

# Going Forth!

Romans 1:16

## POSITIVE ENERGY

Prior to departing for America, members of this year's **Urawa Lutheran School's** annual America Summer Study may have been feeling some anxiety, nervousness, apprehension, and perhaps even **fear**. Students may have been thinking, *"Will my level of English be enough to communicate well with the Americans? Will I fit in with the rest of my classmates? What will my host family be like? Will I get homesick?"*

This year's theme song for the trip was, **"No Longer A Slave,"** (see Bethel Music's lyrics in side bar at right). As our team of 24 ULS students and 3 chaperones rehearsed in English, the chaperones had a chance to discuss student concerns, and to hear how easy it is to feel the weight of such worries to the point of becoming a **"slave to our fears."** The chaperones, Tom with co-workers Michiko & Emily were grateful for the excuse to address these issues each time the song was performed, which set a record this year!

You unravel me, with a melody  
You surround me with a song  
Of deliverance, from my enemies  
Till all my fears have gone  
I'm no longer a slave to fear  
I am a child of God

From my mother's womb  
You have chosen me  
Love has called my name  
I've been born again, into a family  
Your blood flows through my veins  
I'm no longer a slave to fear  
I am a child of God

I am surrounded  
By the arms of the Father  
I am surrounded  
By songs of deliverance  
We've been liberated  
From our bondage  
We're the sons and the daughters  
Let us sing our Freedom  
Whoa, whoa

You split the sea so I could walk  
right through it  
My fears were drowned  
in perfect love  
You rescued me and  
I stand and sing

ULS students sing, "No Longer Slaves" at Concordia University Irvine for Summer faculty worship at Good Shepherd Chapel, and show handbell skills at Christ Church Lutheran, Phoenix.



I am a  
child of  
God,  
full of  
faith, yes,  
I am a  
child of  
God!

(Bethel Music, 2015)

(continued from page 1)

Traditionally, ULS students are expected to perform the theme song once in California (see photos on page 1) and twice in Phoenix. This year was exceptional, however, as students were asked to sing an additional 3 times, boosted to higher excellence by beautiful harmony added by 3 ULS choir members and elegant piano accompaniment.

It was very moving as the students repeated the chorus over & over: **"I'm NO longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God."** We could imagine what each of their lives would look like if these words were to come alive. **How could their lives be different if they wholeheartedly gave them to Jesus? What kind of peace could they have in their hearts? How could their relationships be deepened? What kind of hope for the**

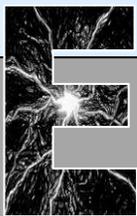
**future? From what fears could they be freed? Can we help them to go from slaves of worry and energy draining anxiety (see below) to adopted children of God?**

Our students had a glimpse of the answers to some of these questions while staying with Christian friends & families. These homestay families and American peers modeled for our students what it means to have a daily, active, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, showing our students homes that reflect the saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15).

Whatever nervousness or fears the students had arriving in Irvine, and then again in Phoenix quickly evaporated with the outpouring of love and care provided by these hosts and families. It truly is a HUGE sacrifice to open a home, not

just for a weekend or one week, but TWO whole weeks, giving up bedrooms, bathrooms, cars, family time, free time, & back-to-school preparation time in order to provide ULS students with a chance of a lifetime!

**The Lord blessed our Summer Study in America in countless ways as our advisor, teacher, counselor and protector (Psalm 32:8), providing us with many opportunities to witness His Hand at work.** We pray that each one of the 24 ULS students can now see the God of the Bible in a new light with affirmation and confidence that there is NO need to fear what the future holds. **We pray that they remember that the Creator of everything, the King of the Universe, the Creator & King of Time HOLDS their future!**



# ENERGY DRAINED

Students sang (see previous story and lyrics on p. 1) about being "a slave to fear." It is well known world-wide that students in Japan of all ages experience a high level of anxiety about demanding studies, complex relationships, & their unpredictable future, even prompting young workers and students to end their lives in a desperate act of hopelessness.

