

# Going FORTH!

Romans 1:16

Going Forth  
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Perhaps some of you may have been tracking the number of Covid 19 infections in Japan which has remained relatively low....

usually averaging around 600 infections per day in a country of 126 million people! The current totals since the start of the pandemic are about 120,000 infections and 1,900 deaths nationwide. The numbers have remained remarkably low, thanks to the diligence of the Japanese wearing masks when outside the home and keeping gatherings to very small numbers.

We saw on the local news recently that roughly only 50% of Americans say that they regularly wear masks when out in public. Here in Japan that figure is close to 100%. **Yes, masks in Japan have proved to be a key to solving the spread!!**

Watching Japanese news covering American issues, we are seen by other countries as a nation deeply divided about many topics.

To wear a mask, to not wear a mask, how to protect ourselves, how to protect others – our expectations, priorities, outlook, perspectives, cultures, age, motivations, dignity, respect, rights – so many issues that are creating such deep divides and hard feelings. It seems many despise our differences. It seems that there are many feelings that have been right under the surface that have spilled out in demonstrations and protests. **It is hard for Japanese to understand the “drama” of recent American events.**

One thing that Americans are famous for world-wide is “wearing our hearts on our sleeves” and “speaking our minds,” two things that most Japanese people are not comfortable doing. **Americans are known as “straightforward” and “forthright.” Japanese are often labeled as “reticent,” “shy,” and “unable to put their feelings into words.” We want to explore some of those issues in this newsletter.**

All of this talk of masks has made us think of drama, theater, and acting. Tourists have long appreciated world-famous traditional Japanese entertainment. There are **Kabuki, Noh,** and **Bunraku**, all theater arts that create an illusion of drama using music, sound, lighting, & masks. *(continued on page 2)*



## DRAMA

The three most well-known dramatic arts in Japan are:

**KABUKI** – highly stylized blend of mime, singing & dancing, and spectacular staging, elaborate make-up, and glamorous costuming.

**NOH** – slow, dramatic movements with monotonous tones of chanting.

**BUNRAKU** – half-life-sized elaborate puppets controlled by 3 or 4 men per character



Photo: Christine Griffith



# 能

The word **NOH** (at the left) is written with the kanji for "skill" or talent," and uses masks like those at the left. Notice the two masks here at the right, specifically the eyebrows, eyes, and mouth. When the actor tilts the mask up, as the near one, they say that the eyebrows and mouth are sad, but when it is tilted down, the eyebrows and mouth look happy!



**Japanese theater is interesting! Kabuki** is popular with its frozen tableaux of stylized and often quick loud dramatic action, while the movement in **noh** is slow, the language is poetic, the tone of the chorus is monotonous, seeming more noble and dignified. There are many differences between the two theater arts: **Noh** uses masks, while **kabuki** uses colorful makeup on the actors' faces. **Noh** is 600 years old, while **kabuki** is 400 years old. Many say that "noh is the teacher of kabuki. Noh is very traditional, but kabuki is something that's for ordinary people."

One thing that they have in common is that **all performers in both arts are male**. In 1629, the Japanese government became worried about morals in the theater, so women were banned from performing in kabuki. Troupes started using men to dress as the female roles, as they do to this day, much like classical Greek theater (see p. 6). Also like Greek drama, noh uses a chorus at the side of the stage to assist with the narration of the story. Noh was traditionally performed outdoors on a stage, now in a theater with a beautiful roofed stage with open sides and only a back wall.

In many forms of Japanese theater, the stage attendants dress in black, not as part of the play, but assisting the performing characters such as handing them props or moving objects, or as in the photos at the bottom to control the elaborate puppets. These "kuroko," literally the black-clothed helpers, are an example how Japanese can ignore something right in front of them, choosing to "not see or hear." If you think of apartment buildings built practically on top of each other with thin walls made of wood or paper, or commuter trains packed full of people face-to-face with strangers, it makes sense that **Japanese society is skilled at choosing what they see and hear**.

