

Mission Trip to Hong Kong
Our Savior Lutheran Church
Fenton, Missouri
October 9-19, 2008
~ A Journal ~

8:30 Fenton-St.Louis Time. God is Good! I guess I've known that all my life. But I keep learning it over and over again. And I know I will learn it again in new and even unexpected ways. I pray that God will open my eyes to see it and appreciate it as it happens.

Sitting here at Gate A14 Lambert International Airport, St. Louis. All ten of us here: Mike and Betty Hea, Bruce and Sallye Fagala, Ellyn and Julia Petrovic, Kathy Schulz, Judy Rethwich, Denise Marquardt, and me. Everyone arrived at the airport without mishap. We checked in together at Continental with extra bags of shoes, gifts for people in Hong Kong and teaching materials. We passed through security with nary a glitch, and are presently sitting down at an uncrowded gate, conversing, some eating, Julia passing out air sickness pills, and generally relaxing before the beginning of the first leg to Newark.

We have been getting ready for this trip for over a year. The team has been great in working together. I believe it's going to be a great cooperative effort. God bless each one. God bless our families and all the people back home. God bless the people we will meet in Hong Kong and along the way. God, do Your good work to us and through us.

It all hit me on the evening of Sunday, September 28th, the day of Our Savior Outdoor Worship and Picnic. What a terrific event that was again this year. Thank God for the glorious day and for all the people. Anyway, after worship, picnic, and a service at Lakeview were all accomplished, and I was able to go home and put my sore, aching feet up, I took out my handy pocket calendar and observed that the trip to Hong Kong was suddenly only 1 ½ weeks away. Well, it has been a busy time since then. I believe that I have all things set up for my absence that I was able to do. Many people are filling in for me at Our Savior. I thank God for every one. I am confident that God will take care of everyone and all things. He always does.

Even with all the busy activity, these past days have been filled with God's blessings. The fall weather has been wonderful. The beginning of Autumn colors has been intriguing. And of course, the people, especially the kids, and especially the older folks, and especially the...everybody. Whether strumming my guitar with the kindergartners or baptizing a mother and child, or e-mailing an answer to someone, I love this ministry God has placed me in. I pray that He will give me the physical stamina and all I need to continue in it.

10:00 AM Still not boarded. Looks like we won't take off by 10:15. We just gathered in a circle right here amidst the now crowded seating at Gate A14. I handed out prayer cards and explained how we will share our responsibility for devotions. Then I shared a devotion about "What Am I Doing Here?" We shared a circle prayer for people at home, for Hong Kong people, for ourselves and the trip, and for the cross of Jesus to be shared in our faith and in our lives over these next days especially. We are now ready to go. God bless.

10:30 AM We just boarded. Left side, window-aisle seat. This is a small plane – three seats wide. It's not eight feet from my window to the one across on the other side. 10:43 The plane is moving. 10:56 Airborne, a 45 second take-off after finding our runway. Looking down on beautiful St. Louis on a gorgeous fall day. Farewell, Missouri. We'll be back soon.

11:10 Am Dozed off. Stewardess woke me with a little tray of trail mix etc. All right, I'm ready for a little snack or an early lunchette. Beef salami and cheese spread with crackers and a little Hersheys bar to top it off. Just right. I can't help but remember when Ben and Sam sold "Meat and Cheese" for the Band program at Jackson High. That was 20 years ago, wasn't it?

12:07 Just finished a good ol' Coke, got up to stretch, talked with Bruce and Sallye, Betty and Mike, all sitting close by. Had to scrunch back into my seat a couple times to let someone get by. We're up about 35,000 feet. Haven't lost sight of the ground since we took off. Farms and small communities across Illinois and Ohio. Not sure where we are now but we're supposed to travel across Pennsylvania on our way to the East Coast and Newark, New Jersey. It's been a very smooth flight so far. Sun is shining. It was a bit warmish when we got on the plane. It cooled off rather pleasantly and I even put my jacket back on a few minutes ago.

I was told that there will be a guitar at the High School that I will be able to use. I hope this is so. I brought my capo and picks so I'm ready to go. Then again, there might be a music store close by also. Oh well, one way or another God will provide. I brought a couple harmonicas and a whistle flute too. Ya gotta have music!

1:20 PM Touchdown at Newark, N.J.

2:00 St. Louis time. 3:00 Newark. We're on the plane. Got on after a quick shuttle (They let us off the plane from St. Louis first) Then a quick run to the gate to answer the last call. When we got on the plane at 1:45 I asked Bruce and Sallye why we had to rush since the flight doesn't take off till 3:00. It's one hour later, they told me. Then I realized it was 2:45 and we were just in time. I think I'll leave my wrist watch on St. Louis time anyway. That way I always know what time it is back home.

I've got seat 41D, an aisle seat. Nine seats across with two aisles, this plane must be 3 times as wide as the one from St. Louis. 3:12 NJ Taxiing to runway. Lots of Asian-looking people on this flight. I wonder how many are actually from Hong Kong. The guy next to me and I greeted each other when I sat down, but he's got earphones stuck on his head and eyes closed ever since. I wonder if I'll get a chance to talk to him.

3:12 PM NJ time. Jet engines starting to wind up? No, not yet. Called home before taxiing started. Last time for now. God bless.

3:26 Begin take off. Airborne in 45 seconds. I think every seat is occupied. That's about 44 times 9 – almost 400 passengers. Isn't it amazing how God lets us get a thing like this off the ground. That's a picture of how God allows us to get a mission trip like this off the ground. And that, of course, is just another picture of how God in His grace picks us up from our dead-on-the-ground sinfulness and lifts us with His forgiveness on wings like eagles to soar in the life He gives us.

8:30 PM St. Louis time. We have traveled over 3400 miles in 5 hours. We have over 5000 yet to go. 600+ miles per hour. We have traveled north through Canada. We are about at the top of the world right now. At 36,000 feet, it's -41 degrees F outside. Nine

hours to go. I've been up and down a number of times. Surviving nicely. Harry Potter and Indiana Jones have helped along the way.

4:12 AM St. Louis time. Lights (off all night) just came on. Up and down all night. Little sleep. 5:17 AM St. Louis time (6:17 PM Hong Kong time) Descending.

Gentleman next to me is a young businessman from Hong Kong. He was one week in the US for a conference. Just got over jet lag before coming back. That's all he would say. God bless him. Judy's seatmate is a Christian. She is from Hong Kong also.

5:22 AM St. Louis time. Touch down in Hong Kong at 6:22 PM.

7:28 PM HK time. Here at the exit area of Hong Kong International Airport waiting for the bus. Mary and Hilda came to meet us.

10:00 AM St. Louis. It's 11:00 PM here in Hong Kong. It was dark when we landed at about 6:30 PM. Disembarking went smoothly. Into the terminal and down many runways before we came to customs. After customs we looked for our connections but found no one around. I suspected that they were waiting at the exit gate. Sure enough. After getting directions from an airport lady, we headed for the exit, walked outside and there at the end of a long line of people (some of them holding up signs) was our gal Mary holding up "Betty Hea's Team." Mary and Hilda got us a taxi bus and we headed here to the Lutheran high school.

The one hour drive from one end of Hong Kong to the other gave us a chance to sing (God is So Good & This Little Gospel Light), to talk and also to get acquainted with Mary and Hilda. They are both gals in about their 20s it seems. Mary has been working with our church here in Hong Kong for 5 years. She's learning Chinese, especially since her husband of 8 months is Chinese. Hilda was born in China and came to Hong Kong as an adult. Her native tongue is Cantonese. She learned English in school from the primary grades and she speaks it very well. She also knows Mandarin.

Charles and Ivan are teachers here. Ivan teaches business. Charles teaches music. They will be our leaders and guides. We sat down with them in their very nice conference room for an orientation. Then we took a bit of a tour. We checked out the 2 showers, one men, one women, on the first floor at one end, and on the other end our rooms up past the gym on the second floor. We ended up in Charles' music room where I borrowed a guitar for the week. Thank you, Charles. Some of the team got on the computer and e-mailed back to all our families that we had arrived safely. There were a few high school boys there to "assist" in the orientation, tour, and other needs. Ben, Ethan and I forgot his name. They are very limited in their English. Two are shy. Ethan is pretty outgoing. This should be fun. Well, it's 11:30 PM now. Full day tomorrow. God bless all. Good night.

Saturday, 5:25 AM Hong Kong (5:25 PM Friday in St. Louis) Up at 2:00 AM. Decided to get my Bible, paper and pen and find an air conditioned room. Down through the gym and up the hallways. None of the four keys they gave each of us fit the Conference Room or the Library. So, I ended up walking around for a while observing the school and looking out at the city around us through the open hallways that all seem to open out to the outside. Only the rooms are fully enclosed. Most of the lights were on in the buildings. They do not seem to be hurting for money. Things are not posh here, but they are fairly well furnished. The guys' apartment is the men's dressing room. It's about 11 X 20, 2 sinks, and a toilet room. We had to improvise for our hanging stuff.

We are bedded down on hard mattresses atop gym pads. Not bad but they squeak when you move. The gym has a nice floor marked off, not for basketball, but for badminton. They have an outside basketball court, with extra hoops on the side too. The gym has a nice high school stage with curtains. They have another assembly room on the 2nd floor also I believe, but their cafeteria is all down next to the parking area, all open air, covered. It's actually under the gym, but open on two opposite sides. Beautiful shrubs, trees and greenery can be seen in various places on all sides within the outside walls. In one corner by the basketball court there is a reptile house complete with animals to study and care for. (We heard that the animals were brought in from America!)

I was up again at 3 and 4. Finally at 4:45 I got up, gathered my stuff and made my way down for a shave and a shower. We got the whole team together to go out for breakfast. We had no idea which way to go, so we just started out. A young man (out getting his Saturday morning exercise, we guessed) saw us and stopped to help. He not only told us about a McDonalds not too far away. He actually took us there. Like Sacagawea leading the band of Lewis & Clark into the uncharted wilderness of the West, so this unknown man forged for us that would become our daily route for sustenance for the days to come. We thanked him many times but we didn't get his name. We suspect that he was either a Christian or an Angel or should have been. God bless him.

The McDonalds was just like home except that they offered a kind of Chinese breakfast soup on the menu. A few of us tried it and said it was pretty watery but not bad. After breakfast we stopped in at the Market close by. What I thought was some kind of Chinese 7-11 turned out to be a produce market. Not only did they have fruit and dry goods in abundance. Toward the back they had "meat." I'm not sure what kind of meat they were chopping up on the blocks, but it looked like it could have been beef or a reasonable facsimile. On the long counter in front of the meat choppers they had displayed for your sensory delight a host of things for the wise and prudent shopper to take home and prepare. Frogs (live jumping ones on top, dead or near dead ones on the bottom), turtles (all alive I believe but not moving much), sea creatures with clamps tied shut, eels of various sizes, and a few of God's little creatures of questionable identity. What a fine discovery. We had been given a special insight on life in Hong Kong.

