



## The Lonely Christian

Last week I attended the funeral of the mother-in-law of one of our mission station members, Shujuan.

Since these traditional Taiwan funerals are long, multi-staged affairs, Shujuan told Vicar Zhao and me that it was only more important that we get there for a section in the middle. Just after I arrived was the time for the grandchildren to worship their (now deceased) grandma. The grandson has been to our mission station’s Sunday catechism class and worship many times (and the granddaughter once), and it pained me to see them bowing their heads to the ground, and offering the incense, fruit, and flowers to Grandma. Whether or not their hearts were in the actions, I don’t know, but the enormous pressure in Taiwan to do these actions, particularly for that sole grandson, is nearly impossible to overcome. Shujuan’s much more elaborate and extended time to worship was over by the time I arrived, so I don’t know to what extent she did the various actions. From everything I saw when I was there, though, Vicar Zhao and I were the only ones in the whole room who didn’t worship. Not only extended family members, but also various other groups, including coworkers of the son, and politicians who know the family, approached the picture of the deceased group by group and offered their worship. After Vicar Zhao and I went up at the very end for the “catch all” group of anyone who was “left over” (though we didn’t worship), I was able to have a few words with Shujuan. Although I haven’t had a chance to talk with her since, I know she must have felt extremely lonely as the only Christian there (aside from Vicar Zhao and I), while at the same time trying to rightly grieve for her mother-in-law. This scene occurs daily hundreds of times in Taiwan, as ancestor worship is by far the most dominant religious distinctive in Taiwan. I was at least grateful that at this particular funeral, Buddhist and Taoist elements were almost non-existent from what I could tell. Please pray for Christians like Shujuan to remain

*an example of a typical Taiwan funeral*



strong in their faith despite tremendous family and societal pressures, and also for the Gospel to break into the hearts and lives of more people here, freeing them for the worship of the one true Triune God.



### Pastor Paul’s Call

Pastor Paul is a theological educator in Taiwan, serving with the China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC) and China Lutheran Seminary (CLS). He is called to teach, write, and help plant and pastor Lutheran churches.

To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to [michael.paul@lcmsintl.org](mailto:michael.paul@lcmsintl.org) with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

**And those in the boat  
worshiped Jesus, saying,  
“Truly you are the Son of God.”**  
Matthew 15:33 ESV





## What can you pray for?

### Thanks for:

- good weekly sermon preparation w/ Taiwan church leaders
- Irene's safety and good health during the past few months

### Petitions for:

- Shujuan, that our Heavenly Father would keep her strong in Christian faith through His Word and Spirit.
- the Gospel to reach more Taiwanese, freeing them to worship the one true God
- success in finding new homes and a worship location

#### Our mailing address:

No. 98, 12F Lipeng Road  
Hsinchu City 30072  
TAIWAN, R.O.C



Chinese Book  
of Concord

Our official website:  
[www.lcms.org/paul](http://www.lcms.org/paul)

There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [www.lcms.org/service](http://www.lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

## Preaching Prep

I'm more and more convinced that one of the most important things I do here occurs every Monday morning from 9:30 – 10:30, when I lead two other pastors and four vicars in a discussion of the Scripture readings for the Sunday two weekends away. My seminary students tell me all the time that the sermons of many, if not most, churches in Taiwan do not focus on a particular Biblical text, and when they do, the theme is almost always on what Christians need to do to be better Christians (i.e., all Law regarding what we need to do, and no Gospel of God's free forgiveness and salvation in Christ). During our Monday morning studies, we focus especially on the Gospel reading for the Sunday, looking at it from many angles, and then always end with an extended discussion on what specific Law themes and Gospel emphases could be stressed in our sermons for that Sunday. It's been particularly encouraging to see some of the men growing in their ability to articulate the Gospel clearly and plan out Biblical, Law-Gospel sermons. Please pray for good Monday morning discussions, and Christ-centered preaching from the pulpits of Taiwan.



*Vicars Zhao and Chen meeting with me in Hsinchu, while the rest join us on-line*

## Brief Updates

- We just learned that the land on which our first mission station is located (as well as the land on which our aboriginal members live) will soon be expropriated by the local government. Please pray for God's blessing for our aboriginal members and our mission station to be able to quickly find new homes and a worship location.
- After 2 ½ weeks of strict quarantining, Irene now has just a few days left until she's "fully" back home with me here after her time with our children and grandson in the US. We thank our Heavenly Father for keeping her in good health throughout these past two months.

**Keeping up-to-date:** If you're not receiving this newsletter by email but would like to, please contact us at [michael.paul@lcms.org](mailto:michael.paul@lcms.org). For frequent Facebook updates, go to the facebook group: "Michael Paul family Taiwan mission."

To support our work financially, you may make checks payable (memo line: "Support of Missionary Michael Paul") to "The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" and send your tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861



You can **ALSO** make checks payable to "Mission Central" and send your tax-deductible gift to our friends at: Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034.