Recent studies have shown that "since 2014, suicide has become Japan's leading cause of death in youth aged 10-19, and the rate of child suicide keeps rising despite the decreasing overall suicide rate." (soraneews24.com) Those statistics reflect a society that is, literally, in chains of fear and anxiety so fierce that they cannot imagine ever being free. "These problems lead children to depression. In Japan 1 in 12 elementary school students and 1 in 4 high school students suffer from depression. We see a spike in suicides in September when children go back to school after the summer holidays; Japanese children are actually more likely to kill themselves on 1st September than on any other day of the year. The spike in suicides repeats in April when students go back to school to start a new academic year."

In Japan, group culture is important, and this is magnified at Japanese schools. "Being in the group" means that everyone has to follow the rules and have the same opinion as the other members. Every person who is different or doesn't follow the rules of the group will be excluded and could become the target of bullies. This group culture is also linked to school pressure. Students are always expected to perform and get the highest scores, and those with difficulties rarely receive any support -- they have to go along with the rest of the class.

Compared to westerners, Japanese people are more likely to opt for suicide when faced with a difficult situation. In Japan, suicide is not perceived in the same way as in the West. Unlike in Christian countries, in Japan suicide is not considered as a sin. It is seen as a way of taking responsibility and asking for forgiveness. (humanium.org/en/child-suicide-in-japan-the-leading-cause-of-death-in-children)

Pray for the culture of Japan being drained of joy and confidence and hope, generations following the rules of their school group or company, an unhappy country with a deathly fear of failure, a society whose souls desperately need the LIFE-GIVING CHARGE of God's love and grace! They need to let God break their chains and have the fearless security of knowing that they can be in God's eternal family because of what Jesus did for them on the cross!



*A mysterious artist from Japan has gained quite a following online for his emotion-fueled, thought-provoking art.*

*Known only by his online handle, Avogado6, the artist vividly captures segments of Japanese society's woes in simple yet somehow difficult to describe illustrations. (nextshark.com)*

In another study we found a surprising statistic: only 28.1 percent of men 20-60 years old could answer the question, "Are you happy?" positively! That leaves the other **72 percent floundering in some degree of unhappiness.** The happiness figure is staggeringly low compared to other developed countries, so why are Japanese men unhappy? Unsurprisingly, the website that showed these statistics labeled the reason for the lack of happiness as, **"fear of failure."**

Most Japanese men still expect to remain working for the same company for their entire careers, so, in order to rise in the ranks and get paid more, they have to fight for promotions. However, if they don't succeed, they feel like failures. This affects their self-confidence, which affects their work, which pulls them further away from their goals. It's a vicious cycle. In order to avoid this, **men work long hours, a situation that creates a whole set of unhappiness-inducing consequences of its own, such as having no free time and quality time with family.**

As an employee of a Japanese company, it is said that you must "accept their crazy terms or expect never to rise in the ranks." Those "crazy terms" can include everything from working unbelievably long hours, to picking up & moving across the country to a different branch at the drop of a hat. Then despite being given an average of 12-18 vacation/sick days a year, you're expected not to take more than five total, and no more than two in a row (even if your spouse or parents pass away), as taking any more days off would show lack of commitment to your team and company. **(Who needs a honeymoon longer than four days anyway?)**

# NEGATIVE ENERGY

In April of 2015, Urawa Lutheran Church called a new, young pastor to lead our congregation. Soon after Pastor Kasahara arrived, he started finding disturbing notes in his mail slot at church, scrap pieces of paper scrawled with angry handwriting saying things like, **“Death to Christians! Japan already has Buddhism! Christians GET OUT!”** Similar notices continued to come, accompanied by vandalism, until Pastor Kasahara alerted the local police.

