

**Going  
FURTH!**  
Romans 1:16

**Greetings  
to all God's  
people in  
Christ Jesus.**

**The brothers  
and sisters who  
are with me  
send greetings!**

*Philippians 4:21*

**Did you  
Know?**



Face masks can be seen throughout Japanese history. **At the left,** in a detail of a woodblock print from the Edo Period (1603-1868), a patient at a medical clinic covers his mouth with a cloth. There has also long been special care taken for preventing 'unclean' breath for religious rituals and festivals using special paper or leaves over the mouth. With global cases of the recent coronavirus on the rise as Japan's humid summer arrives, companies are rushing to produce cooling and drying face masks to help cope with the sweltering heat. Disposable refrigerated masks, selling for about \$7.00 each, were an instant hit. Soon after, a reusable cloth mask with pockets in which to insert ice packs became available for about \$13.00.

Japan Times, July 5, 2020 - "Examining the History Behind Japan's Love of Face Masks"

For the last thirty years or so, we have written letters to you, our beloved Prayer Supporters, family, and dear friends. Some of you we have been blessed to work with before on the mission field; from many of you we have learned much; some our family met on our travels; some we have known since college, and a few of you much longer than that; and **we are so happy to keep in touch with ALL of you.** It has been a privilege to share our hearts and lives with you here in our newsletters.

Almost one third of the New Testament is correspondence: made up of Epistles, or LETTERS, mostly written by Paul and addressed to the Christian churches of his day. With a couple of exceptions, these letters were written in response to conditions that existed in the churches that

Paul was associated with.

Those letters provide insight into the struggles and joys of the early church, and the topics as well as the depth he discusses is astonishing as he shared his wisdom and how the elders of the church are to conduct themselves, the faith to which the believers must cling, and how the church must serve its community.

Paul's "newsletters" were personal, sharing stories of failure and reports of success, connecting him with his friends and co-workers; telling them of his prayers for them and asking for their prayers. **What a blessing those divinely-inspired surviving CORRESPONDENCE of Paul's are! They challenge us, teach us, advise us, scold us, and encourage us.**

**Handwritten letters are rare today, cherished, since now we have so many ways to keep in touch, including social networks for short thoughts and electronic mail for longer letters.** News travels fast, so we know that you probably have heard many stories and statistics about different countries' response to the Novel Corona virus. We want to share specific stories of Urawa Lutheran School's continued journey, as we respond to families' needs and shine Jesus' Light of Truth and Love to each student and his parents during this unique time.



# REPORT:

# BOXES IN THE MAIL

**b**oth the fiscal and academic school year in Japan have traditionally begun the first week of April, coinciding with the blossoming of the thousands of cherry trees signaling the start of a new school year.

This year's annual kick-off was unfortunately greatly affected by the blossoming of a new virus. Just prior to the opening of our school year, the Japanese government announced closures of all campuses nationwide which forced the administration here at **Urawa Lutheran School (ULS)** to come up with alternatives in the virtual realm, much like other schools all over the world.

In order to have such online learning benefit our students, we needed for them to have their textbooks in hand, something we had prepared to distribute in person on the first day of school.



However, with the lockdown the leaders came up with a massive plan to ship via the postal system all textbooks, resource manuals, and assignments to each household - all 764 students. **As you can see from the photo below, this was quite a project, but one that helped to properly kick off this initial phase of study at home.**

Over the next 4 weeks, students returned completed assignments either online or through regular mail using pre-addressed and stamped envelopes. Each Monday there were huge stacks of mail to sift through with science homework delivered to the Science department, math work to Math, Japanese language study to Japanese, and of course, English essays and exercises to our desks.

After the government ended the official lock-down, ULS was given the green light to allow students back on campus, but only at 50% capacity. Mornings brought students with even-numbered student codes, and the odd in the afternoons. *(No, lunch was not followed by the hosting of those students who are a bit "off the wall," but rather odd-numbered!)* Throughout the day, faculty assumed new duties such as taking student temperatures at campus entry points, cleaning all student desks & chairs with antiseptic solution following each session, and installing plastic partitions on each student desk (see photo on the next page). Teachers are also required to wear plastic mouth shields with a chin covering and complete cleaning responsibilities usually done by students.

**From mid-June, we began regular classes with all the students attending all day, every day.** This continued into July as each school day was spent doing our best to catch up on any lost curriculum, as well as special projects & assessment not completed during the "stay home" period.

With students forced to stay at home, much more time was obviously spent on their homework and writing assignments (completed in English, their second language) were much more detailed. Students who normally would turn in just a few sentences for homework provided paragraphs that were much more expressive, colorful, and vivid. It was an English teacher's dream! It has to be said that it felt like a small advantage to this crisis.