10:35 AM HK (9:35 PM Friday at home) Sitting here in the Music room after a break that is just about over. Got orientated a little more and finally found out about the students and what they will be able to handle. I knew it would start to come together like this, but I wish it would have happened sooner – before Judy prepared all those lessons.

Break over. 6 High School boys sing "Lord, I Lift Your Name On High." Then they invited us to stand as they sang their school anthem. So, we sang our Star Spangled Banner for them. We cheered for them and they cheered for us.

10 PM HK Back to morning session. Charles had prepared a page for students to ask us questions about self, family, occupation, etc. After a while we stopped so that we could get to the bank to exchange some currency. The mall bank was crowded. Mary and Ivan stayed to exchange our money while we slipped away to a Chinese restaurant close by. It was quite a large eating establishment and it was crowded too. We were seated at two large round tables. We followed Hilda and our High School boys as we rinsed the dishes with hot water. Then we prayed and the food started coming. One dish after another. I was able to use the chop sticks pretty well and enjoyed everything (just about). I really didn't care for the chicken feet. A lot of rice and bread creations with

shrimp or pork. We finally could eat no more. Mary, Ivan and Charles showed up after changing money for us. They sat down and new dishes started to appear. It was quite unbelievable. The three high school guys at our table – Raymond, Ben and Ethan, kept eating and eating. I was convinced that high school boys are pretty much the same wherever you go. Lunch over finally, we slowly made our way back to the school.

2:30 PM HK. We met to go to the open air market down by the sea. It took us about 45 minutes to get there. Saw some beautiful Hong Kong valleys, mountains, and waters on our way. Our bus driver insisted on rolling down those winding roads at a pretty good clip. We all arrived safely. After about 1 ½ hours of walking and looking and buying amidst the hundreds of tourists and locals, we got on our bus again and headed up the trail. My feet were so very tired and sore but I had accumulated a few treasures to bring back home for others, so I was content.

We felt like we had a good rapport going with the guys. I asked Louis and the other boys, Roy and Chris, if they were going to come to church with us tomorrow. Louis hesitated. I said “We’re going to be there. Why don’t you come too.” He agreed. Roy and Chris did the same. I reminded them again later and they were still on board. I found out at devotions tonight that others had asked them too. It seems that Christianity and Church are accepted here as things that go along with the school. But they really aren’t viewed as important for a person’s life. We’re told that the great majority of students are here for the good academic education (especially the American English connection) and do not really believe in Christ as their Savior at all. We’ll see what God has in store.

I was really tired getting back. We met with Charles briefly anyway. Then a few minutes to refresh and we were dragging ourselves off to some place for supper. It was well after six by now. We found Chinese fast food next to the mall. I had egg fried rice. Wasn’t too hungry. Even that was more than I needed. They served a side dish with it, of what must have been cooked, limp, cold lettuce. It looked woeful. It didn’t touch it. Back to school. Devotion scheduled for 8:45. We got together by 9:00. Bruce and Sallye led. God gives wisdom in Christ our Savior. We each got to share something we learned since we got here. Very nice. Prayer and song “Here I Am, Lord.” Following Devo we chose a song to sing in church tomorrow since we had been invited to do so. We selected “God is So Good.” God bless us all with a good night’s sleep and a good day tomorrow. God bless everyone at home as well as everyone here. Amen.

Sunday. 7:15 AM HK (Sat. 6:15 PM home) Once again I fail at Chinese e-mail. The Music Room just happened to be unlocked, so I turned on the light, went over to the computer next to the piano, jiggled the mouse, and there it was! But all my attempts to get my email failed. I left the computer with strange Chinese warning signs flashing on the screen. I’ve been up since 6:15. Returned after shower to find Mike and Bruce gone. Went back down the stairs through the gym and up to 3rd floor expecting to find them in the Library. No one there. Down to the music room on 2nd floor and my email exercise in futility. Back up to the library to find Denise, Kathy, Judy, and Betty standing outside the door. Talked for a few minutes, then back up here to the room. Still no Mike and Bruce. Sat down to write. Five minutes, Mike walks in. He and Bruce had been to the Library for coffee then down to the shower room to shave. Then I told Mike about

keyless ladies in waiting. He rushed down to rescue them. I guess we all missed each other all the way around.

Sunday morning 7:55 AM HK (Sat 6:55 PM Home) Library. Staff room. Been down here with some of the group. Instant coffee not bad. Banana, along with a few fruit crackers (and a couple of breakfast bars I had earlier up in the room), I feel like I've had something of a breakfast. Thank You, Lord. Betty got on a computer here. Between her and Denise they tried to help me get on also. No success. I'm hoping I can make a phone call sometime, but time will tell. Betty sent out emails to all the families on the night we got in so at least everyone knows we got here safely. When you can't email someone you can always pray for them. So that's what we do.

Church time ahead. We're not supposed to gather till 9:45. It's supposed to be all in Cantonese with an interpreter for the sermon. I remember Guatemala worship in Spanish with no interpreter. That was a challenge. I remember India worship when I preached and someone interpreted into Tamil. That must have been a challenge for them. Tamil liturgy was familiar sounding to me, but still unintelligible.

9:20 AM HK Up in the room with a few quiet minutes before going down to church. We 10 just had a fine session down in the Library. After coffee, fruit and email, Judy showed us the teaching props and materials she brought along for us to work with. Then we practiced our song for worship and ended up practicing and planning other songs as well. This is a really fun group to work with. We talked a little more about our introductory program (We'll work on this more this afternoon), our lesson plans (More on this too later), and our theme. We may try to pick up on this month's school theme passage, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice." The song in two parts will be good. I am concerned for us to bring in the gospel whenever and wherever we can.

10:30 AM HK Chinese Lutheran worship. We gathered outside in the cafeteria area. Guys wore team shirts over shirt and tie as requested by "the ladies." When we showed up, Betty burst out laughing. The gals picked up that we were reluctant to wear the long sleeve team shirts. So, they decided not to. They forgot to tell us. We quickly adjusted.

I met Pastor Lam out in front. He has been pastor there for five years since his graduation from seminary. He was ordained just one year ago. They have a system similar to that of the Lutheran Church in India.

We gathered in Room G02, where the church meets. Nice large room set with about eighty chairs facing forward, aisle down the center. People old and young were coming in. Screen up in front, guitarist and two singers to the left. Lectern stand to the right. When it was time to begin, about 10 people (those who were either leading or assisting with worship) stood together in a circle in front and shared in prayer. Then they all took their places. Pastor Lam spoke to the assembly, in Cantonese of course. He then introduced us and gestured to us to come forward. I grabbed my guitar. We made our way to the front, turned to face a mixed crowd of Chinese people, not knowing if they would understand a word of what we were saying, and began to sing. They all listened attentively. Many smiled. Some joined in, humming or singing along. God is So Good was not just the song we were singing. It was the mutual expression of two groups of Christians from opposite sides of the world, very different in language and culture, but united in the one true faith. I suspect a few angels in heaven joined in the rejoicing, and God Himself smiled as His holy name was praised.

Pastor Lam led the liturgy. It was color coded up on the screen for the people to follow. It didn't do us much good since it was all in Cantonese. But it was not difficult to imagine in our minds the invocation, confession and absolution. We could still worship with them in Spirit and in truth.

The song leaders took their places. The congregation stood. Words flashed up on the center screen, and they sang. They sang three different songs. It was pleasant. Though the words and melodies were unfamiliar, we could see that the song leaders were sincere in their expression of the words and the people enjoyed singing freely also.

The Epistle was read by a woman with no reference to what it was in English. The Gospel, however, was announced and read in English. The Great Wedding Feast.

The message was delivered by a retired pastor who is still some kind of leader of the Lutheran Churches in Hong Kong. I think he might be like our Circuit Counselor. Rev. Lee was his name. He is 73 years old and still has a strong voice. The lady who stood beside him and interpreted in English did a very fine job. Though her voice was softer than his, she spoke very clearly, and there was no accent to challenge our American ears. He spoke on the Gospel lesson of the Great Wedding Feast. He wore a clerical shirt and collar, but no robe. Pastor Lam did the same. I believe the title of the sermon might have been "The Guest Robe." That was his theme anyway. He spoke of taking on the robe of marriage when he got married. He spoke of taking on the robe of the ministry when he was ordained. This represented a humble acceptance of the role he was called into and that he was committed to.

Then he spoke of the arrogant guest who refused the robe given to him at the Wedding Feast. He had no respect. He considered his own clothes more elegant than what was offered to him. He explained how the guest robe made everyone the same, not rich or poor. We are all sinners. We have no righteousness, no elegant clothes that we can boast of. As Isaiah says, all our righteousness is like dirty clothes. But when we take Jesus as our Savior, we are clothed with Christ. Martin Luther stressed how we are justified by faith and not our own works. We come to Jesus with a repentant, humble heart. We pray that God would mold us and use us for His good purposes.

He spoke of the pastor's robe (which I thought was funny since he wasn't wearing one. But I believe they probably do wear a white robe when they celebrate Holy Communion.) Pastor's robe shows us how we sinners are covered with Jesus' righteousness which He earned for us by His death and resurrection, and which He gives to us in the Means of grace. (I'm not sure he said all that last part. It's not in my notes, but it's what I expect he said!) He ended the sermon with a prayer.

There was a small child talking (not too loudly) in back of us through most of the sermon. The air conditioner blower was on too. I guess there will be distractions in Hong Kong Lutheran church as well as Fenton Lutheran church. God sees to it that the gospel gets through. We will have to remember that through the coming week when we speak to many students are not yet Christians. We pray that God will open many hearts, claim and revive many lives to faith and eternal life, and use us in the process.

We stood again and the two young ladies on voice and the one young man on guitar led us in another song. Then the pastor talked to the people. They spoke some response. There was silence. Then everyone bowed their heads as he spoke a prayer. Two boys came forward to get the offering bags and proceeded to bring them back through the

group on either side, holding them forward only, it seemed, when someone made a gesture that they had something to offer. It was generally silent during this time.

Then the original announcer person, who turned out to be assistant to the pastor, got up. He proceeded with announcements and other things that must have been very important to share. He took a very long time to do it. Then he must have acknowledged our group again, for many people turned to look at us, and a few older ladies nodded and smiled and even waved at us. After all this (about 10 minutes worth), Pastor Lam offered prayers. He then thanked the US mission team. He offered another prayer. And then, just when you thought the worship service was over, they began to show photographs up on the screen, and the Pastor explained what they were all about. It much have been some youth retreat or something similar. Then more talk in Cantonese. Then the song leaders got up and led another song. Then the benediction.