How is a church to respond? All we could do was continue to press on and shine our Gospel lights where the Lord had planted our congregation, not allowing the enemy” to discourage us or let our lights of Hope and Joy (and courage!) be snuffed out. **Over the following months and years, led by Pastor Kasahara, his wife, Tomomi, and two sons, Urawa Lutheran Church members were faithful in being cheerful and generous neighbors to the community.** Anybody passing by the neighborhood can't help but hear loud, cheerful music at the church on afternoons after school, evenings, and weekends.

Fast forward to this past July when the positive reputation of our church caused Pastor Kasahara to receive a phone call inviting our church's praise band to play a few songs at the annual Komaba Summer Festival in August held at Renshoji, a local Buddhist temple.

**Yes, our Christian band was being asked to sing praise songs at a location that neighbors consider to be a holy place for Buddhists! What a TURN AROUND over the past 4 years, from the NEGATIVE energy of persecution to the POSITIVE energy of God's love!**

From **Above right:** As an ersatz stage, the Festival committee of Renshoji set up the Urawa Lutheran Church band on the porch of the temple, facing the large courtyard strung with typical glowing paper lanterns; **Middle:** the band made special *happi* coats for the occasion, the traditional costume for a festival, festooning the back with a huge cross and 2 Corinthians 1:20; **Bottom right:** Lyrics of one of the songs sung that night to a crowd of Buddhist revelers;

**Below left:** the Urawa Lutheran Church band (Tom was on Summer Study, but Debi & Isaac got to share their hearts in song!)



**“For all of the promises of God in Christ Jesus are YES, and in Him AMEN, to the glory of God through us!”** This is the Bible verse chosen by the designer of our coats, our talented pianist, Daigo Ikeda (pictured below left in the band photo, upper right), ULS graduate and now student at Concordia University in Irvine. He chose it because “he wanted everyone listening to feel God’s inclusive love.” Pastor Kasahara continued this theme by writing a song for the occasion in the style of a traditional festival song. Some of the lyrics of the chorus include, “We are all welcome to the family of God – grandpas, grandmas, dads, moms, brothers, sisters, **the cat and the rice spoon, TOO!**” (The last phrase “the cat and the rice spoon” is an idiom like our English “throwing in the kitchen sink,” to mean EVERYTHING!

きみは愛されるため生まれた  
 You were born to be loved  
 きみの生涯は愛で満ちている  
 Your whole life you've  
 been receiving that love  
 永遠の神の愛は  
 われらの出会いの中で実を結ぶ  
 The eternal love of God is being  
 poured into our lives with us meet-  
 ing together and will bear fruit  
 きみの存在が 私にはどれほど  
 大きな喜びでしょう  
 You exist to experience the  
 great joy of knowing this love  
 きみは愛されるため生まれた  
 You were born to be loved  
 今もその愛受けている  
 Even now you are  
 receiving that love



# P

There is no greater joy  
We love to tell people

than telling our friends about Jesus!  
about the hope we feel because of what  
Christ has done for us on  
the cross, making us  
pure before our Creator God, so that He could  
adopt us



# PLUGGING IN



as one of His be- loved  
children. We spend a lot of  
time reaching out to stu-  
dents, trying to meet new  
people, endeavoring to turn conversations to  
spiritual topics, thinking of new ways to reach  
people around us with a different kind of love in  
our friendships and teaching.

Creator to our neighbors, co-  
for strength and guidance.

workers, & friends without regularly **PLUGGING into the Word of God**  
We would not be able to do all that the Lord calls us to do without His  
relevant, daily directions in the Bible.

How can a young man keep his way pure? By **PLUGGING INTO** God's word & living according to it!

**I PLUG INTO YOU, GOD,**

And seek You with all my heart.

I have **PLUGGED** Your Word into my heart, and  
hidden it that I might not sin against You.

Praise to You, O Lord;

help me **PLUG in** and learn Your decrees.

With my lips I retell all of the words of Your mouth.