**One key element of noh are the wooden masks which the characters wear.** They are carved and tell the audience what kind of character

from blocks of Japanese cypress actor is being portrayed. **They are created three-dimensionally and allow skilled actors to imply a variety of expressions with turns of the head** (see photos at the top of the page).

The conflict between **HONNE** (one's true feelings, see more on page 5) and **TATEMAE** (one's obligations to family or society) is one of the **main topics of Japanese drama throughout the ages**. A hero would have to choose between carrying out his obligations to his family or loyalty to his feudal lord OR admitting his true love for an unacceptable lady or wishing to pursue a career path outside of his social class.

and tell the audience what kind of character **uniquely**

In modern Japanese, the word **KABUKI** is written with 3 characters (below):

**KA** - song  
**BU** - dance

**KI** - skill

Since the word is said to come from the verb, kabuki, meaning "out of the ordinary," the theater style is often translated as "avant garde" or "bizarre." **The painting on the face & body are elaborate, as you can see at the photo at the right, even "bizarre" muscles on the arms and legs.**



# 文楽

The characters (at left) used to write **BUNRAKU**, the name of the puppetry art, mean "the delight (RAKU) of literary arts (BUN)" and the script is formally presented to the audience before each act.

# 歌舞伎



"Alright, let me get this straight: **A man in a KABOOKEE MASK** attacked you."  
(one of our favorite lines from Big Hero Six, Disney movie, 2014)

At LEFT, a kabuki mask ☺



# SMILEY FACE



September & October are busy seasons for private elementary schools in Japan as they compete to attract new students for the next academic year that begins the following April. Included in the “race” is Urawa Lutheran School (**ULS**), who has had several Open Houses on campus (*both in-person and online*), culminating in two big days of entrance exams for prospective 1<sup>st</sup> graders and their parents. Much like last year, record numbers of 5-year olds sat for the tests, almost 300!

These surprising numbers are once again thanks to all of your prayers and the guiding Hand of the Lord who led us to an affiliation with Aoyama University in Tokyo that offers prospective students with not only 12 years of continuing education at a quality Christian institution, but rather 16 years! Parents that have flooded our Open Houses and local School Fairs these past two years have stated what peace of mind they would have knowing that they would not need to enroll their child in a cram school in the future (*sometimes up to **nine years** of added evening and weekend cram sessions*) to help ensure their son or daughter could enter a reputable university. Being accepted into our Lutheran school would provide a direct and smooth entry to Aoyama, one of the top universities in Japan, often described as just a step below the “Ivy League.”

This amazing flow from the floodgates of Heaven has been a huge blessing that has filled our classrooms to overflowing, causing the ULS leadership to consider ways to add more square footage to our campus without breaking any prefectural building codes. Included in the expansion discussion is how to add more desks in the faculty room.

As student numbers have grown exponentially, so has the need for new teachers, which now totals over 90 faculty, including part-time teachers. **Included in the recruiting was the addition of two new expat English teachers**, Mr. Kurt Wells from Missouri and Mr. Ian Hunt from Michigan (*see next page for introductions!*). For the first time in ULS history all the native English teachers are male (*except the time there was only one English teacher*).

“Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the FLOODGATES of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it!” (Malachi 3:10)

**Did you know** that there is a disorder in Asia called “Smile Mask Syndrome?” It has been found that depression and physical illness can result after prolonged, unnatural smiling. Japanese people who feel that they are expected to exhibit positivity, such as smiling and expressing positive emotion towards customers for instance, become unaware that they are smiling even when stressed or upset.

**Recently, the Chairman of the ULS School Board asked the English Department to start English ONLY morning homeroom devotions in the classrooms.**

Kurt, Tom, & Ian enthusiastically joined in leading songs and prayers without the translation help of a Japanese English partner teacher. **What a blessing to lead the**

**littlest students in simple songs of praise! It is encouraging to see heads nodding in understanding of an English message of how to find peace in Jesus’ love!**



Tom is usually seen at school wearing a plastic see-through mask (*see photo, top of next page*), but the mask at the top left of this page would be the one showing his true **HONNE** (*see definition on page 5*) about working with two enthusiastic, professional American **MALE** English teachers. Having 6 sisters, Tom has always felt very comfortable with female co-workers, but is greatly enjoying a first – working with two other guys!