9:30 PM HK (8:30 AM Home) Here we are at the end of the day, and at this very hour Our Savior Lutheran Church is in the middle of the Sunday morning early worship. God bless the message. God bless His people who hear His word and cherish it. I miss everyone back at Our Savior. I miss being with you in worship. I miss sharing God's Word with you. I know it's good for you to have a break from my voice once in a while, but I know that's where God has called me and that's where I belong.

Just up to the room from our group devotion to end the day. It's been a day of labor to be sure. After worship we had a nice time of fellowship with the people. Met the two retired pastors, one who preached and the other who also had a lot of energy. I got to talk to a student, the guitarist, the two female vocalists (both of whom are working) and several others. Between us, our group probably talked with everyone who didn't slip out the side door before we could catch them. Very friendly congregation. I believe there must have been sixty people there besides us.

We were told that we would be having Sunday dinner with Pastor Lam. We did not know what all that would mean. Pastor Lam, his assistant, the two retired pastors, and several others joined us as we walked as a group down the street and across to yet another restaurant. Mealtime was once again a grand ordeal. That seems to be the way they do it here. But it's too much food for most, and the time involvement tends to wear a person out. Three of us had a great time sitting with Rev. Lee (the preacher for the day). We talked of many things. He explained how a pastor is addressed in Cantonese. "Mak see" is the term for pastor. His last name is Lee. So people would call him "Lee Mak See." Kind of has a nice ring to it, doesn't it. He also taught me the Cantonese for "Amen." It is Ah Mun. He also wrote in my journal in Chinese characters, but that didn't help me much I'm afraid.

Back to school and back to work. We spent the afternoon figuring out schedules, grade levels, and lesson plans. That was enough, but we had much yet to do on top of that. After a brief break we were back together preparing for the opening presentation scheduled for tomorrow morning.

I guess it was close to 8:00 PM when we finally broke. Some took off for McDonalds. I just went up to the room and took my shoes off for a while. Back down to the Library for devos with Betty Hea leading. Then we talked around the table about concerns and thoughts about tomorrow. We parted with much to pray about and with the confidence that God would bless our efforts and the kids too.

Now I'm thinking about everyone back home. Got to call Karen finally about 5:30 this afternoon. Of course that made it 4:30 AM St. Louis time. I felt bad about waking my dear wife out of a sound sleep, but I was thankful to get to talk to her. All is well. I'll be praying for you and your journey to Texas. Give them all a hug from me.

I guess it is now about half way through the Sunday School-Bible class hour back home. And here, it's time for me to call it a day and hit the hay. God bless everyone here and everyone there.

MONDAY – 6:10 AM HK (5:10 PM Sunday at Home) Thank God for the morning. Not just that it finally got here. Thank God whose blessings are new to us each morning. This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it! Got some sleep last night, but I was up at 1:30 and three other times after that. Finally got up and went down for a shower about 5:20. Guys are asleep now. Saw Judy in the hall earlier so I suspect some of the gals are up too. Spent some awake time last night lying there and thinking about, praying for, and planning for our opening session this morning. I believe that what we have been told about Lutheran Schools in Hong Kong is going to come clear to us today.

Although there are Christian (even Lutheran) teachers and students here, there are many who are not Christians at all. The teaching and learning here cannot be completely Christ-centered even though 70% of the teachers claim to be Christians. And yet, as a school they try to bring out the Christian influence. Posted on the walls in the hallways are Bible passages in English. There are 10 very colorful Bible passage posters in the open cafeteria – one for each month of the school year. They have “Bible Knowledge” classes, some are Bible history stories, some are more like Christian ethics. Anyway, I hope we can fan the flame of Christian faith in this place as the Holy Spirit takes our words and actions and moves students and teachers alike from unbelief to sincere trusting faith in Christ our Savior.

We've been told that people here are too busy for religion, too busy for God. We've been told that ancestor worship is prevalent and that “burning paper” is required to satisfy relatives who have died. I wonder how many do this and what it means to them.

Bruce, Denise, and I hoofed it down to McD's for a little breakfast. Stopped at the market next door and got some fruit for the gang.

11:05 AM HK Monday. Sitting in a quiet library among students as they write some kind of lesson in their books. This morning has already been great in making initial contact with the students at the entry gate. I learned from one of the 2 greeting teachers how to say Good Morning in Cantonese. It sounds a lot like the word “chosen” except with a heavy accent on the first syllable. The man teacher I learned this from always greets students in this way. After I tried it a few times, he suggested that we “trick” the students by him saying “Good Morning” and I saying “Chooson.” We got a couple startled looks. Most students passed into the gate with a respectful nod. Some said Good Morning. A number of them smiled. A few, very few added a word like “How are you?”

Then we came in and got ready for the opening. 8:30 the kids came filing in. Didn't get started until 8:40. Didn't finish until 9:30 (15 minutes over). Kids were attentive to photos and the skit we did. It really all went very well for our first encounter with all of them at once.

Students all wear like clothing. Navy blue and white are the dominant colors. Many girls wear sweaters today with the breezy weather. Girls all wear white dresses. Many have pony tails. Seems that many students wear glasses. Teachers all dress nicely but in no conformity that I can detect. Many young teachers – could almost pass for students. Teachers use mics in the classroom! Even in regular size classrooms! This seems like over-kill, but I'm sure it serves a good purpose. Walking the hallway you can get quite an earful!

6 PM HK (5 AM Home) Sitting in open air cafeteria waiting for the bunch to go to supper. Some took a local tour with some students to find the laundry etc. Our first 80 minute class was with Form 6 students (like our high school Seniors). They were great. They were respectful and could converse well in English. Also sang very well. Our Form 1 class (7th grade level) was a challenge. A couple students were allowed by the teacher to make obnoxious noises. Teacher had difficulty with discipline. Still, we accomplished some good communication with a number of them.

There are about 20 students still playing down here in the basketball, cafeteria area. Apparently no one supervising them. Some horsing around among other students around the area. Some girls screaming. Maybe they are waiting for a ride since it is rainy out today, though it's not raining now.

It seems like it is standard for teachers to use microphones in the classroom. The students were excellent in the assembly this morning. They can get a bit loud and even obnoxious when left on their own. I walked around the crowded cafeteria at lunch and talked to some students and teachers. Younger students can't get much beyond "Hi" it seems. One little girl, Form 2, came up to me to talk a while ago, and just now a young man, probably Form 1 or 2. I'll have to think of something to say besides, "How are you?" That seems to baffle most of them. We had a session with Charles at 3:00 and did some sharing. They're trying to do a good job with this program, but it seems that no one has had the time or ability to work out some of the bugs. Oh well, maybe our group will help them with that.

9:15 PM HK Just up from devos led by Mike. Did some sharing about the day. I told about a girl in my Form 6 class. She was the only one out of nine who responded positively when I asked them about church and Christianity. She also seemed to possess a real confidence with who she was and readily answered questions and joined in discussion. I was thinking how the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. With that faith you instinctively know what's going on in the world. Without it you're lost!

Earlier this evening, the local tour group got back later than the rest of us expected. Seems as though Charles made quite a production out of it. Anyway, when we had the group back together we went across the street to the restaurant we went to on Sunday. Soon after we sat down we realized that an overhead exhaust fan was making a lot of noise. The waiter obliged when I asked him to shut it down. The second thing was that they had no Coke. So, several of us got 7-up. Third, most of us got steak. Whether it was the better cut as some got or the more economical steak as I got, it was likewise gristly. Not our best eating experience. We walked down to the City Plaza II and couldn't believe the many stores and wide selection. We stopped for ice cream and made our way back through the maze of halls and levels and crosswalks. Pleasant walk back in the cool night air but sore feet still prevail when I got back. It's 10:00 and I can't keep my eyes open. G'night all.

TUESDAY – 2:40 PM HK (1:40 AM St. Louis/Dallas) First chance to write today. I should be preparing for a Bible Knowledge class and the Form 1 class that we had yesterday. We get them 2 times tomorrow, and unless we can get things worked out for at least 2 troubled students, we will not be able to accomplish much at all.

Up at 5:20 this morning. Down through the gym to the one male staff shower restroom. You have to flip the switch for the electric hot water heater when you enter so that you'll have hot water by the time you're ready to shower. No hot water at the sinks makes for a cold shave. Mike and I hoofed it over to McD's for breakfast. My, that coffee was good. Back to the school library for a work session with Judy and Mike. We planned out our two Form 4 classes for the day. Then, out in front to greet the kids at 7:45. Almost a continuous stream. When the bell rings at 8:00 the teachers on duty begin closing the gates as the last students slip in.

Morning exercises out on the basketball court. Classes and sections all lined up with school bags beside them. Girls in front of each class and boys behind. Teachers take their places in front of the lines. Teachers who speak to the group stand on a platform up front and use a microphone. Four or five teachers speak. One with a prayer, others a Bible reading or devotional thought. Students stand quietly, some paying more attention than others. At times like this everyone knows what they should do and they do it. At other times it seems like chaos reigns.

These were the "Junior" students, as they call them, Form 1-3, I believe. On some days it's the "Senior" students (Form 4-7 – our Sophomores and up) who have morning assembly.

Back to the library and up to room 607 for our English Class with Form 4 students. It all went well, even though things took longer than we thought, and so we couldn't finish our entire plan. But we adjusted along the way and got through without serious injury.

After class we met to readjusted schedule then caught up with Denise, Julia and Ellyn to put it all together. This was another Form 4 group – this time 43 students rather than a mere 36. It went pretty smoothly. We adjusted along the way once again. They are less ready to volunteer in discussion and they are very reluctant to do motions and actions. Judy, our master dramatist, is trying to loosen them up and make actors out of them. But alas! They act more like Hamlet's father than Hamlet. Still we love 'em. I believe we're giving them opportunities to hear English spoken and to practice that English. We bring out wherever we can the blessings of God to us in our families, in our surroundings, and especially in Jesus Christ our Savior. I suspect that the minority of Christians have a difficult time witnessing their faith in Christ. Hopefully this will all help them too.

After class up to the library for a quick review and I was ready for a hamburger. Alone I ventured out into the streets of Hong Kong. They say Don't do it, but there I went. I guess I really wasn't alone anyway. A McD burger and Coke went down well as I sat outside and watched the people go by. People of Hong Kong are a world of variety in themselves. Students, professionals, laborers all. I headed back through the Mall building through which we pass to get from High School to McDonalds.