**I PLUG in** and rejoice to follow Your words  
as one rejoices in great riches.

**I PLUG in** to Your words and meditate on them,

**PLUGGING in** to consider Your ways.

**I PLUG in** to delight in Your commands;

I will not neglect Your Word.

*(Psalm 119:9-16)*

In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I **PLUG in**  
and lay my requests before You and wait in expectation.

*(Psalm 5:3)*

I will praise the Lord at all times;  
His praise will always be on my lips.

My soul will boast in the Lord;

let those in slavery to fear hear and rejoice!

Glorify the Lord with me; let us sing about Him  
together. I **PLUGGED** into the Lord, asking for His  
help and He answered me; He delivered me from all  
my fears! A slave to sin called, and the Lord heard  
him; He saved him out of all his troubles.

Taste and see that the Lord is good;

blessed is the one who **PLUGS into**  
Him and takes refuge.

*(Psalm 34:1-4, 6-8)*

Verse 1:  
Why You ever chose me  
Has always been a mystery  
All my life, I've been told I belong  
At the end of a line  
With all the  
other Not-Quites  
With all the  
Never-Get-It-Rights  
But it turns out they are the ones  
You were looking for  
All this time

Chorus:  
I'm just a **NOBODY**  
trying to tell **EVERYBODY**  
All about **SOMEBODY**  
who saved my soul  
Ever since You rescued me,  
You gave my heart a song to sing  
I'm living for the world  
to see nobody but Jesus  
I'm living for the world  
to see nobody but Jesus

Verse 2:  
Moses had stage fright  
And David brought a rock  
to a sword fight  
You picked twelve outsiders  
nobody would've chosen  
And You changed the world  
Well, the moral of the story is  
Everybody's got a purpose  
So when I hear that devil  
start talking to me, saying  
"Who do you think you are?" I say,

Chorus

Bridge:

So let me go down, down,  
down in history  
As another blood-bought  
faithful member of the family  
And if they all forget my name,  
well, that's fine with me  
I'm living for the world  
to see nobody but Jesus  
It's all I ever wanna be  
And if they all forget my name,  
well, that's fine with me  
I'm living for the world  
to see nobody but Jesus, yeah!

Every day when we **PLUG into God's Word**, we take our eyes off of ourselves and our situations and just spend some time paying attention to what God has done for us in Jesus. "Nobody" (in box, above right) is sung by Casting Crowns' lead singer, Pastor Mark Hall, and his guest, Matthew West, as a "partner" to the title song off of their recent album, "Only Jesus." Mark wrote the lyrics with John the Baptist in mind, whom he thought of as a strange Nobody for years when he was young. He later realized that the heart of John wanted TO BE a nobody, to say, "I am not the point. I am to POINT to The Point!" When Jesus came and a crowd came to him to ask for explanations about Jesus, John had his chance to be in the spotlight, to be famous for a short time, but he knew his place. When everyone asked who he was, John didn't even give his name. He just said, "I'm only a voice crying in the wilderness." You can hear Pastor Hall explain his song on YouTube (only four minutes, but time well spent to hear him share!)