Ian

Kurt

**Meet KURT (above photo, far right):** He grew up in Missouri and met his wife, **Cathryn** (with him in the photo, below left), at the University of Missouri. They moved to Japan in 2017, and **“are so thankful to God for the relationships, beauty, lessons, and faithfulness that we have received since we've been here. What I appreciate most about Japan is the strong sense of community. Every day, you can feel that you are a part of a group that is living and working together. That comes just from living in such close proximity to each other, but I also think it's a cultural thing. The students at ULS bring me joy every day I'm there. I teach mostly elementary students and getting to teach, encourage, and be around these little people that are so often filled with happiness is always encouraging. Since living in Japan I have experienced first-hand the effect of people praying for us from abroad and I'm grateful. We especially ask for prayers for peace and rest as we adjust to being a family of three and our new work responsibilities at ULS.”**



Ian

Kurt & Cathryn had a beautiful baby girl, Ari, in July.



**One of Ian's claims to fame here in Japan is that he has appeared in an English Conversation Course (ECC) commercial (far right in the photo above) with Japanese figure skater, Asada Mao, far left.**



**Meet IAN:** He joined ULS back in July, a few months after the

new school year started. Originally from Grand Rapids, Michigan, he has been in Japan since 2016. He worked for a private English language school called ECC, teaching “Business English” courses, as well as English as an ALT at a public school. He says, **“Both jobs left me longing for something more; somewhere I could invest as an educator without worrying about profits or sales. ULS has quickly become the place I have been looking for but more importantly, it is the place God has planned for me. ‘For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for well-being, and not for calamity, in order to give you a future and a hope.’ (Jeremiah 29:11) Living abroad, I continue to learn to trust God’s plan despite never having a complete picture. We are all given glimpses of His plan, moments of clarity which are marvelous and humbling. I am blessed and thankful that God’s plan has led me here to ULS. If there are any prayer warriors reading this looking for a prayer request, I would ask that you pray for discernment, patience, and understanding on my behalf. These three things have been my close companions, and could always do with a bit more.”**

**Tom (in the photo at the top of the page with Kurt & Ian) has been leading homeroom devotions in various classrooms since gathering in the chapel has been lessened. They were asked to start doing English devotions without translation, so they are teaching songs, gestures, and using Power Point presentations with many pictures and the students are loving it!**

# DEEP UNDER THE SURFACE

Maybe one of the most challenging aspects to friendships and ministry in Japan is the difficulty at getting to the truth. Communication can get confusing and sometimes frustrating when **most Japanese friends don't want to disappoint you, disagree with you, or make you feel uncomfortable, so don't tell you what they really think.**

In Japanese culture, public failure and disapproval of others are seen as sources of shame, maybe even "losing face" (*reduced social standing*). It is common to avoid direct confrontation or disagreement in most situations. Traditionally, a Japanese person feels that they should try to minimize any discord, since if they didn't, they might be seen as aggressive or insulting. For this reason, most Japanese tend to go to great lengths to avoid conflict, especially in large groups. If everyone follows these social guidelines, they can be fairly sure that they will not have anyone be insulting or aggressive with them.

