of our relationship with our Heavenly Father each one of those phrases is! In His Love, God did all of that for us: sent His Son to die for us so that we could be bound together eternally. On the cross, as He was dying, Jesus sighed and used the marketplace word for closing a Bargain to say, "It is finished!" Through His life and death, He contracted a friendship and entered into a relationship with us that needed His grace. He formed a connection, tied a knot of Love between our Creator and us.

In Jesus' words above about keeping our branches connected to the main vine, we can also picture the grafting and tying of our own little twigs into His thick healthy branch (like the photo at right). As the wise Gardener ties us on, anchoring us into the life-giving Branch, we can be nourished and bear fruit for Him. So many KNOTS of GRACE!



TYING THE SCHOOL TO THE CHURCH

Our focus of mission here in Japan, and particularly as teachers at Urawa Lutheran School, has always been to seek ways to connect our students to our church, Urawa Lutheran Church. **The best strategy continues to be through the bridge of MUSIC.... getting students interested in Christian music through lessons in the English classroom**, encouraging them to play their own versions of hymns and contemporary praise songs, helping them to learn to lead their fellow students in school chapel, then inviting them to participate in our monthly praise worship times at church on Saturday nights.

It is interesting that most student bands sing a healthy mix of English and Japanese praise songs, challenging themselves to pronounce and understand the lyrics of difficult songs!

We really enjoy encouraging students to form their own bands, usually in typical Japanese fashion, gathering by grades. In the last couple of years, high school bands (usually 10th and 11th graders) have formed, the older bands guiding and advising the younger ones, like a series of knots on a string. They have also asked talented church members who play instruments to mentor them also, strengthening the ties between church and school.

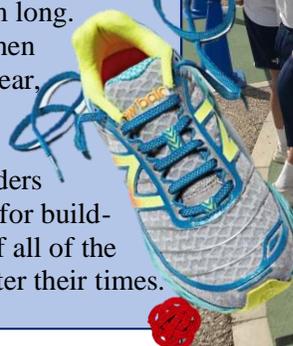
Please join us in praying for three separate student bands to join our next Praise Worship on March 9.

Here is a group of 10th grade students after leading a recent high school morning chapel at ULS for the first time as musicians. Following the service, they gathered to discuss songs they could possibly share at the next Music Ark Praise Worship. 🍷



LACE UP!

Spring in Japan brings elementary marathons! On this sunny, crisp Spring day at a nearby park on its running course *in the photo on the right*, the 5th and 6th grade boys get ready to start their race! They have been practicing 2 months for this day! The 1st graders watch and cheer as grades of students take turns listening for the starting horn. The 2nd grade students have a course in front of them that is 1 km long. The 3rd and 4th graders go together, first all of the girls, then all of the boys. The 5th and 6th graders run 2 km. Every year, the “Marasohn Taikai,” or “marathon sports event” is on a Friday and can take most of the day. (The junior and senior high event held in the Fall for 7th through 12th graders is 20 km/12 miles.) These marathons are very important for building endurance & team spirit. This year ULS kept track of all of the students with microchips on their chest numbers to register their times.



CONCORDIA TIES TIGHTEN

In March we will be welcoming a new English teacher to Urawa Lutheran School, someone that you have seen featured in our newsletter before, as a visiting partner from Concordia University in Irvine, California – **Miss Emily Crosby**. Emily was part of the Faculty Development program in May of 2017 as a student participant in the inaugural year of adding students to the faculty that come to experience cross-cultural professional development. When departing Japan, Emily privately stated her sincere desire to return overseas in the future, asking us to pray for the feeling she had of the Lord tugging her heart toward overseas missions.

We are pleased to tell you that Emily has wholeheartedly responded to that tug and will be joining our faculty team for the start of our new 2019 – 2020 academic year in April! After recently graduating from Concordia and finishing her student teaching, Emily quickly completed all the paperwork to secure a teaching visa for Japan and is now packing for the big move.

Emily originates from Sacramento, CA, and comes from a family of six (*pictured above*): mom, dad, two brothers and one sister. In addition to her many studies at Concordia, Emily was also involved on campus with the speech and debate team, competing in the academic showcase, working as a tutor at the campus writing center, and working as a tour guide for prospective Concordia students and their families. As you can see, she actively pursues excellence in ballroom dancing (*see below right*), and recently used some graceful leaping skills to board the train to Hogwarts!