In a normal academic year, our school's 1<sup>st</sup> term would end around July 20 with students beginning a 6-week summer break. So, to allow for lost time in class, Japan's Ministry of Education strongly suggested a much shorter holiday so ULS has chosen to scale down the summer break to two weeks. The summer break will begin August 1 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Term will begin on August 17.

On the whole, the country of Japan has also seen interesting positive trends in regard to quality of life in the workplace, due to the virus. Of course, the Japanese have always taken great pride in the quality of their products produced, but perhaps not so much in the amount of work hours invested in the production. Thanks to the social-distancing measures implemented in Japan, companies were forced to encourage employees to work from home. Many hurdles had to be overcome with implementing teleworking, **but the results of the past 3 months have shown productivity improving as workers** (without the long commute into Tokyo) **are more relaxed & clear-minded. The additional time at home has actually allowed for more work-related tasks to be completed, providing more flexibility & options for family time.** With fewer commuters in the traditionally overly-packed rush hour crush, traffic has moved very smoothly throughout the country. **A recent survey found that over 60% of Japanese workers want to keep working from home after the pandemic has subsided.**

On the “con” side of this experience is the continued frustration in the eyes of an English teacher assigned to teach the ORAL component. Yes, the writing assignments listed above have been an unexpected joy, but the struggles to actually complete listening & speaking exercises in class have been quite the opposite.

In our last Going Forth newsletter, you may remember reading an **NMZ rule** in Tom’s English classroom:

*When students would walk into the English classroom at ULS, they often see written on the board in large block letters – **NMZ** – reminding them that Tom’s classroom was unique: a **No Mask Zone** to assist in facilitating the learning during ORAL English class. With each lesson focusing on the Listening and Speaking components of English, it is vital that the teacher can see the efforts to correctly pronounce the words and phrases along with proper intonation. In past years, a source of frustration for Tom during the annual Kafunsho (hay-fever) season when the spread of pollen from cedar and cypress trees brought out the face masks leading to the muffled sounds coming from the mouths of his English students. In 2020, the NMZ strategy has taken on a whole new meaning as any efforts to enforce such policy could get a teacher into trouble with the school’s administration and perhaps even the local government.*

**Now, 3 months later, the oral sounds are even more muffled as students have not only a mask, but a clear plastic wall that was constructed to surround each desk (4 of 6 sides of the cubical space).** Can you see them in the photo below? Having students sing, repeat, or recite phrases has been near futile in regard to hearing and comprehension. Gone are the “good old days” of turning to your neighbor, breaking into conversation pairs or groups to practice the day’s phrases, passing conversation cards back & forth, and handing out realia to students to increase interaction.

Speaking of **BARRIERS**,  
the sin in our hearts **SEPARATES** us  
from our perfect & just Heavenly  
Father. Because of His great love, He  
couldn’t leave a wall between us,  
so He sent His only Son to  
crash through many walls we built  
so that we could know Him better.