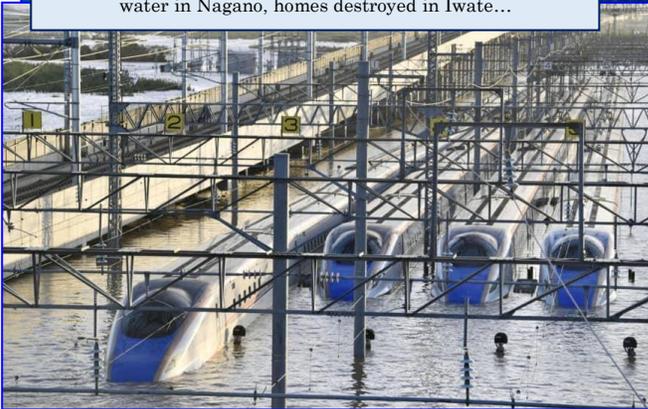
# ERRIBLE TYPHOON POWER

JAPAN

As our newsletter was preparing to go out, Typhoon Hagibis slammed Japan on October 12, "bringing widespread flooding and loss of life. In 7 prefectures, 66 levies broke causing flooding in 47 rivers. Over 15,000 homes have been flooded and almost 6,000 people are still staying in shelters," writes Pastor Carl, a friend in Tokyo. "Thousands of people are shocked by the mess in their homes and are busy shoveling out mud from landslides. One man standing in his home said, 'The whole area looked like the sea.'" We wanted to bring you the latest news.

It is reported that more than 125,000 households are still without power and running water. At this writing, 72 people have died and many are still missing. At least 7000 homes have been destroyed.

Photos show widespread destruction, bullet trains under water in Nagano, homes destroyed in Iwate...



**"Japan needs your prayers.** As residents in the disaster stricken areas persevere with the cleaning, and deal with life in the government provided temporary shelters, **they still lack what they really need ... true life in Jesus Christ. Please pray for the believers to overcome their shy and reserved nature, to boldly share the gospel.** Japan is less than 1% Christian. Please pray for more workers to rise up to pray and work for the kingdom of God in Japan!" Pastor Carl wrote a list to help us pray...

## How to PRAY FOR JAPAN after the typhoon:

- 1) Pray for the elderly who are stranded in secluded areas to be rescued and taken care of quickly.
- 2) Pray for evacuees to find answers for daily life, especially their health and hygiene.
- 3) Pray for power to be restored around the nation, and for sufficient water supply for everyone.
- 4) Pray for restoration of roads and bridges.
- 5) Pray for hearts of Japanese people to be turned to the only One who gives hope in a hopeless situation.



# RECHARGING OUR BATTERIES



One year ago we wrote about a new partnership that was formed with a prestigious Christian university in Tokyo, Aoyama University, that led to a large intake of new First graders Urawa Lutheran School at the start of academic year this past April. At recent Open Houses & information meetings, record numbers of visitors have flocked to the ULS booth to hear about the specifics of such an educational path. Parents are drawn to the idea of having not just 12, but rather 16 years of schooling laid out for their son or daughter, the possibility of an option that would NOT require years and years of added evening lessons at cram schools to ensure entry into the proper Junior or Senior High school and, even more importantly, a university!



As applications have streamed in for upcoming official entrance exams and interviews into our school, one whole extra day was added to the schedule to accommodate the large increase in demand. This flood of interest and applications could have only come from the Lord as He has blessed this process and recharged the batteries of teachers who are 100 % committed to their jobs, whether it is as the batteries above say, “reinen dori” (例年通り=the same as every year), or new & exciting challenges, like the battery charger says, “atarashiku naru” (新しくなる= to be made new), like the opportunities facing us now!

Over the last several years through this Going Forth newsletter, we have often 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. All the glory goes to no one other than our Lord, Jesus Christ, who has clearly answered your many prayers and RECHARGED the “same as every year” batteries to feel new and exciting! So many more students means so many more chances to give each family the CHARGE of their Heavenly Father's love and grace!

## NEED A SURGE PROTECTOR?



At right, our church band with the new 10<sup>th</sup> grade band and the elementary band. At bottom, Isaac & Megumi have started a band with some ULS friends: the Tanaka brothers, Rui (7<sup>th</sup> grade) on bass guitar, and Ren (5<sup>th</sup> grade) on drums, along with Hikaru Takano on guitar. They are hoping that their friends will soon feel brave enough to sing along with them in Japanese & English about Jesus' love!! As they practice the music at home, pray that they would let the lyrics speak to their hearts about the grace of God.