Emily tells us that she is most looking forward to building relationships here in Japan and ULS. The interactions she had with ULS teachers and students in 2017 were the most precious part of her visit, and she is extremely excited to strengthen those bonds and form new ones.

She is hopeful that those relationships will become opportunities to bear witness of Christ's love. She asks that our prayer partners who read this *Going Forth* would pray for her peace: emotional, financial, and spiritual. This will be a season of new beginnings, but also of farewells (in many different forms). She also asks that those prayers be extended to her family,

all of whom are excited for and supportive of her, but also in need of heavenly reassurance.

She will be a great asset to our English team!



ON A SIDE KNOT

note

In the last two years, our family has passed through the San Diego International Airport more than a few times! While waiting in the International Arrival area, we have noticed an art exhibition that displays an alphabet of knots that intrigued us (*see airport display, bottom right photos*). The artist, Nina Preisendorfer, used a centuries-old method of communication to make an interactive display as a welcome to the famously beautiful and sunny California city. She used the 19th Century knot alphabet to write, "Sun, Fun, Life!" on a white board, and invited us to tie "sun" on a blue board (*tied in yellow, above left*).



After returning to Japan and researching the subject, we found out that there is a rich history of knot tying in string to communicate with the blind! Can you imagine trying to "read" a string tied with different looped knots? 

Try Your Hand at Writing with Knots

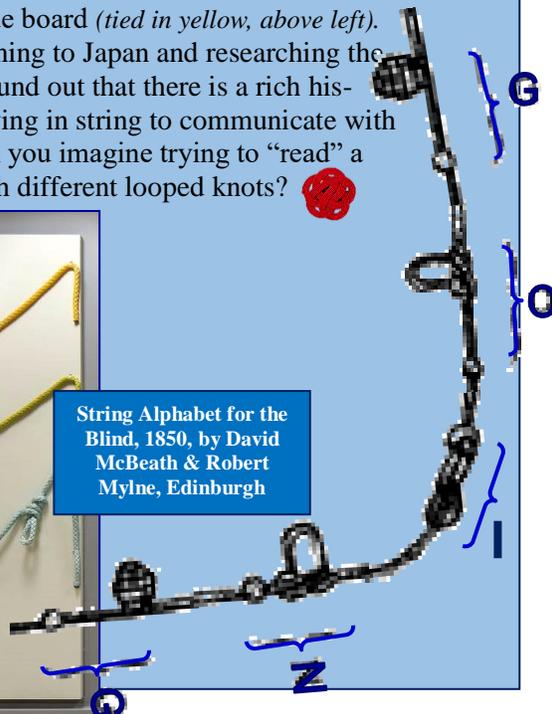


Knot Alphabet



String Alphabet for the Blind, 1850, by David McBeath & Robert Mylne, Edinburgh



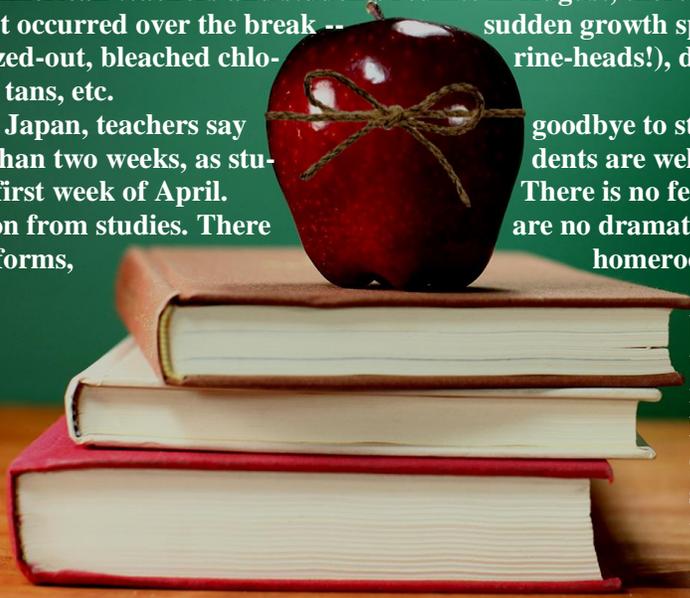
TYING UP LOOSE ENDS

March in Japan signals closure -- the end of the fiscal year for all companies, as well as the scholastic end of the year at school. This national feeling of "winding down" for students & teachers in America takes place in May & June, followed by a long, wonderful summer break that feels like it will "last forever" when you are a kid!