I had my eye on a small sized guitar in a small music store. I walked by it this time however and, to my surprise found an even smaller music store just around the corner and down the hall. And there in the window I could see a tiny guitar, smaller than the one I had found before. "What a Hong Kong Special that would be" I thought. Inside I went.

The lady sitting behind the counter looked up at me in dismay. Her fears were confirmed I suspect when I began speaking in English. “Do you speak English?” I asked. She shook her head and waved her hands in front of her. The expression on her face said, “We can’t communicate. Just leave. That’s all you can do.” I pointed to the guitar hanging on the wall. She stared blankly at me. I pointed and gestured again, saying some words that were perfectly understandable to me. She went over, squeezed between the piano and the window, stretched up to reach the guitar (She was a small lady.) and lifted it off the hook on the wall. She squeezed back toward me and cautiously handed me the little Hong Kong wonder. I strummed it once. It was totally untuned. I was going to ask her if it was ok if I tuned it up a bit so I could hear what kind of tone it had, but that conversation, I’m afraid, would have caused that poor lady more anxiety than I was willing to watch or endure myself.

So, I began tuning the first few strings, praying that they wouldn’t break or the neck of the guitar snap right off. Not a bad little instrument. Not a Stradivarius to be sure, but if it was a true, genuine Hong Kong special, how could a person go wrong? One thing more to check. Where was this little guitar made? I didn’t want something shipped in from Japan you know – or even worse from Germany or the U.S. I turned the guitar over a time or two looking for a trademark. Then I spied it, right through the sound hole. The words I had been looking for: “Made in China.” It was a done deal.

Before I sealed the bargain, however, I needed a box to take it back to the states. “Box” I said and motioned a surrounding to the guitar. She went back and brought out a guitar bag. It was nice but that’s not what I needed. All right I thought that’s the best I can do. Then the lady got on the shop cell phone and talked back and forth for a few minutes while I stood there waiting. After a bit she handed the phone to me. I said hello and a woman’s voice answered in English. Praise the Lord. When all was said and done I got my guitar with a fitting box for \$28.50. What a deal. Now if I can get it safely back home.

4:45 PM Tuesday. Out in the open cafeteria area. Groups playing games and eating snacks with Paul’s after school group. Talking to Paul, from Melbourne, Australia. He taught 3 years here, went back to Melbourne for two, now back here again. He is the “token native English speaker” which, I am told, is required by Hong Kong law for all schools. Paul says he loves having teams like ours here because the kids don’t use English much otherwise. I asked him who teaches the Bible Knowledge classes. He didn’t know. Are you Lutheran? No. Are you a Christian? “No, I’m not particularly religious,” he said. “I could use it as a theme, but I don’t.” You don’t have to be a Lutheran or a Christian to teach here. I know that, but it still baffles me. If it’s a Lutheran school with the mission to bring Christ to the kids and families of Hong Kong, wouldn’t you do everything you could to have Lutheran Christians on staff to bring in that Christian witness wherever you could?

8:00 PM HK (7:00 AM Home/Dallas) About 4:50 we found out that Charles was calling a meeting at 5:00. We were not up to an additional session of Charles time at that point, but we went of course. We were waiting. It was after five. I finally went in to get him and let him know that we were anxious to get on with things. I think that moved things on a bit. We had to hush the talking boys again, but it didn’t take too long and it was helpful for a couple activities coming up soon. I think Charles is trying to do his best to make this work, but he could sure use some more user-friendly ways to get it all done.

We all went out to Pizza Hut in City Plaza II. It was quite a restaurant. Then the guys had to have a little ice cream. (Writing now at 4:00 PM Wednesday Back at the school we gathered for devotion at 8:30. Denise led and we all listened. Amazing Grace fit well with our thankfulness to God for His astounding grace to us in Christ and for getting us through the day. We had a good discussion about worldly influences that we are picking up from the kids. We recommitted ourselves to sharing the gospel as plainly as we could and as often as we could.

Denise let me use her email to contact Karen down in Dallas, but I put the address in incorrectly and it never went through. Up in the room by 10. Put clothes and things out for the morning. Got ready for bed and hit the sack already praying for wife and family, Our Savior family, Mission team and Hong Kong family.

WEDNESDAY – 4:15 PM HK – 3:15 AM Home. Wednesday has been a very busy day. Up a couple of times through the night, I lay awake from 4:00 AM on thinking about ways we could teach the 7th graders and bring in the gospel as well. I finally got up at 5:00 to go down and get ready for the day. When I got back Mike was about ready and we made our way to McD's for breakfast. Mike told me about how he and some cousins have been discovering their fascinating family history lately. It's amazing how God brings people across the sea to start a new life.

My great-grandparents on Mom's side did the same thing about the same time as Mike's about the turn of the century. On Dad's side I guess we go back in America to the Revolutionary War and before. At 7:45 I was out greeting students again at the gate. At 8:00 it was up to the library where Mike and Judy and I had an intensive preparation and planning session. I went down to the school office to get copies of what we needed.

They have several secretaries. Fion Chan must have been the one assigned to us. She got up immediately and happily made copies for us. At 10:10 we were in the class with our good old F1 students. It went very well, and we were all quite impressed with how they took to the shield of faith (coat of arms) idea. After that 80 minute run, we had 15 minutes before our Bible Knowledge class with some of the Form 4 students. The Bible class was ok. We did a Bible quiz and the kids were not able to do it very well in English. I think they knew some of the answers in Cantonese, but hadn't learned the English. They did come up with Adam and Noah after a while, but it was difficult. The lesson on the Ten Commandments was ok. We had some interaction with the students.

We gathered at 12:30 for "Lunch with students." We went out 2 by 2 with several students. Actually two of our groups went together to a Japanese restaurant. Bruce and Sallye and Judy and I were accompanied by Michael, Mavis, Ken, Viann, Shirley and Candice. Sallye and I ended up on the one end with Mavis and Michael close by. We each ordered individual meals with dignity and good taste. Judy and Bruce sat on the other end and ordered sushi for six. Can you imagine? We all joined hands and offered a prayer of thanks and blessing to God for friends, for Jesus, and for food. We really all had a marvelous time talking with the Form 6 students. They were bright, fluent and interesting. They had their ideas about living conditions in Hong Kong, control by mainland China, and also about our U.S. Presidential candidates. It was truly a fine time. Neither Mavis nor Michael are Christians. Mavis said, "I believe in God. I just don't go to church and all that."

We got the students back before 2:05 (so that they would not get demerits), and

headed for our music class, scheduled for 2:10. Turns out we were there before the teacher and students. Singing went well. Judy's acting lesson got them all moving. We sang again and that just about topped it off. But Charles had other ideas. "They want to sing for you," he said. He led them in "Lord, I Lift Your Name" and the School song (which Charles had written the music for). They did a very nice job. I believe everyone was singing, something that we were unable to accomplish with this group.

Back up here in the library, I was finally able to get an email message across to my dearly beloved (Thanks for the access, Sallye!). Now I've got to rush down for our special night of going to a student's home for supper.

(Writing now on Thursday, October 16, 7:30 AM HK – Wed. 6:30 PM at Home) Last night was definitely a high point of the mission trip. We gathered in the music room at 5:00, ready in our groups of two and three. Mike and Betty and I would be going together. Charles held forth for a while in his cordial way. We eventually met the student with whom we would be going home. Caroline (Caroleen) is a cute, little 16 year old who specifically asked for Betty because she was so "cute." As you might guess, they resemble each other strikingly, only separated in time by a few years. Caroline took Betty as her Grandmother (her real Grandmother died 5 years ago) Ming, a friend was also along. Eventually there would be Cathy and Po also, all Form 4 students and, of course, best of friends. We actually went to Cathy's home, traveling through buildings, on the underground train, and through the streets. The girls led and we followed, taking notes and wondering how we would ever find our way back. We felt ever so much better when the girls assured us that they would take us back to the school later.

We arrived at Cathy's apartment building, went past the watch guard inside after Caroline explained who we were, and made our way up to the 19th floor. I think the building has forty-some levels. Down a couple narrow hallways we got to the apartment at about 6:30. We rang the bell. The door and the iron gate opened, and we walked in. Cathy was busy preparing supper. Po was there helping her. Cathy's mother and father would not get home from work till 7:30. We were escorted past the small dining table and into the modest living room area, just large enough for a couch and TV and a little floor space in between. Caroline brought us Tea with the leaves still floating. Cathy's younger brother Ben came in and we met him. He is Form 1, kind of a shy guy, and not very fluent in English at all. In fact, the girls struggled too. Caroline was the best and helped us along with understanding.

The small apartment consisted of the dining-living room area, a small kitchen, a half-bath – toilet and sink but not even a shower. Parent's bedroom was big enough for what looked like a narrow double-bed, a dresser, a closet unit, and a narrow path around the bed. It was a pretty tight fit. The children's room had two bunk beds. Cathy and her older sister got one. Ben got the bottom bed on the other. The vacant top bunk wasn't vacant at all. It looked like it was home to clothes and anything else that needed a place to rest. The dining table would have been comfortable for four or may five if everyone kept their elbows tucked in. We were ten, sitting on chairs, stools and whatever around that overworked table, and we did very nicely.

As we sat on the couch waiting for Cathy's parents to arrive, the girls turned on the TV. It has some sports action reports showing. They do get a channel in English but they don't use it much. One of the girls asked if we were hot. It wasn't really bad, but we thought that it might get a bit close. One girl hopped up on the couch, stood in the

window sill, clung to the metal cross bars and pulled the windows closed so she could turn on the air conditioning. We had nice conversation with the girls. They were interested in getting to know what our lives were like. Soon we got a Coke also. Then food was being placed on the table. Father came home. We greeted each other with words that neither understood from the other, but with smiles and waves that we all understood quite well. Mother soon arrived also and greeted us in much the same way. She looked happy to see us. Each time the door bell rang and someone entered, the metal-barred gate was pulled closed to a locked position and then the door also. They say the crime rate is low in Hong Kong and people walk about outside freely at all hours of the night. But they still seem very protective of their homes.

Soon we were gathered around the table. Mike asked if we could say grace. They were very agreeable, even though they are not Christians. We joined hands and I voiced a prayer for this family who had opened their home to us, for the friends that had gathered, for the food, and for Jesus our Savior who gave His life for us. Amen. We began with potato-carrot soup. It was very good (even though soup is not one of my favorite things.) But, I thought, if Ben, sitting next to me can finish his then I can finish mine. Then came a cereal sized bowl full of rice for each of us. We proceeded in Chinese style to take something from one of the six or eight dishes in the center, put it into our bowl and eat it with the rice. Chicken wings, pork cubes (with bone and fat still attached), a nice baked fish from which we all took portions, egg-noodle, tofu with sausage, all very nicely presented on plates and arranged on the table. I tried just about everything except the long dark green stems!

