

Dear Friends in Christ,

September 19, 2017

On Sunday we commissioned seven people to represent our church at the 130th anniversary celebration of the Hokusei Gakuen School System in Sapparo, Japan and at the 120th anniversary celebration of the Rose Kindergarten in Otaru, Japan. The seven missionaries going are: Clare van den Blink, Paul and Lynn Hornbuckle, Kay and Chuck Stewart and John and Joanne Luce.

“What’s the significance of this trip?” you ask. Well, first let’s review the history involved. Both schools were founded by members of our church who were missionaries sent to Japan by our church. Sarah Smith established Hokusei, a school for girls, which was, at the time, the only opportunity on the island of Hokkaido for girls to receive an education. Clara Rose worked for a number of years at Hokusei before moving to Otaru to establish a school there. Today the Hokusei system is comprised of a University, Junior College and three high schools, offering a quality education to over 6,000 students while the Rose Kindergarten serves about 100 kindergarteners each year.

The Japanese have great respect for their elders and revere their roots. Therefore, students and staff of each of these schools consider it to be a great honor to visit Elmira and our church, the roots of their schools and, at the same time, to have members of our church visit, especially on occasions such as these anniversaries. To show you how important it is to the people of Hokusei to have members of our church attend their anniversary celebration, they sent us a check, which is serving to cover some of the travel expenses of the group. (Travel expenses are also being covered by the Smith-Rose Endowment Fund of our church and by each of the travelers.) It must also be said that our visits to these Christians schools give courage and inspiration to these Christians who are living, working and serving in a largely non-Christian society.

Our hope is that one outcome from this visit by these seven people is that our relationship with each of these schools is given a significant boost, resulting in the following impact: 1. An increased interest in the relationship by people in our church 2. People from our church visiting these schools more often than once every ten years. The Smith-Rose Endowment Fund was established more than twenty years ago for the expressed purpose of supporting our relationship with these schools; therefore we have resources to help keep our relationship with these schools quite active. Perhaps God is nudging you to represent our church and visit these schools someday!

I leave you with the words of L. R. Knost:

“Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world.

All things break

And all things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go...

Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.”

I believe that the effects of people like you and me getting out of our comfort zones and loving intentionally while truly seeking to understand our neighbors near and far, can and do serve to shape a resilient and peaceful present and future that empowers people well beyond what governments can do.

Love and peace,

Betsey