



Hearts In Seoul



Hans

Gretchen



Abi, 22

Mike, 20

John, 17

How May I Be of Service?

First of all, let me wish all of our friends and family a very happy and prosperous new year, according to the pleasure of our loving heavenly Father! I am most eager to see what He has in store for all of us—especially given the exciting news Gretchen discusses in her “Pearl” on the back page of this Newsletter!

But the *second* thing I want to do in this month’s article is talk about a significant change in my ministry work here at Luther University & Seminary. In the Ministry of Education’s official report after their latest round of evaluations, they made a comment regarding the Korean student body as a whole, not just LTU. They expressed a desire for a General Education curriculum (read: the classes all students have to take, no matter what their major) that fosters a greater sense of social responsibility and community involvement. Their report for LTU ‘suggested’ that we take this matter into account for future semesters.

Now, I don’t know how any of the secular universities responded to this challenge, but Luther University saw this as a golden opportunity. What is more natural for a Christian than a desire to serve others?? And so the Liberal Arts department was remade—or would that be “reborn”?—as the *Diakonia* College.

For those who aren’t ‘up’ on the Greek language, “diakonia” is the Greek word for “service.” It’s where we get our words “Deacon” and “Deaconess,” and it is variously defined as “the ministrations of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection” (so says Thayer) or, more simply, “serving God in caring for one’s fellow creatures” (per the online Urban Dictionary). What better name for a division of the University devoted to promoting human care and compassion?

Encompassing all university-wide course offerings, but especially those shared by all first-year students, the *Diakonia* College leadership is charged with evaluating the structure, nature, and content of the classes to see how they can build attitudes of Service and Community-mindedness more effectively. Which, to *my* mind, is just another way of saying “How can all our classes talk more about Jesus?

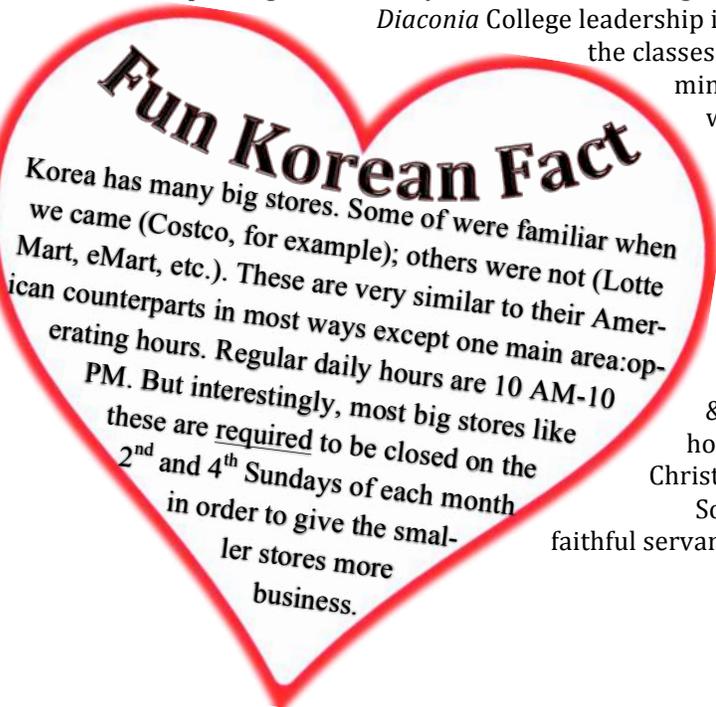
How can we integrate the Christian faith into every aspect of our curriculum?”

To make this change all the more interesting, the school decided they needed a Dean to head this new program and emphasis. And since pretty much everybody around here already wears at least two or three hats—except me—guess who they tapped, to lead the charge?

That’s right. The New Guy. Now Professor of English & Theology and “Dean of *Diakonia*.” Tasked with figuring out how to help our spiritually pluralistic student body become more Christ-like. How awesome a gift from heaven is that?!

So please pray for me in the coming months, that I prove to be a faithful servant, myself, in this new and unexpected role. I’m delighted to be

With you in His service,



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SIBLING STRIP

As many of you may know, I have been taking some dual-credit courses online over the past year or so. In the 7 weeks leading up to Christmas and Epiphany, I took Old and New Testament classes. They were a little tough, but they were completely worth it. I was able to learn all about the prophecies and background of Jesus' life. Since I learned all this, Christmas meant so much more to me. There was a depth of understanding that I had never felt before. I was able to see how Jesus' birth was the culmination of *thousands* of years of history. He fulfilled the promises to the exiled Israelites, David, Moses, and even humankind itself in the curse of the serpent. I was also able to learn how the visit from the magi at Epiphany showed how Jesus was a savior to *all* nations, not just the Jews.

Throughout the coming church year, I will continue reflecting on meaning and purpose Jesus' life, death, and resurrection has. Jesus truly is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, our personal Savior. That is a point worth sharing.

John

"Is this normal??"

There have been countless times during the past three and a half years that I have asked someone (or myself!) that question. Since this is our first time serving overseas as missionaries, we didn't fully understand what we were getting ourselves into. The LCMS did an outstanding job preparing us during our two weeks of orientation in St. Louis, but the reality is most things you have to "live out" to truly "get." Additionally, each country is different, and each person is different, so it would be impossible to fully prepare someone for his/her field of service. Living in a foreign country opens the door to a whole bunch of new experiences—some fun; some not so fun. There are also highs and lows—seasons of great joy, excitement, enthusiasm, and energy; and seasons of sadness, discouragement, disillusionment, and even depression. I think each of us in our family has tasted all of these at various times during our time in Korea. Because God is gracious, He never gives us more than we can bear...it just doesn't feel like it sometimes! One benefit of being here as a family has been that when one of us is discouraged, the others can encourage him/her. It gets a little more challenging when two or three (or more!) are "down." Please pray for us, that we will really pull together as a family, encourage each other, and build each other up. We know we will all be much more effective in our various responsibilities and spheres of influence, if we are standing together. Thank you so much for your prayers!

One bit of very exciting news (that we have somehow forgotten to include in our newsletters these past months!) is that Jael and Levi are expecting a baby boy at the end of February. Please pray for them as well, as they are trusting God to open His door of service for them. They know God has the plan, but they are feeling a lot like Abraham and Sarah these days—waiting for God to fulfill His words to them.

Gretchen



1. Hans putting the finishing touches on the Christmas tree
2. Gretchen and Abi (front left) during one of the worship services at a missionary conference in Taiwan
3. Abi feeding a deer in Taiwan with another missionary kid
4. Mike talking with two of the kids from the orphanage
5. John performing a skit with the presenter from the missionary conference in Taiwan

Prayer Request

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|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. For Hans' new role as Dean of Diakonia College |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. For safe delivery of Jael and Levi's baby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. For wisdom as Hans designs and plans courses for the spring semester |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Thanksgiving for all our dear friends and supporters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. For strong, loving relationships within the family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. For good Spiritual fruit in all our relationships |

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