I made it through the whole meal using chop sticks. It seems that the typical way for the Chinese to eat is to bend down to their bowl or hold it up close to their mouths. Their technique is often one of shoveling the food in rather than delicately lifting it bringing it to the right place. Mike and Betty and I were finished before the others. They invited us to return to the living room area again where Cathy began slicing apples and oranges for us while the others continued eating for some time. I didn't know how they could put away all that food. We had more good conversation. Mother and others came to join us. Father disappeared. Betty gave gifts to Cathy's mother and to Caroline for her parents. They accepted very graciously. I also gave them the food vouchers from the school which was meant to cover the expense of the food.

It was 8:45 and we began to say our farewells. The four girls, mother and son walked with us to the elevator. More words of thanks and parting. Down to the lobby and outside to the plaza area out front. More pictures with the four girls. They asked a lady sitting on one of the concrete benches to take photos for them. She willingly obliged. Then off through the streets, finally to the train station. Standing on the train as it sped along, the girls were still asking questions of us. With the train noise around us and the girls' difficulty in finding the right English words, and then pronouncing them so that we could understand, it was a challenge for all of us, but we persisted and enjoyed each other's company.

Out of the train, across the streets, through the mall, and back to the High School. The girls had been in communication with Charles by cell phone. So, we knew to go right up to the library. There the others on the team were already gathered with Charles. We thanked Charles and the girls again for the wonderful evening, and with good wishes for pleasant night, we parted and they soon were gone. Elynn led our devotion. We closed

the day with “May the Lord, Mighty God, bless and keep you forever.” After some conversation, our fine little mission team parted for the night. I stayed behind and made a worksheet for Bible Knowledge class. Up to the room. I found Bruce and Mike still up. Soon we were down for the night. It was probably 11:00 or 11:30.

THURSDAY – Thursday morning 6:15 came right on time, but I felt like I was late as soon as I opened my eyes and saw the early rays of sunlight piercing the darkness of the room. Up I hopped, thankful I had laid everything out last night. Down to shave and shower and back to the room where Mike was up and ready for McD’s.

12:20 PM HK (11:30 PM Wed. at home) Just finished a class. A little time to write. Back to this morning breakfast at McD’s. Big Breakfast is just like at home. Sausage, scrambled egg and hash browns very good, orange juice cold and refreshing, good black coffee but much too hot. I usually wait to drink my coffee anyway, but Mike’s lip suffered for the early sip he tried. Walk back to school was pleasant though you could feel the heat and humidity already rising.

We spied a couple elementary children in their uniform shorts and tops, skipping happily along. Our uniforms here at the high school must call for black shoes (no gym shoes of any kind), gray pants and white shirts (always tucked in) for the boys, white dresses for the girls. Girls’ dresses must apparently cover a couple inches below the knee. Shirts and dresses usually have the school insignia on them. Girls and guys alike may wear a navy blue sweater or sweater vest. Girls’ hair is usually in a pony tail or something similar. Hair cannot cover any part of the eyebrow. Guys’ hair is not overly shaggy, but never trimmed close like a crew cut.

Teachers are dressed nicely. Some men wear ties. Some women wear dresses, but neither is required. Even though many teachers look young and some are shorter than some of the students, there is no mistaking student and teacher. The principal himself is a very short man. I stood out with him this morning at the gate greeting students as they came in from 7:45 to 8:00. He said just a word to a tall student coming in. The boy stopped immediately, stepped out of line, and listened as Mr. Lee talked to him about something. It is good to see that kind of respect and obedience given to teachers. That is what we see a lot of here. Thank God for that.

The Hong Kong culture, however, seems to call for some allowances that do not seem best to most people from the West. When the bell rings only some of the students are in the classroom, and only some of them are in their seats. Others come drifting in during the first five minutes of class. The teacher is often late just as much as the students. Another thing is the personal little conversations that go on between students while the teacher is talking. Some allow it more than others. I soon got used to quietly snapping my fingers and pointing or adding a “shh” if necessary. The students have responded well. And it has allowed us to do a little more with them in terms of spoken English communication.

At 8:10 AM or thereabouts, the Seniors (Form 4-7) gathered for morning devotion and prayer. They, like their counterparts the day before, stood in single file lines out on the basketball court as a few teachers read Scripture and offered prayers – all in Canonese, of course. And I’m sure that God understood it all. But I pray for those students, that they will understand also.

Had a nice talk with the principal after the students went in to class. I asked him why English is not used more throughout the day if they really want the students to learn English and if students and parents really value English for their education and for their lives. He explained to Mike and me about the EMI and the CMI.

English Medium Instruction was the standard before 1997. That meant that all instruction in the schools of Hong Kong was transmitted in English. With the return of Hong Kong from British rule to Chinese rule, there was a strong political movement to change all school instruction to be taught in Chinese (Cantonese). Most schools adopted CMI (Chinese Medium Instruction). Only about 100 schools in all of Hong Kong (with a population of more than 7 million people) remained EMI. Today these schools are the premiere schools with high academic standards. Students who graduate from these schools are virtually assured acceptance into the University. If you can't make the grade and pass the exams at a high level, you are not allowed to reenroll for the next school year. (I was just talking to Mavis and Michael again out here in the open cafeteria. They're having PE (all form 6 students) next to me. They were each in a EMI school until this year.) I asked the principal if there would be a movement to use more English in the coming years. Yes, he said with certainty. But I don't understand why they can't do more of it now.

Mike and I were sharing with Mr. Lee, the principal, about the wonderful time we had with the students in their homes. We got to talking about living conditions in Hong Kong. It takes 1 or 2 years to get into "public housing." Pets are not allowed usually. There are many domestic problems in the families. They had a suicide call from a mother just this week because of abuse. The husband-father agreed to get help. Thank God for that. Still, the ongoing problem remains. What's going on in this high intensity Hong Kong world where the kids are at school from early to late and then stay up late into the night doing homework and surfing the internet, and few have time or inclination to go to church or even think seriously about God, life and eternity? The home we were in last night had a little Chinese shrine on the wall, complete with the fruit offering. A Chinese custom, they explained, but I suspect that fear and superstition are also strong in the minds and in the lives of many people here.

Up to the library, preparing for classes this morning. We got it all together, got worksheets run off in the office, and made it through three classes, 2 of them 80 minutes and the one in-between 40 minutes. Form 4 students are much better in English than Form 1, but they still cannot communicate well. Every sentence, every concept is a challenge for them. We are praying and working hard, not only to help them in spoken English but also that they might hear the gospel as many times as possible.

Bruce and Sallye and Mike and I headed to the mall for some lunch. Mike and I split off and found a McRib burger and Coke. Mighty fine! Stopped at the Japan Home Store on the way back, looking for a bar of bath soap. None. I did find tape to wrap up my Hong Kong guitar and get it home, and I got a 12-pack of toilet tissue for all our tissueless toilets around here. I felt just like Santa slipping around and leaving these packages that will soon be opened to the amazement and joy of many poor and needy visitors. (Several of the kids have told me I reminded them of Santa Claus. Reminded me of Guatemala when some of them started calling me Father Christmas.)

It's now 3:50. Kids are coming down. We're supposed to meet the bus to the LCMS center at 4:00, have supper, and be back by 8:00. As I was sitting here waiting and

watching the PE class, Mavis and Michael came over after they completed their exercise activity. Others soon gathered around. These were all Form 6 students. I began questioning them about why discipline is different in different classes. They said that some teachers are on the discipline team. Students are afraid of getting demerits from a discipline teacher. Some teachers simply do not teach and enforce discipline. I mentioned one teacher. "He's always nice" they said. "He never disciplines anyone." "Is that good?" I asked wondering what they really thought of it. "No," several answered.

10:15 PM HK Thursday (9:15 AM home) Ready to turn in for the night, but if I don't write now, I'll miss some things for sure. At 4:00 the bus showed up and off we went to the LCMS building. Passed by sections of Hong Kong we had not yet seen. Some downtown streets look busy and others a bit bawdy. Older buildings often had air conditioners hanging out of every window. Most traffic is made up of busses, taxis, and commercial vehicles. Very few personal cars, an occasional motorcycle. Ed Strohsehein was there to greet us at the LCMS building. He is Business Manager.

The land was purchased in 1960 by LCMS and developed later. The building is, I think, five stories high. Ed and family live on the 2nd floor. Josh Lange (nephew of Bob and Nancy) took us up a few flights of stairs to the Asia Alive presentation. Very interesting. Rev. John Mehl joined us. Dr. Stephen Oliver of the Lutheran Seminary in Taiwan and Missionary Carl Hanson were there, also Dr. Robert Kolb from St. Louis Seminary and Dr. Schmitt from Seward, who is going to start a mission school in Hanoi. Quite a gathering. I especially enjoyed talking to John Mehl, Dr. Oliver and Dr. Schmitt about their work and about the desperate need for teaching English and communicating the gospel in English in Asia. What a great gift God has given us in this language that all the world is using for commerce and computer. Good stewardship demands that we use this powerful vehicle for the spread of the gospel.

Supper was pizza, chicken wings, salad, and three kinds of ice cream. Everyone on our team had a fine time talking with all the men, their wives, and (my personal favorites) the Hanson girls, Emma, a third grader and her sister Amanda who is in Kindergarten. They go to Hong Kong International School, started by the LCMS many years ago, now independent. Emma and I talked about school. She loves to sing. "On Top of Spaghetti" must be one of her favorites right now. No Jesus songs in their school? Her Mom told me later that they get the Jesus songs in Sunday School. She is a delightful lady, a "product of Lutheran missions" she told me.

We got back shortly after 8:00 and agreed to gather at 8:30 for devo. I went right up to the library and started writing out a copy page for our Christian Character discussion tomorrow. I had worked up the idea on the bus ride and had it checked by a couple of our team teachers. Julia led the devotion on God's still small voice to Elijah and to us. After devo we did some sharing on the evening and sang a bunch of songs. We chose "Rejoice in the Lord" and "May The Lord, Mighty God" for the closing ceremony. Then we went to work on ceremony forms for Charles, downloading photos for the closing, and filling out Mary's debriefing form. I worked on the worksheet for class. Sallye helped me fill in most of the illustrations. Mike and I were last to leave. Now it's time to turn in. God bless the world.

FRIDAY – 8:47 AM HK (7:47 PM Thurs. Home) Standing in the back of the room of 39 Form 4 students as Judy Rethwisch teaches them mother, father, sister, brother, etc. The noise of the fan above is constant. The Sophomores are ok, but not as responsive as we would like. Always some talking in Cantonese underneath. I can see why they use microphones in most classes.