本音

**If your true feelings (your HONNE, literally the true sound, your deepest inner voice) are contrary to what is expected by society or what is required according to your position and circumstances, they are kept hidden, except from your closest friends. Your TATEMAE (literally "the outer structure of a building," what you pretend to believe) is the behavior & opinions that are expected by society and required from everyone, and might not match what your HONNE is saying, deep in your heart. In many cases, TATEMAE leads to outright telling of lies in order to avoid exposing true inward feelings.**

建前

An American who doesn't know much about Japanese people might say that they are shy and stand-offish. People might even be insulted when faced with a lie. **Someone might wonder how to truly make friends in Japan if people are only telling you what you want to hear. Honne-tatemae** has been called the "Japanese art of indirectness," and many have wondered, **"SOUL or MASK???"** "The Honne-Tatemae divide' is considered to be of 'paramount importance' in Japanese culture," says WIKIPEDIA, and continues to be a source of confusion for many foreigners. **What an opportunity to listen with our hearts, to ask the Holy Spirit to show us our friends the way that their Heavenly Father sees them! We need God's grace to see down deep, beyond our friends' faces and words, to what they are not saying. We need to look underneath the surface, listen to the heart under the HYPOCRITE (see page 6!), find the truth that their hearts are missing, and share how to find peace when they don't know what to say, strength when they feel**

**weak (see page 7!) and grace that is FREE!**

SOUL OR

Another good example is a situation in which a person goes out of their way to do something for someone who didn't want them to do in the first place. This "favor" ends up causing problems for the one "helped," but Japanese society says that he has to show gratitude anyway. He might use a recently coined word, "arigatameiwaku," which is a combination of the words for "thank you" and "nuisance."

The next time a computer illiterate yet confident member of your family tries to do things for you on your laptop that you definitely could have done faster, you can grit your teeth and hiss your thanks at them using this handy Japanese word!

Find more useful Japanese phrases at [livejapan.com](http://livejapan.com)!

If a person is socially awkward or inappropriate, Japanese young people say they are "KY," short for "kuki yomenai," meaning, "can't read the room," or literally, "can't read the air." Japan is a very high context culture, and a lot of social interactions involve suggesting things indirectly, inferring implied meaning, and not speaking frankly or saying things outright. If this is at odds with your own cultural background, you might find Japanese conversation a little challenging to navigate. No matter how long you live in Japan, you may be a little on the "KY" side, as far as your Japanese friends are concerned! ([livejapan.com](http://livejapan.com))

ほんね たてまえ  
本音と建前  
Real Intentions Official Stance

ABOVE LEFT: **HONNE** - a person's true feelings and desires, often kept hidden to oneself contrasted with RIGHT: **TATEMAE** - the behavior and opinions displayed in public to satisfy society's demands.

Japanese society recognizes these two might conflict, due to the fact that society values harmony. This idea of "face" as it is called, or *tatemae*, is necessary to society, making outward appearances important.



MASK ?

# GREEK DRAMA

**All this talk about Japanese drama and masks make us think about ancient Greek drama.** We will tell you a little bit about drama in Greece, and **see how many similarities with noh you can find!**

In classic Athens, people would take part in performances that explored great issues in their society, either comedies or tragedies. Tragedies were often about the past, while comedies tended to be about current and everyday life. It was not unusual for ancient Greek comedy to embarrass a well-known person, from politicians to celebrities, while tragedy had a more serious tone in the writing, using a moral lesson within the show (*often based on mythical idols*), often about humility, pride, and sorrow.

Performances were performed in the open air. The semi-circular theatres were built on hillsides in the open air with rows of tiered stone that could hold more than 18,000 spectators. The stage was raised on the circular floor to make sure the audience could see and amplify the sound.

**All the actors were men, some of whom had to dress as females during the performance. The actors wore large masks made from fabric stiffened with plaster with large mouth holes to amplify the voices. They exaggerated facial features and emotion. Costumes played an important role, bright colors for comedies and dark colors for tragedies. Costumes were bulky to allow guests far away from the stage to see the actors.**

Greek plays were either spoken or sung in rhyme. Instead of one actor telling a story, a group of actors known as a chorus (*between 5 & 50 actors who would sing in unison and chant*), working together in movement and voice so that stories could be heard and movements seen. Singing was another important part of ancient Greek theater, as well as the choreography of music and dancing. The dramas featured plenty of music played on the **aulos** (*a flute type instrument*), and the **lyre**. There were sound effects to add to the reality of the story such as rain, horses galloping, & lightning. They used fire, enacted real-life battle scenes, even using cranes to help people soar across the stage. (*The audience would throw food & stones if they thought the acting wasn't good enough!*)