**For He Himself is our peace, who  
made both groups into one and broke  
down the barrier of the dividing wall.**

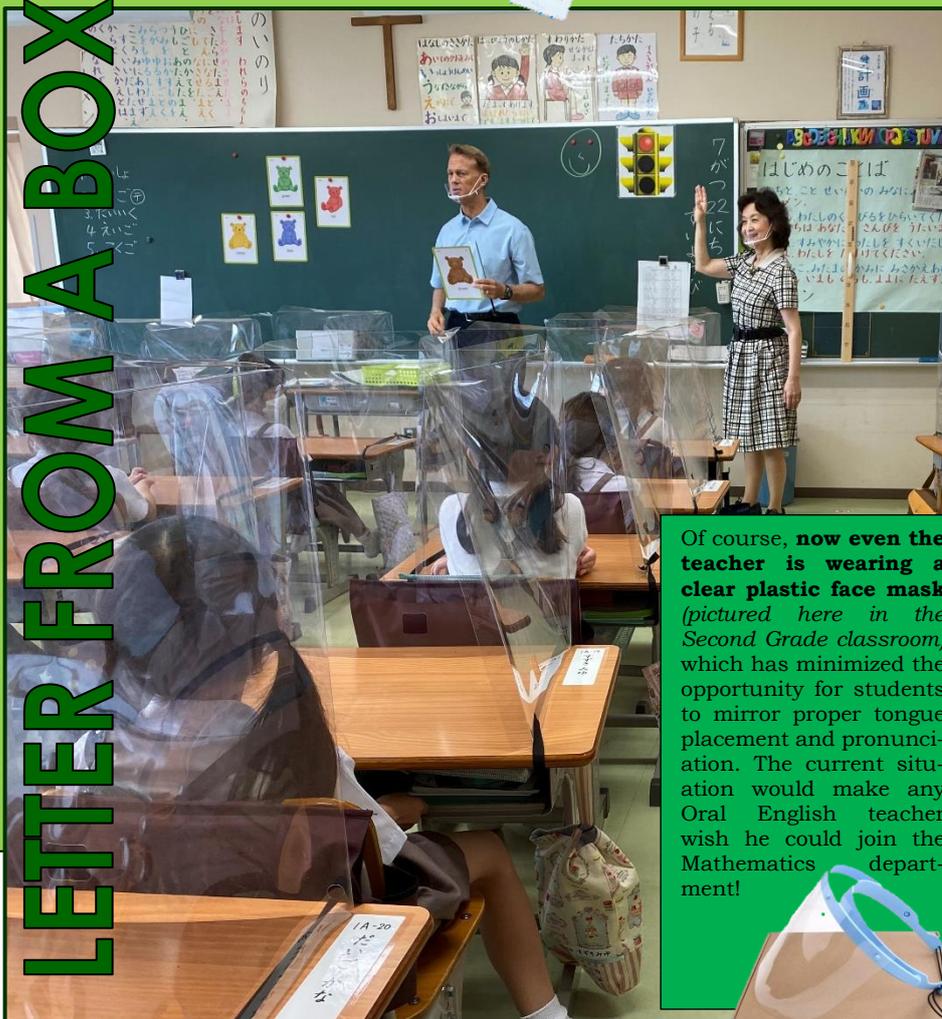
*Ephesians 2:14*

*God sent Jesus to die to pay for our  
sins so that all barriers that stood  
between us were broken.*

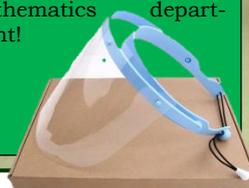
*In the almighty power of grace,  
He literally rolled the barrier of  
a huge grave stone away!*

**Looking up, [those who had come to  
the cemetery that morning] saw that  
the stone [in front of the tomb] had  
been rolled away, although it was  
extremely large. Mark 16:4**

LETTER FROM A BOX



Of course, **now even the teacher is wearing a clear plastic face mask** (pictured here in the *Second Grade classroom*) which has minimized the opportunity for students to mirror proper tongue placement and pronunciation. The current situation would make any Oral English teacher wish he could join the Mathematics department!



Paul  
Departmental Science

# DEAR YOUNGER ME,

手紙 読んでいるあなたは  
どこで何をしているのだろう

十五の僕には誰にも話せない 悩みの種があるのです

The above lyrics (not the complete song) are written by Japanese singer-song writer Angela Aki (2008). Paired with a beautifully haunting melody, this song is very popular with piano teachers & school choirs in Japan. The idea of writing your teenage self a letter from the future sounds romantic, but when you read the translation below, you will probably agree that talking to yourself feels empty and forced. The future happiness that you tell yourself is "yours for the taking" feels like a lie when you reach out and can't find it.

"Greetings to My 15-Year Old Self"

**"GREETINGS ...** You who are reading this, where are you and what are you doing now? I'm 15 and there's something worrying me that I can't talk to anyone about. But if I address a letter to my future self then I know I'll be able to speak my mind. I feel like giving up now, I feel like crying, I feel like I'm going to disappear. Whose words should I trust as I move forward? My one and only heart has broken into pieces time and time again, and I'm living through painful times now. I'm living in the present.

Greetings ... Thank you, I have something to tell your 15-year-old self. If you keep asking yourself why and where you should go, the answer will become clear. The seas of adolescence can be rough but keep sailing the boat that is your dream towards tomorrow's shore. Don't give up now, don't cry, when you feel like you're going to disappear. Then you should trust your own voice and move forward. Even an adult like me gets hurt and has sleepless nights. But I'm living in the bittersweet present. Everything in life has meaning.

So, don't be afraid to follow your dream. Keep on believing. I feel like giving up now, I feel like crying, I feel like I'm going to disappear. Whose words should I trust as I move forward? No matter what stage of your life you're in. You can't get by without going through sadness. Show me a smile, let's live in the present. Let's live in the present.

I pray that you who are reading this will be happy."

Maybe this song is so popular in Japan because many young people hear echoes of their own hearts in these lyrics and can relate to the empty sadness. Many young Japanese wonder, "Whose words can I trust?" When you read through this letter, think of how you could give eternal Hope and answers to a young person who is wondering where to find answers. Pray for those who want to fill that emptiness. Pray they will hear Jesus' words of HOPE and PURPOSE for their lives.