Now it's 9:25. We just finished our section with Rejoice in the Lord. Now the other team (Denise, Julia and Ellyn) is up, teaching the common table prayer. Table "grace" Do they understand what that's all about? I don't think so. The concept itself is foreign to them. However, we have tried to teach the culture of praying before meals. They seem to accept this when we do it anyway.

So, as Julia now reads to the class about noodles, I sit here to the side and write. This morning started out with water dripping from the air conditioner pipe into a plastic trash bucket by Bruce's head. I got up and taped a hand towel inside to catch the drip softly. I think that was 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. I got up again a little before 6:00. Actually, I had been thinking earlier that I needed to write out words to sing for Bible Knowledge class. Anyway, up to shower. Out to McD's with Mike, back a little after 7:00 and up to the library to work. Got it all together – worksheet and planning with group, all before 8:00 when Charles was to show up.

Charles didn't come until at least 5 after and held forth until 8:30. We had class at 8:35. Charles is still arranging for our closing program at 2:30 this afternoon. He also gave us the Saturday schedule. Sounds like they've got us on show for the potential new student families for next year. They're expecting 500 parents and kids. Then Lunch and tour. Looks like we're going to miss the Youth Worship service. But since Pator Lam has not showed up all week and made no conversation or arrangements, we could hardly insist on that tentative plan made last Sunday morning. That's a shame. The church is slighted much too much anyway. We need to worship and we need to support them in worship. So, I will see what we can do. If not, we will try to deal with it all and give support where we can.

The class is now interacting pretty well with the team leaders as they have moved from noodles to talking about other foods. About 1/3 of the class wear glasses. The popular (almost the only) style is narrow lenses, some less than an inch high, with full frames, many of them black. Some of the girls have colored frames. The name of this school is "Ma Chan Duen Hey Memorial College." They go by MCDH. They use the letters to stand for Modesty, Caring, Dilligence, and Honesty.

10:15 AM Library. Sally, Bruce and Kathy just came back from a challenging class. They had Form 4, but the teacher was the same Bible knowledge teacher who had no discipline.

6:37 PM HK Friday (5:37 AM at Home) At cafeteria table. Just finished debriefing with Mary. Finally done for the day. Feet hurt, tired, hungry. Such a great day and yet right now all I care to do is have something to eat and put my feet up for a while. But, since some of the crew is not down here yet, I'll write a few lines. Bible Knowledge class with 61 Form 6 students was probably the best thing we've done since we got here in both spoken English communication and also gospel witness. We had the church room for the class of 61. I got there early and arranged the chairs in a big oval outside and a smaller oval inside. The kids came in and sat down. We passed out the pages we had prepared for them with songs on one side and the Fruit of the Spirit on the other. They

caught on to the songs and sang out on Rejoice in the Lord and He's Got the Whole World in His Hands.

I explained about the fruit of the Spirit coming from faith in Jesus our Savior. I told a little about each fruit of the Spirit directing them to think about each symbol next to the fruit listed. Love, for instance, had a heart with a cross inside. Then we numbered off the students 1 to 10 and 1 to 10 again until all were in a group. We team leaders then lined up and each took a number one to ten.

Then the real test came. Would this be total chaos and bedlam? I asked the students to pick up their chairs and follow the leader who had their number. Ok, let's go. Everyone started to move, and for a few moments it was doubtful what was going to come of it all. But soon the leaders, who had scattered to different parts of the large room, were gathering their students around them in a circle. Praise the Lord. It was going to work. Each adult had 5 or 6 students and the students were together, not with their friends who had been sitting right next to them, but with other students from throughout the room.

I had three girls and 2 guys in my group. I pulled them in in a tight circle and we began. They were all very cooperative and really fairly conversant in English. Ling, Andrew, Enoch, Alice, and Iris. They were very thoughtful and articulate in speaking about what fruit of the Spirit they liked best, which one was hardest to be, and which one was most like their mother. They knew right away that the only one who was perfect in all fruit of the Spirit was Jesus Himself. Well, when I asked them what did it mean to them that Jesus died on the cross for them, you should have heard the answers. One said, "I was like a criminal. I should have died. But Jesus died for me and rescued me. Well, it turns out that all five students in my group are Christians. Ling has been a Christian for 5 years. Andrew's parents are Christian so he's been a Christian for as long as he can remember. Enoch, since he was a young boy I think. Alice, since primary school where she first heard about Jesus. Iris has been a Christian for 3 years.

Time was nearly up. I wanted to get a photo of the group. We got up and before I got two shots, the whole room seemed to be up and taking photos. Photo opt complete, we sat down to talk some more. Ling wants to be a teacher. Andrew wants to go to University if he can make it but doesn't know what he wants to be. Enoch either. Alice would like to be an engineer and Iris a psychologist.

I think everyone on our team had a similar experience with their group. The English interchange was fluid and the Christian witness was tremendous. There were even students who did not declare themselves to be Christians who still answered the questions from a Christian perspective, even about Jesus' death on the cross. It was great.

We were late to English class but the class consisted of half of the Form 6 students that we were just working with. As they came in the room after us, it was nice to see them happy that they would have us as teachers again. English with Form 6 students was reminiscent of our first class on Monday when we had the other half of the class. They were again very cooperative. We sang. We witnessed. Judy really got them rocking with putting their whole bodies into English expressions like "Hi" and "Bye, Bye" and "Who? Me?" I drew a quick US map on the board and Mike explained where Missouri and the mighty Mississippi were.

We then split into groups and passed out maps and Missouri Conservation magazines. We went around and talked about Missouri and Hong Kong. We passed out post cards. Judy and Kathy talked about their students back home and asked the students here to

write to them. One group I stopped at asked me about what homes were like in America. I sketched out a street and houses, and then drew a floor plan and showed them a house with three bedrooms, a full basement, bath rooms upstairs and down. They looked on with interest and awe.

Then one of them asked me about Knock, Knock jokes. I did my best to explain and gave them a couple examples with “Doris” and “orange”. I think they got it. A couple of them even laughed.

SATURDAY morning 7:35 AM HK (6:35 PM Friday at Home) Ah, what a fine Saturday morning, sitting here in the open cafeteria area, sky overcast, breeze blowing, covering the humidity nicely. Mike and I just got back from our routine morning trip to McD’s. American oldies is what we hear playing often when we go there. I heard “Two Less Lonely People In the World” Foot traffic on the streets was noticeably less this morning although we did see a few school children in uniform. I wonder what a typical Saturday schedule is like here at the high school.

More about FRIDAY. Yesterday afternoon, at the end of our last class we had to take class photos, you know. Our Australian teacher suggested it. And what would have been total chaos in a Form 1 class turned out to be a nice experience among the Form 6 group. It was after 1:00 PM, and the big show (closing ceremony) wouldn’t begin until 2:30 (or so I thought). Some of the team gathered for a trip out for lunch. I was going to go along and then decided I didn’t need lunch, and that I did want to spend some more time with students. I found Cathie, Po and Ming with some friends at a table. I had brought several puzzles for them to try. They soon got the four colored cubes and the two horsemen arranged properly. I started handing out little twisted metal wire puzzles as we talked. I can’t remember what we said (after all, that was a whole day ago!). Other kids were soon gathering around, trying out puzzles and talking. What neat kids these are. Of course, maybe a lot of the attention we’re getting is just because we are a novelty from America. All the kids seem to know things about the USA. They have seen movies and know about places like New York City and Hollywood. Mavis asked me the other day, “Why do they always do “Chinese take-out? We don’t do that. We just eat Chinese at home!” I think I just said, “That’s Hollywood.”

The kids were soon gone, waving and chortling as they left. I joined Judy not far away and we talked for a while as she enjoyed a “Cup of Noodles” and I ended up getting a Rocky Road Drumstick from the school canteen.

We were up in the assembly hall (gym) by 2:30. Turns out the program wasn’t going to start till 2:50. My mistake. Got to talk again to some of the kids who came early with Charles (his class that hour, I suspect). In a while some of the Form 6 students came in and took their places up in the front. I asked some of the girls why the girls always line up ahead of the boys. Is it just a school rule or is it Chinese custom? One girl smiled and answered, “Because we’re better.” Well, that settled that.

The closing ceremony was another Charles special. All Form 1,4 and 6 students assembled (all the classes we worked with). With the team seated in front, Charles proceeded to show on the big screen his planning notes for the event. Then he had students come out and take the mic and read a sentence or two they had written about the week with us. Very nice comments and thank yous. Then the team members were asked to come up and each speak to the assembly. This was also a good opportunity to thank

them, express our Christian love for them and also remind them once again of God's great love for them in Jesus our Savior.

Charles then introduced Mr. Lee, the principal. He had a very nice way of talking to the students and thanking our mission team. Then we were asked to sing. We did Rejoice in the Lord Always with the assembly. And then we tried to split it into two parts (as we had done in most of the classes) with half of the assembly taking each part. Well, we got through it somehow, but with the mics and sound and the separation of the two sides – let's just say that we didn't keep it all together very well. Still, the song itself was a good reminder to everyone of our time together and of God's faithfulness and love. Rejoice in the Lord – that is, be happy, because in the Lord Jesus you have the love of God, forgiveness, heaven, and a life of good from God. We pray that the students will remember this and grow in this Christian faith.

We then read together the blessing song that came up on the assembly screen. "May the Lord, Mighty God, bless and keep you forever." Then we sang it to them. It was cool. There were a few more incidental things like the gift we gave to Charles and the special things some of the kids gave to us. After the ceremony there were photos and more photos and more photos. It was a fine time, but exhausting. After a while the last of the students trickled out, and we made our way up to the Music Room for debriefing with Mary and to meet the students we would be with at lunch and tour today (Saturday).

In the next hour and a half we listened to Charles figure things out for what was happening in the next day and a half. We did, however, finally get to connect with the students. Mike and Betty and I had a great time talking with Kit and Iris. I even got them to write the Chinese characters for the fruit of the Spirit. It amazes me how quickly they make all those little marks. And how do they remember all those characters. We have 26 letters, relatively simple symbols from which we can make at least a half a million words in English. Chinese have a different, and sometimes complicated, symbol for each word or concept.

Anyway, Mary had arrived by 5:00 (only a half hour late, she must have had some difficulty getting here), and it was getting on toward 5:30. We had already spent a goodly amount of time with the students. I felt like "the bad guy" again when I caught Charles and suggested that we get on with the debriefing. He consented and went back in his office to get Mary. Soon the kids were gone, and Charles and Ivan were gone. We had a good sharing session with Mary. Gave us the opportunity to voice both joys and concerns about how the week went. That finally being accomplished we were ready to go out as a group and have supper together. Mary joined us. Charles caught Betty, however, on the way out, and informed her that although he had arranged the bus for the tour (for today, Saturday), we would have to pay for it. Surprise! Surprise! Mary told us later that she was not surprised since Charles had done this before. Well, we have group funds yet, so we will be able to cover it all ok, but it doesn't feel very good and it doesn't seem very neighborly. Oh well, God bless him. He's got a lot to deal with.