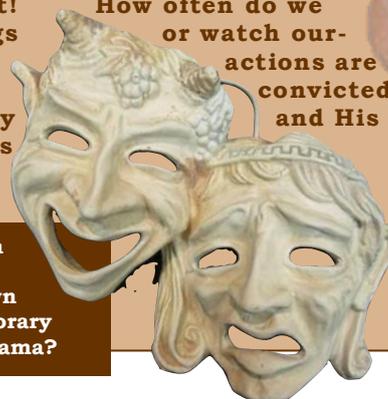
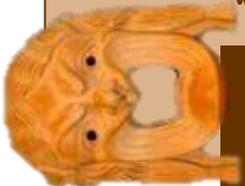
# HYPOCRITES

A number of different things might pop to mind when we hear the word **hypocrite**. Maybe it's a politician caught in a scandal; maybe it's a religious leader doing something counter to their creed; maybe it's a scheming and conniving character featured in soap operas. We usually think of a person who pretends to have virtue that he or she does not actually possess. We often think of a person whose actions belie their stated beliefs.

Did you know that in Ancient Greece, a **hypocrite** was an actor, literally, "an interpreter from underneath," the one who reflects the mask they are wearing, hiding their true character under their stage persona? They were the people interpreting their stories through their masks. Often, one actor would play multiple parts, ducking back to the side to change masks, coming out as different characters.

Talking about Japanese drama or the outside wall that they show to hide their feelings sounds a lot like classic Greek drama. Trying to figure out what Japanese friends or coworkers' real opinions are can feel like navigating an ancient script! bend the truth to spare a friend's feelings selves and feel frustrated that our own different than what we have said. We are when we seek God's truth and find integrity challenge to be His servants of Grace in His world to His created & beloved children.

If you look up the definition of Japanese Noh theater, you find that it is drama structured around song and dance. Plots are usually drawn from legend, history, literature, and contemporary events. Doesn't that sound like a classic Greek drama?



# DONNING OUR SUPER SUITS

Before 2020, we only saw masks on thieves or super heroes! Thinking in this newsletter about masks used in drama made us think of reminding ourselves that we are **SUPER HEROES!**

During this year of financial issues, health anxieties, and global worries, we need to remember WHERE we get our super strength! Our patience, peace, joy, strength, and perseverance comes from the promises of our Heavenly Father. As children, we dress up as our heroes, donning super hero costumes (like Isaac in these photos) and pretend that we have super strength, but we don't have

to pretend! God gives us so much grace to be supernaturally strong and courageous! Sing with us, "In the morning I will sing of Your love and strength, Lord, You are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. O my Strength, I sing praise to You, my loving God!" (Ps 59:16-17)



"Even when you feel like grieving, remember that the **JOY of the Lord is your strength!**" (Neh 8:10)

"Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. **Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always.** Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced! Give glory to His Holy Name!" (1 Chron. 16:10-11)

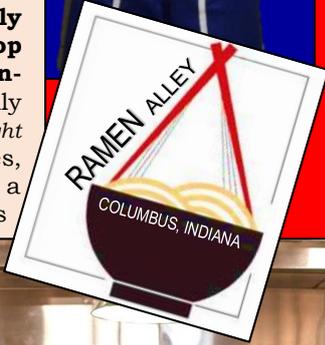
"It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect!" (2 Sam 22:33)

"God's way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a **SHIELD** for all who take refuge in Him." (2 Sam 22:31)