When American teachers and students reunite in August, there is always the shock of seeing drastic physical changes that occurred over the break -- sudden growth spurts, different hair styles (including those lovable frizzed-out, bleached chlorine-heads!), dramatic voice changes (from boy soprano to tenor!), sun tans, etc.

Here in Japan, teachers say little more than two weeks, as students return in the first week of April. There is no long vacation from studies. There student uniforms,

goodbye to students around March 20, but the separation lasts until students are welcomed back for the beginning of a new school year. There is no feeling or expectation of lazy summer days or a dramatic physical changes, just slight adjustments in homeroom teachers, and classrooms.



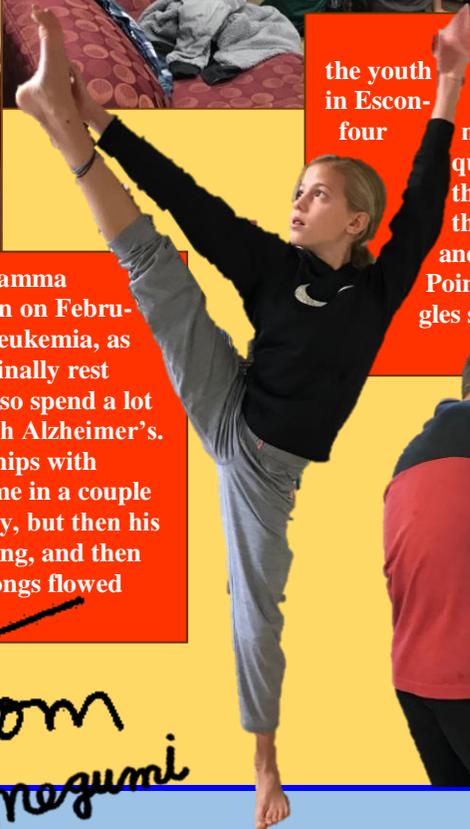
For us foreign teachers, this has always felt a bit odd, to "return" to school with no big "Back to School" hoopla & sales. Because the apple is not a symbol of education in Japan, we miss the huge cardboard apples pasted all over Walgreens, department stores, and the neighborhood grocery store! So at ULS' year-end closing ceremony in the middle of March, we will say to the students, "See you in a couple of weeks!" 

Kids' Corner



The kids had the chance to say goodbye to Gramma Bush (above) two weeks before she went to Heaven on February 16. She fought bravely her last year against leukemia, as well as other health problems, and now she can finally rest from her fight. While in California, they could also spend a lot of time with Grampa Bush, who is struggling with Alzheimer's. He has forgotten many things, even his relationships with relatives. When he held his guitar for the first time in a couple of years, his mind couldn't remember how to play, but then his fingers took over and started picking & strumming, and then the lyrics to favorite old Country and Western songs flowed out! (Isaac is helping him to tune the guitar at the right.)

Isaac & Megumi had the chance to join the youth group at Community Lutheran Church in Escondido, CA while Debi and the kids spent months at Gramma's house. They made quite a few good friends and were so glad that they jumped in! On the last night there, they got up to share about their life and ministry in Japan. They used a Power Point to show photos of the joys and struggles serving the Japanese. Thanks to DCE Jim Meyer for letting them share!



Debi Isaac Tom Megumi



Please pray for the **applications** for this year's America Summer Study program, as they are distributed to **parents and students** in March. Pray that **hearts** would be **open** to the Holy Spirit's leading them to sign up to go to CUI in Irvine, California, and Christ Church in Phoenix, Arizona.

We continue to give praise to God that He has placed us here at Urawa Lutheran School, and that He has put this ministry on your hearts, making you our **partners in prayer**. We give thanks to **God** for **tying you to us** and for all the exciting things that He will do between this letter and the next!



Tom & Debi Going
serve as educational missionaries in Japan for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod with their 11-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.