Supper at City Plaza II. The first restaurant we went to was crowded. Up to the food court with many food places just like a food court back home, but there was not Burger King or KFC in sight. In fact, we could not find many words of English in all the signage except, of course, Coke! The pictures of dishes were all a bit strange looking and I guess we just weren't up to it. Bruce went back down to check the restaurant again. Still a long wait. Off to Pizza Hut we went with great enthusiasm. They were busy too, but

they made a place for us out in the Mall hallway. They pulled out the planters, pulled the tables and chairs out from the guard rail and seated us all quite comfortably. We were not too long getting our orders in and the food eventually came also. Pepsi is ok if you can't get Coke. And I had a seafood fettuccini that was really fine. It even had a few little squid in it. It was neat to join hands and pray together right out there in the middle of the mall with people coming and going all around us. We didn't do it for show, of course. It was a united Christian witness of our faith and dependence in God. I suspect that a few people might have given us a funny look. Maybe even a Christian or two smiled in appreciation and was encouraged in their personal faith and witness. I don't know since I had my eyes closed. But even with my eyes open I know that I miss the many ways that God is working in the hearts and lives of people all around us.

Almost 9:00 AM here on Saturday morning and I'm still not done writing about last night. The Form 4 girls just came by. Caroline and about 5 others. They're here this morning to "serve" as they put it. I believe they will help the visitors in some way. I think Caroline has picked up on my weird laugh and has started mimicking it right after me. The she smiles and covers her mouth as if to say, "Maybe I shouldn't have done that."

We got back to school last night about nine, a little after actually, and went right up to the library on the 3rd floor for devotion time. Julia led. We all admitted God had given us another good day.

It is now 12:30 PM HK Saturday (11:30 PM Friday at Home). Sitting at table in back of entry to school, ready for 400 parents and students to come. The Red Cross students in uniform line both sides of an aisle from the gate to the school door entry. They have been practicing all morning with saluting and marching. We were lined up and ready. Then we found that the group is at another school and will come when they are done there.

We gathered earlier before 10:00 up in the Music Room. We scooted out pretty quickly with 5 students to the Lazy Susan restaurant, the same place we went last weekend. Kristine, Cherrie, Emily, Ethan, and Larry helped us along. All fifteen of us sat down around one table. We followed our students in washing our bowls, chop sticks, etc, as we had done before. Tea came. The kids ordered. We all joined hands and offered a prayer, and then, joined in the common table prayer (at least we Lutherans from American did). Larry sat at my right and Emily next to him. They all helped us, making sure we had plenty to eat. They seemed to hold back a bit, eating only very little until we were all about finished. Then they picked up speed and ended up finishing off every dish except a few things they put in boxes to take along with them. We talked of many things, even learned how to count 1 to 10 in hand signals. Found out that Emily is a Christian. Larry is not. I'm not sure about Ethan, but he sure does eat a lot! We were back at school before 12:00 and ready to line up by 12:15.

SUNDAY – 9:55 AM HK (8:55 PM Saturday in St. Louis) Sitting here on the plane that will, God willing, take us back to the good ol' USA. We aren't scheduled to take off yet for 25 minutes. I had a window seat with 2 people to bother every time I would have to stand, and I anticipate that will have to be often. Melanie comes along and claims seat C, and aisle seat. We greet each other and, after a minute or two I ask her if she would like a window seat. "Would you like the aisle seat?" she replied. "Yes," I answered with

some subdued enthusiasm. "Sure," she said, "if you don't mind me crawling over you when I have to get out." "Not at all," I replied, "I'll probably be up quite a bit myself." And so we switched seats. Thank You, Lord! Melanie and I had a pleasant talk. She is from New York city, visiting a friend in Hong Kong. A recent graduate, she is a paralegal in NY and thinking about going on to law school, although all her friends and lawyer acquaintances tell her not to.

I pray that all is well at home after Karen's day of travel. Thinking about it late last night right before the trip began and early this morning after the trip was over. I'm glad it was such a good visit in so many ways. I'm just sorry that I missed the chance to see all the Texas bunch this time.

Back to yesterday (SATURDAY) at school. The potential students and parents arrived late. We greeted them in Cantonese "mm-on" (Good afternoon!) Got to talk to Cherrie, Emily and Kristine some more. Cherrie and Emily told me about the different colored shirts worn by students for PE. Each color represents a "house," and in games and competition, students cheer for their color and their house.

The assembly program began at 1:00. We (team and students who were with us) sat up in front on the left side. It was all in Canonese. We sat up and pretended that we were attentive to every word. The slides on the screen helped. The principal was explaining a variety of things about the school program. I wrote a note in my journal and showed to Cherrie sitting next to me. "Is he saying good things?" She wrote back telling me that he was talking now about students and the awards they had won. Finally we were to be introduced. We got up from our front row seats and headed back stage only to wait for many minutes while other strange language talk goes on.

Finally, we are introduced. (Writing this at 10:25 as the plane taxis to the runway. The take-off at 10:37 has us airborne in 45 seconds.) Betty is asked to address the assembly of several hundred people. She is told ahead of time that most of the people will not understand her. She does a marvelous job. If they didn't understand her they at least knew that English is important enough in the school to bring people all the way from the USA to teach it to the students!

After our show time we slipped away to go on the city tour. 10 Team members and 9 students off the the Museum, the Peak, the Lights and Supper. Got to talk with Andrew on the way. He goes to a Lutheran church and sings with the choir team. He enjoys it very much. He and the girls (Emily and Cherrie) were teasing back and forth, just having fun, but doing the typical high school type put downs at the same time. They were talking about some popular guy. "I hate him!" Andrew said, and then told us how he thought the guy only liked rich people because when he told him where he went to school, he walked away. "I hate him," Andrew said again. I said, "Andrew, you're a Christian. You shouldn't hate him. You should pray for him. A light seemed to come on. "All right," he said with some conviction, "I'll pray for him." While we were talking Cherrie and Emily were making a card, hiding it whenever I looked in that direction. Later Emily gave it to me. Very nice thank you from both of them.

We arrived at the Chinese Museum first. The Girls (Kit and Iris) who were with Betty, Mike and me, said that the Science Museum next door was more fun. But into the History Museum we went. Very interesting to get a glimpse of real Hong Kong and Chinese history. They had to begin of course with the man-made story that comes out of evolutionary fantasies. Once you get past that, China has a very colorful history in many

ways. I photoed Iris in front of the 3 giant Chinese gods. We all got onto an old trolley and sat down for a while. The Chinese Junks and house boats were very interesting.

Out of the museum and on to the bus to make our way to the tram and the peak. We parked in a very closed-in part of the city it seemed. Tall buildings all around. We got tickets and stood behind several hundred other people waiting for our turn. While we were waiting Andrew asked if we had anything like it in the states that could go up 500 ft. Well, I said, we do have a mountain called Pike's Peak and there is a tram there that goes to the top. How high? About 14,000 ft. Whoa! That was hard to believe. Then Mike and I told him about driving to the top and seeing snow even in the summer time. That was even more fascinating. These kids have never seen snow in their lives. After two or three loads of people went up, we finally got on the tram ourselves. It was a pretty steep ride. It was neat to look out and climb the skyscrapers and then overtake them. What a fine view of Hong Kong. Land and water: God-made mountains and man-made buildings.

Up on top the main attraction was shopping. A few of us, however, found a place to sit and have a Hagen Daaz ice cream. We had trouble talking Iris and Kit into it. "So expensive" they said, but they enjoyed it too. The group finally gathered and we went for another long wait at the tram. This time we got to go down backwards. What a treat. Off the tram, our bus met us and took us to "the most expensive hotel in all of Hong Kong." There we went through and to the back where we came to the wall by the water's edge. The Hong Kong skyline was already lit with lights. A goodly breeze was blowing. First thing we had to do was pose for photos. A security guard close by was given the honor of trying to figure out many different cameras and snap a photo from each one.

In a while the 8:00 light show began. The music played behind us. Several buildings across the water began to flash a variety of colors and designs. It was quite a technological feat. I asked Nic about it later and he said that the government did it as a tourist attraction. I'm sure it is. But our high school kids were not overly impressed. After a few minutes, it was boring to them. Light show done, we took off on foot through the crowded Hong Kong streets in search of the food court restaurant.

I must admit that during most legs of our travel I got so interested in talking to one or more of the kids that I didn't pay much attention to the sights and sounds around us. I guess all 9 of these students attended an EMI school last year. They did not score well enough on the exams to continue there.

The food court episode turned out with everyone together having a fine time and a fine meal, but it started out in chaos.

(2:30 PM HK Sunday – 1:30 AM home) We've been up in the air for four hours. I've been up and down many times dozing and writing. We had a nice meal early on. White fish and rice and coffee. I just got the urge to look at some of the photos on my camera. Battery, which was low for those final photos at the airport, is now dead. I'll have to wait for a charge up at home.

Back to Saturday night live and the food courts of old Hong Kong. All in Chinese and pictures for the most part. Also Japanese, Vietnamese and others. No Steak and Shake, however. The students helped us get around and order. Mike and I found sweet and sour pork at last and went for it. It was delicious sweet and sour pineapple and tomato and that golden coated pork. After a couple bites, however, we started finding bone and gristle in the pork. Oh well, we had to work at it now, but it was still good. The kids all

got their Chinese favorites and dug right in. Kit and Iris shared a tray as people sometimes do. Some of the things did not look very appetizing to me. I asked them if they ever hated some foods as a child. No, mother always made it delicious. When we were about finished I got out my pocketful of Hong Kong coins and began separating them on the table. I got help from the girls who could identify them much more quickly than I. Figuring that I would not be able to use it, I tried to give it to the kids. No, no, they said but they began taking our bills and buying up my coins so it would be easier for me to carry. I must have had \$50 in Hong Kong change.

Out into the Hong Kong street again. Walking and talking at the end of the line, we didn't realize we lost the group. Judy, Vivien, Kristine and I were stranded. No problem. Vivien and Kristine got on their cell phones and contacted one of the others. Soon we were all connected again. Kristine is not a Christian. Her parents do some of the traditional Chinese religion. She says she has no religion. We talked for some time about it. I think she understands about Jesus and what He did for her. It just hasn't sunk in and taken hold of her yet. After all, she's only been going to a Lutheran High School for a month, and I don't know how much she has really gotten from her religions teacher who can't keep order in the classroom. Our time with them might have been the only time they have really heard about Jesus and what it means for a person's life.