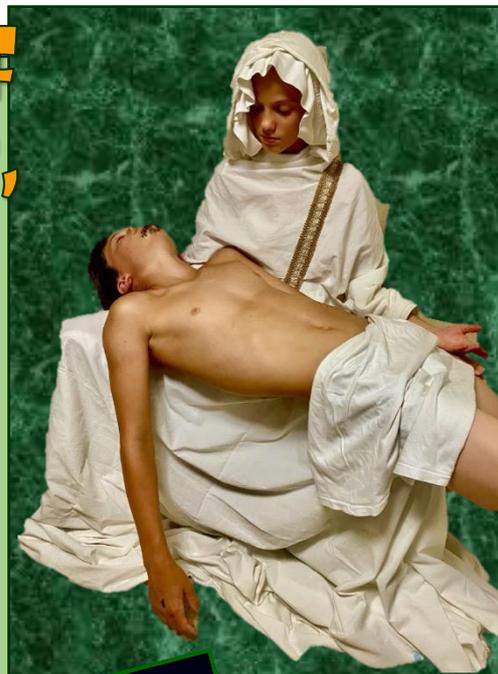
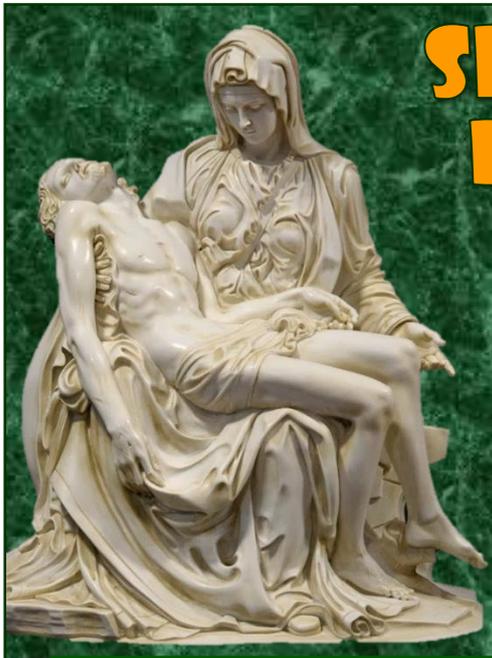
Many of you know that the **SOUND of the TRUE SOUL of the Going family for two generations has been the Japanese people.** This **HONNE continues to echo** in two of Tom's sisters, Bonnie & Kay, their husbands, Tony & Gordon, and daughter, Alyssa (see photo at left and bottom right). **They recently opened an authentic ramen noodle shop in an alley in downtown Columbus, Indiana!** They brought two dear family friends, **Kyo & Shige** (far right in bottom right photo), who came from Japan with recipes, advice, and muscle! The restaurant was a **HUGE success**, lines of hungry customers out the door, then the Virus hit. In God's strength, they have continued scooping noodles with a smile for take out or a quick slurp! **Pray that the restaurant continues to bless the community with hot ramen and warm love!**



Other family members help out in the kitchen chopping vegetables when needed, like Tom's parents (below)! On the wall behind them (at left) in the restaurant is "**shinkou,**" **FAITH.** With noodles, they want to serve up Jesus' love!



# SPEAKING OF DRESSING UP,



Part of our Junior High curriculum is appreciation of beautiful classical art as we march through Art History. Debi

& the kids enjoyed recreating some favorite classics in our living room. Posing for Michelangelo's stunning optical illusion (top left), "The Pieta," was challenging since Megumi's lap hold her brother's over 5 feet tall body! (Mary's grand marble lap was exaggerated to incredible proportions to hold the body of her adult son. (If that beautiful statue could stand up, she would be over 6 feet tall!)) As you can see in the middle photo, Isaac kept sliding off his sister's perch, making for some hilarity! Next, we tackled Johannes Vermeer's "Girl with the Pearl Earring" (framed painting above), dressing Megumi in a couple of different kimonos to play with color combinations. Doesn't the robe in the original look like a kimono?

We recently had dinner with Kyo & Shige here in Tokyo (right) and loved hearing stories of dear family and yummy ramen!!!



**Tom & Debi Going** serve as educational missionaries in Japan for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod with their **almost 13** 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.