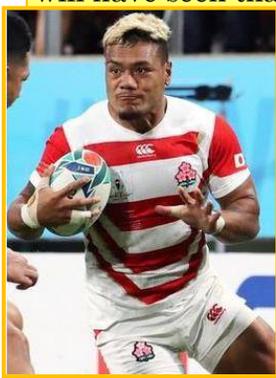
We don't WANT any surge protector to shield us from this YOUNG ENERGY of Christian music that is SURGING into our church and school!

When planning for a recent Praise worship Saturday night at church, we looked at the list of participating bands and realized that our church band did not need to do more than a couple of songs to start, and a few to end because of all of the youth bands from school that signed up to play!

How exciting to have so much young ENERGY to sing and play at church as they learn the meaning of the lyrics and how their lives can change, throwing off their “chains of fear and becoming children of God!”



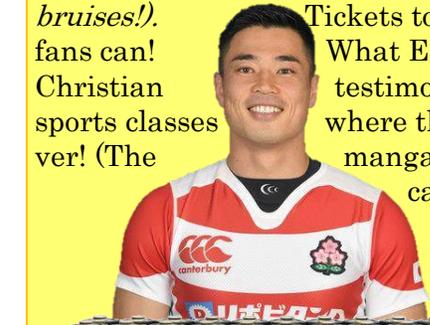
# family fun!



Along with cricket and lacrosse, rugby is a sport that is played at very few American schools, and the rules of which most Americans do not know. If you have been following recent international sporting news, you will have seen that the Rugby World Cup is being played here in Japan as this newsletter is going out to you. **TALK ABOUT ENERGIZER BUNNIES!** Japan is doing remarkably well in the matches, earning the “Brave Blossoms” a spot in the Quarter-Finals, after beating international Tier 1 powerhouse teams like Samoa and Ireland. The burly red & white-jerseyed men were originally called, “The Cherry Blossoms,” but after flexing their muscles with a steely defense against Scotland 16 years ago, they were dubbed, “brave,” by a British journalist, and it stuck. So, as you can see in a photo of Lomano Lemeki (*at left*) and Akihito Yamada (*bottom left*), real men in Japan DO wear PINK! It’s been a challenge and an adventure learning the rules and vocabulary that are unique to rugby, along with the unusual sportsmanship shown after hard-fought &

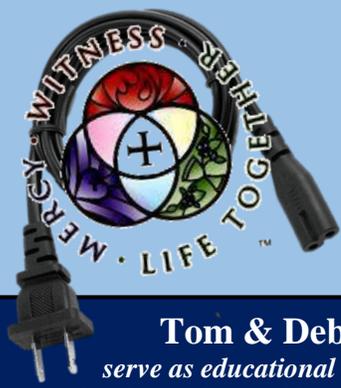
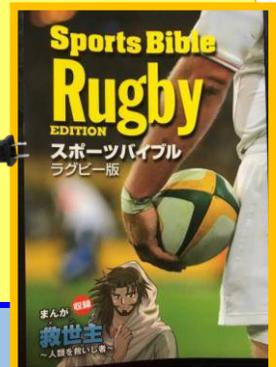
intense matches (*with very little protective gear*) as opposing players hug it out (*gingerly, with all those bruises!*). Tickets to all matches throughout Japan have been sold out, cheered for as only Japanese fans can! Christian sports classes ver! (The

What ENERGY!!! We seized on rugby fever and found a great Gospel book/ tract with testimonies of 13 professional athletes, including 5 rugby players! Friends in the kids’ where they gave them to young fans, sat right down in the gym and read it cover to cover! (The manga version of Jesus’ story at the back of the book is a unique draw!) Pray that we can give them all out by the end of the tournament, & that those who read



them will be touched to talk to us about how salvation in Jesus can free them from fear. They can feel hope & peace as “children of God!”

*Isaac Tom Debi Megumi*



**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.

Our family recently opted to perform for church functions as a family, singing and playing songs like “Glorious Day” and “Lift My Life Up!”