The song on the top of the next page called, "Dear Younger Me" is written by a Christian band called, "Mercy Me," on their 2014 album, "Welcome to the New."

Yes, it is an idyllic notion to think of warning your adolescent self about the future, but what a chance to give calming advice and encouraging counsel from God's Word!

What a chance to point your younger self to the grace at the cross and mercy of your Heavenly Father! He is waiting for you to ask Him to give you the answers!



**d**

ear younger me, where do I start? If I could tell you everything that I have learned so far, then you could be one step ahead of all the painful memories still running thru my head. I wonder how much different things would be...

Dear younger me, I cannot decide... Do I give some speech about how to get the most out of your life? Or do I go deep and try to change the choices that you'll make 'cuz they're choices that made me. Even though I love this crazy life, sometimes I wish it was a smoother ride...

Dear younger me, if I knew then what I know now, condemnation would've had no power. My joy, my pain would've never been my worth. If I knew then what I know now, would've not been hard to figure out what I would've changed if I had heard... "Dear younger me, it's not your fault. You were never meant to carry this beyond the cross."

Dear younger me -- You are holy, you are righteous, you are one of the redeemed, set apart, a brand new heart, you are free indeed! Every mountain, every valley, thru each heartache you will see, every moment brings you closer to who you were meant to be! Dear younger me...



# MY DEAREST CHILD,

**y**ou may not know me, but I know everything about you. (Psalm 139: 1)

I am familiar with all your ways. (Psalm 139:3)

For you were made in my Image. (Genesis 1:27)

I knew you before you were conceived. (Jeremiah 1:4-5)

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in My Book. (Psalm 139:15-16)

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know Me. (John 8:41-44)

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. (1 John 4:16)

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you.

Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. (1John 3:1)

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. (Matthew 7:11)

For I am the perfect father. (Matthew 5:48)

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. (James 1:17)

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. (Matthew 6:31-33)

**My plan for your future has always been filled with hope.** (Jeremiah 29:11)



The Creator of the Universe has written YOU a letter!

Because I love you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find Me. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

Delight in Me and I will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

For it is I who gave you those desires. (Philippians 2:13)  
I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

When you are broken hearted, I am close to you. (Psalm 34:18)

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. (Isaiah 40:11)

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. (Revelation 21:3-4)

**(God's letter to YOU is continued on next page)**

Personal Management

(God's letter to YOU is continued from the previous page)

Excerpt from, "The Father's Love Letter," available in over 115 languages.  
<http://onfire.jp/FL>  
<http://www.fathersloveletter.com/languages.html>  
Father heart  
Communications ©1999

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. (Revelation 21:3-4)

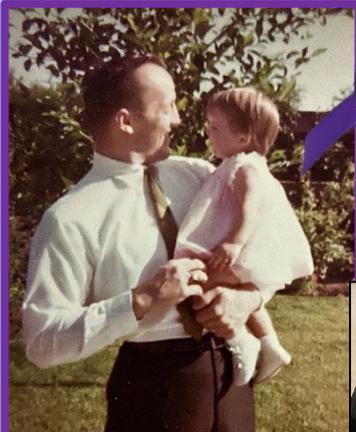
I gave up everything I love that I might gain your love. (Romans 8:31-32)

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (Romans 8:38-39)

I have always been Father and will always be Father. (Ephesians 3:14-15)

Will you be my child? (John 1:12-13)

I am waiting for you. (Luke 15: 11-32)  
Love, Your Dad,  
Almighty God



Photos above: In June we said goodbye to Dad Bush (above with Debi in '67, below with the kids in '12). He lost his battle with Alzheimer's and entered Heaven to be with his beloved Jackie and his Lord Jesus.



We have been called here to the Asian mission field as educational missionaries, supporting & supported by Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC MS), and many of you at home. We especially want to thank the faithful team in Nebraska at **Mission Central**, Mr. Gary Thies, and Pastor Brent Smith for all of their help in telling our stories & recruiting churches and brothers & sisters in Christ to give prayer and financial support for our family & work in Japan! For more information, follow this link: <https://missioncentral.us/going/> Thank you!



Photos at right: Like many of you, this time staying at home has been spent learning to cook more elaborate ethnic dishes and meals! The kids tried ceviche, lasagna, gyoza, various breads, and more! The look on Tom's face tells his delight at the culinary experimentation!



Photos at left: Scout meetings have been online, except for Summer Camp with a few good friends!



**Tom & Debi Going** serve as educational missionaries in Japan for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod with their 12-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.



Art & Animation