

Chinese Christmas: An opportunity for evangelism

Because rapid economic development impacts every aspect of Chinese society, Christmas has become a special time in China. Without believing in Jesus Christ, most Chinese, especially the young and city-dwellers, celebrate Christmas as a festive party time. Without experiencing a work holiday, Chinese people enjoy this festival's atmosphere. It is joked that Christmas sells even better than the Chinese Spring Festival.

On the other hand, Chinese congregations use Christmas as an opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, because they have most non-believing visitors during this time. Members are even asked to give their seats to visitors who have come to learn about Christianity. Based on the Blue Book on China's Religions published in 2010, the number of Protestant Christians is 23.05 million, roughly 1.8 percent of the population.

In this time, we remember that Christmas is good news of great joy for **all** people on earth. Because God loves the world, God loves the people of China.

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."
(Luke 2:10-11)*



I am so blessed and privileged to serve in China through our partnership with Beijing International Christian Fellowship—helping bring more and more people to know Christ. We work with the church in China to train pastors, lay leaders and seminaries so they are better equipped to serve God by serving the people in their local congregations. The need for leadership development is great. Please pray for us!

On behalf of Chinese Christians, I wish you 'Sheng Dan Kuai Le 圣诞快乐' (Merry Christmas).

The Rev. Dorcas Wang serves as an ELCA missionary in China, training leaders through the Beijing International Christian Fellowship.

Overnight: The people were filled with hope

The Arusha Lutheran Medical Center, directed by ELCA missionary, Dr. Mark Jacobson, just graduated its first class of Assistant Medical Officers. In training these students, the center is addressing the huge need for health professionals in Tanzania. With a population of 44 million, Tanzania has fewer than 2,000 medical doctors to serve the entire population. The shortage is especially critical in rural Tanzania.

In response to this shortage, the center trains "assistant doctors." These are students, previously trained as clinical officers or physician's assistants, who have returned for a two-year course, upgrading to be an Assistant Medical Officer. In the course, their clinical skills are refreshed and they are introduced to basic surgery. The goal of the course is to increase the number of trained medical providers for the rural communities of Tanzania.

The school is the first faith-based program of its kind in the country. Among the first class of 20 students, 15 have completed the course and passed their examinations.

While 15 graduates sounds as if it will make little difference, the impact of these 15 on their home hospitals will be enormous. It means that 15 new doctors will serve 15 different hospitals in the most remote areas of the country.

Consider Dr. Wallace Sahani who received the "best student" award. Upon graduation, he immediately made the 14 hour drive to the western side of Lake Victoria where he resumed duties in a 150-bed hospital with only one other Assistant Medical Officer. Overnight, the medical professionals were doubled, the quality of care improved and the people were filled with hope.



Dr. Wallace Sahani is recognized as "best student."



Dr. Mark Jacobson (seated fourth from the right) celebrates graduation at the Arusha Lutheran Medical Center where he serves as director.

A USEFUL URL

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A tribute to Bette McCrandall: "The Mother Teresa of the ELCA"



Bette McCrandall, ELCA missionary, was recognized for nearly 30 years of missionary service.

Three months before Leymah Gbowe, life-long Liberian Lutheran and ELCA scholarship recipient, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, another woman was recognized for her quiet, yet exemplary, service in Liberia.

Bette McCrandall, after nearly 30 years of service as an ELCA missionary, was heralded "the Mother Teresa of the ELCA" by the Rev. Rafael Malpica-Padilla at the Summer Missionary Conference recognition banquet. During the bloody Liberian civil war, when missionaries were being evacuated, Bette McCrandall opted to stay and walk alongside global companions in the Lutheran Church of Liberia and others.

Bette served as surrogate mother to countless Liberian youth, carried victims' bodies from St. Peter's Church after its bloody massacre, and helped the Liberian Lutheran church rebuild and strengthen its education ministry.

Together, we say "thank you" to Bette for exemplary service. And, I say "thank you" to you, supporters of ELCA missionaries! Your support helps to make "a world of difference."

P.S. View a video of Bette, along with vignettes of other ELCA missionaries, at the Hand in Hand blog digest: <http://blogs.elca.org/handinhand>.

The Rev. Twila Schock is director for
ELCA Missionary Sponsorship and Global Appeals.

Give a good gift this Christmas

Twenty-five dollars helps an ELCA missionary lead Sunday worship. Forty dollars helps an ELCA missionary teach three school courses. One hundred dollars helps an ELCA missionary provide surgical training to medical students. You, too, can help. Find out how you can support ELCA missionaries in the ELCA Good Gifts catalog on page 19, or give online at www.elca.org/goodgifts.

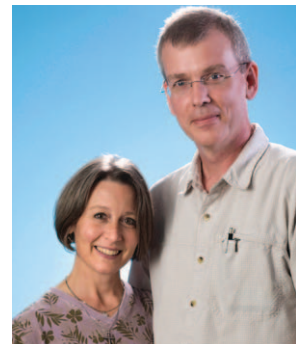


A handy idea for Epiphany

Celebrate Christ's light for the world during the season of Epiphany. Each week, lift up the church in each part of the world where ELCA missionaries serve: Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East. Pray for missionaries. Host a global dinner using Missionary Sponsorship placeMAPS. Share missionary stories in your sermons or during Sunday school. Request placeMAPS at missionarysponsorship@elca.org. Find missionary stories at <http://blogs.elca.org/handinhand>. Download bulletin inserts at www.elca.org/handinhand

Sponsors needed

The ELCA continues to walk alongside the Lutheran Church in Liberia. ELCA missionaries, the Rev. Brian and Christine Palmer, live in Totota where Brian trains emerging Liberian church leaders at the Lutheran Center for Biblical Studies. To sponsor the Palmers, or another of the ELCA's nearly 250 missionaries, email missionarysponsorship@elca.org or call 800-638-3522, ext. 2657.



Pastor Brian and Christine Palmer are called by the Lutheran Church in Liberia to train lay leadership for ministry.

How to give

1. To give through your congregation, write "ELCA Missionary Sponsorship" on the check's memo line.
2. To give online, visit www.elca.org/4missionaries.
3. To donate directly, make your check out to "ELCA Missionary Sponsorship" and mail to: **ELCA Missionary Sponsorship, PO Box 71764, Chicago, IL 60694-1764.**
4. Give a gift that says "you mean the world to me." Call 800-638-3522 to donate and to request an ELCA Missionary Sponsorship gift card ("Thanking," "Celebrating," "Honoring" or "Remembering").
5. For assistance including ELCA Missionary Sponsorship in your will or estate plan, contact the Rev. Twila Schock by emailing missionarysponsorship@elca.org or calling 800-638-3522, ext. 2641.

