

November 28, 2008

“Dzan Mei Tz Ai Jen Shen” or “Praise to our loving Lord”!

The Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) is celebrating its 95th anniversary. Tonight was a thanksgiving service attended not only by those at the Seminary, but also by many from the 53 churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong (ELCHK). Ninety-five years ago in Hubei Province in China, four different mission groups from Norway, the USA and Finland began the Seminary.

Tonight I looked around the packed Ming Jye Chapel and saw Mrs. Hsiao whose father had been a teacher at that original Seminary site in China. The Seminary was pushed to Hong Kong in 1948 during the civil war in China. Her late husband became the first Chinese president of the Seminary in Hong Kong about thirty-seven years ago. I also saw Mrs. Bok whose late husband served the ELCHK with Ted's father some fifty years ago. One of her four daughters is an ELCHK pastor and another is a church worker in Hong Kong. These two women represent others whose love for the ELCHK helped build its strong foundation.

Tonight, a lovely teen-ager came toward me dressed in Nepalese clothes and I suddenly recognized Naomi whom I had taught in nursery school when she was four. She now studies in a boarding school on the border of India and Nepal, but her parents live here in Hong Kong. Her father is a seminary graduate and serves a Nepalese congregation here in Hong Kong. Her mother is a student at the Seminary and hopes to use her theological education to help strengthen the spiritual lives of Nepalese women who often find life quite challenging. Naomi and her family were not around 95 years ago when LTS began, but they are shaping the international scope of the Seminary now. We highly value her family's presence and commitment to serving the church and its changing needs.

There are 315 seminary students enrolled part-time or full time. Of this number, 42 are international students from Myanmar, Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Canada and Germany. There are also students from Taiwan and China. As I looked at the 100 faces of the Seminary choir, I felt sad that a couple familiar faces were not there. Then, I reminded myself that they are not gone, but graduated in June and now serve churches full time!

The Seminary in its 95th year has much for which it is thankful: the love of those in its early days, the dedication of the present students and the vibrancy of our faith that leads us into the future. It is this faith that remains the steadfast guide for the Seminary in changing times. We celebrate God's love made manifest in Christ's birth and LTS delights in preparing men and women to share that good news not only in Hong Kong, but in other Asian countries and the world.

Merry Christmas! “Sheng Dan Kwai Le”

*Ted and Janey Zimmerman
ELCA Global Mission missionaries
tedzimm@gmail.com*