We had a good time on the homeward trip last night. They had a few hand games to teach us. I taught them thumb wrestling. Back at the ranch we said our fond farewells and of course took more photos. The girls and our gals seemed to have really bonded. The guys too have made a good connection with us. Back in the compound and after 10:00 we decided to wait with Kathy's devotion till Sunday morning. Up to our rooms we went into a packing frenzy. I did anyway. I hadn't done a lick as of yet, so it was time. First, my Hong Kong special guitar. I used all my used shirts to pack around the little gem. Then the strapping tape to hold it all together. Next was the suitcase and brief case. After some thoughtful rearranging I was ready.

I don't think I slept much but I must have finally dozed off. Mike's alarm had us up and going at 5:00 AM. Shower and shave, luggage down to the first floor, us up to the 3rd floor for a banana and coffee. Mike had already set the burglar alarm off in the library, so all was safe. Mike went down to help with luggage while I finished a few notes to Charles and others, and wrote out the words for "Hark the Voice of Jesus Calling." Soon others came in. They said some of the boys were here to help with luggage. What a surprise. Betty and Mike and others got busy at the table counting money and receipts as Mary watched over them with an appreciative eye. Other groups, she said, gave her many "receipts" scrawled on the back of napkins and such. My, what a good team we have. Before we went down, we all gathered around Betty and Mike and sang together "Hark the Voice of Jesus Calling." At the close Betty was crying. I'm not sure why. I thought it sounded pretty good.

Down to the ground floor and the bus. Nick and Ethan and another boy were there. And who else should come walking in but Savoy, Kristine, Emily and Vivien. "We missed you," they said. We couldn't believe it. After a long day and a late night we just knew that they would all be sleeping in, but here they were. Well, we had to take more photos of course, along with more farewells. We loaded up the bus, go in and found that Nic and the girls wanted to go along with us to the airport. So we piled up the luggage a little more and made room for them.

Nic and I sat together and had a fine talk on the way in. He is a Christian. His family is not. He is hoping to finish this year and next with good grades and then to pass the exams so that he can go on the University. The pressure is great on these kids. They feel it. They talk about it. It's not just for themselves but to do honor and help their families as well. I wonder how it affects young people like Nic when their parents are not Christians and have such high worldly expectations of them.

At the airport we unloaded the bus and separated our bags. The kids went right in with us and helped where they could. The girls were interested in my briefcase. I opened it up and showed them that it was just full of stuff. Then I pulled out a harmonica and played "Turkey in the Straw" for them. They acted like it was the greatest thing since U-tube. High School students can be very kind to old people. Kristine started telling me how she likes music too. She plays the Chinese flute in some kind of orchestra. She would like to learn regular flute but it is expensive. We talked on as we slowly made our way up in the line, I found out that her father is a plumber. My father was a plumber too, I said. She seemed delighted that we had that in common.

We finally got up to the ticket desk after a long wait in line. Then on to security. Guitar and brief case went through fine but I didn't. I ended up having to empty every last pocket. On to the gates and now we really did have to wave our fond farewells to the kids, still waiting and watching on the other side of the divider. What a fine bunch and what a rich experience this has been for all of us. "Don't forget me," they said to us again and again. I gave out my e-mail to more kids than I will be able to keep up with, but I hope a few of them will write. If they will write I will answer and maybe they will learn to speak better English too. I think what exciting possibilities we might have for continuing to share the gospel with these kids. God bless 'em, every one.

EMILY'S STORY

Emily attended an EMI all girls school up to this year. She did not score high enough on the exams. So, she had to find a different school. At her old school in a different district she would go 2 km to school usually taking the bus. If she and her friends were late, they would go together in a taxi. The taxi would cost \$15, but with 5 of them it was only \$3 each. That was ok. Now Emily must make sure she is ready early enough to take the bus since she has to come from a longer distance from a different district and she has no friends close by who go to the Lutheran school. If she is late for school she will have detention – staying after school, writing out vocabulary words and reciting them.

Emily and Cherrie are good friends. They went to the same school last year. Together they made a thank-you card for us. Emily is a good student and she is a Christian, but I don't think she is able to go to church very much. She and Cherrie said they would try to go. Emily would like to go on to the University and become an engineer. She and Cherrie are such nice girls. They were both so helpful, serving at lunch. They are friendly and speak English pretty well, but sometimes they can't remember the right English words.

Emily said that before the Olympics she would think, "I am from Hong Kong." Now she is proud to say, "I am from China."

CHERRIE'S STORY

Cherrie's story is tied up with Emily's, but she is a special young lady also. Helping us at lunch on Saturday and spending most of the day, they never seemed to tire. They sat near to me on the bus and Cherrie always wore a bright smile.

Cherrie told me about the four houses and wrote them out for me. Each school divides its students up into houses. Each house is given a different color for PE (Reminds me of Harry Potter, and I guess it does come from the long and substantial British influence.) At MCDH, each of the letters that stand for the name of the memorial college also stand for a word of Christian character and also is assigned a certain color. At MCDH the houses are: Modest (Green), Caring (Red), Diligent (Blue), and Honest (Yellow). At sports and games you cheer for the team from your house. Cherrie and Emily are from the Honest house. One of their cheers is: "Go, go, go ahead! / Be, be, be the best! / Go ahead! Be the best! / Honesty is the best!" (or "Yellow is the best!") Cherrie was with us most of Saturday and went on tour with us but had to go home during the light show. That was the last I saw of her. Cherrie also said she was a Christian. I pray that she will go to church and grow in Christian faith.

SONGS

When was the last time you heard "Two Less Lonely People in the World"? for me it was at McDonalds in Hong Kong, China. There were other oldies at McD's during our morning visits. Then one evening we were in City Plaza II and what should we hear over the sound system? Moon River! It wasn't Andy Williams but it wasn't "Moon Liver" either.

One of the songs Charles had his kids sing for us was "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High." He compiled the hymn/song book used by their school and the other Lutheran High Schools in Hong Kong.

When we were entering the Museum there was music playing with a distinctive Chinese twang. "Do you like that music?" I asked Iris. "Yes" she answered without hesitation.

The worship songs we heard in Chinese Lutheran church were more like "Lord, I lift Your Name". Retired pastor, Rev. Lee told me that the Lutheran church in Hong Kong is also rich in Lutheran liturgy and hymns.

What a variety. What a mixture. In some ways, Hong Kong is very much like the USA.

DIM SUM

Or as I called it, the Big Lazy Susan. It's a style of eating traditional Chinese. Saucer, bowl, wide spoon and chop sticks are at your place. Everything else you need is placed on the large lazy Susan in the center of the table. You begin by pouring hot water into your bowl and proceed to rinse each item at your place. When you are finished, you pour the water back into a bowl which the waiter then soon collects. Tea is poured for everyone. Your order food by circling the Chinese name on a paper. The waitress collects the paper and soon brings you something. There is no specific order in what is

brought. It is brought in small wooden or wicker type baskets about 6 inches diameter and 2 inches high with a lid on top. They sometimes stacked two or three high. Inside you find 3 or 6 or whatever of the item. One will have chicken feet, another egg roll or rice roll, pork inside a flower shaped rice thing, congee, shrimp and pork in an egg and rice ball, fried wonton, vegetable cake, seafood roll, and other things difficult to describe or imagine. You aren't finished with the meal until everything is eaten. That is the Chinese tradition. Anymore, however, you can always ask for a box to take home the extra food you could not eat. There was such a variety so as to satisfy just about anybody's taste. Indeed, I enjoyed quite a few items. But I can think of several parts of a chicken that I would enjoy much more than the feet!

IDIOMS

American idioms (figures of speech) seem to be of special interest to people in Hong Kong. Charles asked Bruce and Sallye about their shirts the first day. The phrase "Hong Kong or Bust" intrigued him and he just had to know what it meant. "We have idioms too," Michael told one of our group. "The moon is always rounder in a foreign country." "Ah," the reply came back, "kind of like 'the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.'" Michael laughed. "I'll have to remember that one," he said. He did. The next day at PE when he and others gathered around as I was writing, it was Mavis who said it. Then I explained where it came from. Drawing a cow inside a fenced in area, I showed how the cow sticks her head through the fence wires to eat grass on the other side, even though she has good grass right within her pen. "Oh," they said. But I suspected that they had never seen such a thing and were only trying to imagine the scene in their Hong Kong High Rise Citified minds.

PAUL'S STORY

Paul is the English teacher who speaks English as his native tongue. The idea is that each school should have at least one native-speaking teacher so that the students learn how to speak English naturally rather than with a Chinese accent that would be very difficult for others to understand. The funny thing though, is that Paul is from Melbourne, Australia and speaks with such a strong Australian accent that he himself is hard to understand at times. Actually Paul is easily understood by all of us, but it does seem strange that they should let him teach English in Hong Kong.

Paul seems to get on with the kids well. He talks to them in a nice but teacher-like fashion. When he speaks, they listen and respond as they should. He told me a couple of times that he really appreciated having our team there. He'd love to have a team every week he said. He thinks it's great for the kids. But I wonder about Paul. I'm not so concerned that he is giving the kids bad English pronunciation, but rather that he is giving them a bad philosophy of life. Paul is not a Christian. He freely (almost proudly) admits that he is "not a very religious person." As a role model in a Lutheran school, what is he doing for the kids? I'm afraid he's giving them a model of an guy who has done nicely for himself without God in his life. The thing is that he is not doing nicely in life at all without God. And the real tragedy is that neither he nor many of the kids he is teaching realize what a pitiful and hopeless life he has. Paul seems like a nice guy. He had taught

at the High School for several years. I wonder what he's looking for. Not married? Friends? I want to continue praying for Paul. If he would come to know Christ as his Savior, he, like his New Testament name-sake, would be a powerful witness of God's grace.

KRISTINE'S STORY

We gathered with students for Saturday lunch. I hadn't met Kristine personally yet, only in class. I asked her to write her name on a journal page (I never know what kind of name a student here will have. And this avoids having to ask someone to repeat it again and again to make sure I get it right) She wrote "Kristine" and handed it back to me. "Ah, Kristine" I said, happy that it was a familiar name. "Yes," she said with a smile. Kristine sat with team members on the other side of the table at lunch, but I got to know her better as we talked a couple different times after that.

Kristine is 17. She wants to be a nurse, go to Europe, America, and especially to Mongolia. Her mother mostly stays at home. Her father is a plumber, so we have that in common. Her older sister by 9 years works but still lives at home, has a boy friend but doesn't want to get married yet. Kristine's older brother by 6 years is a policeman in Hong Kong. No girlfriend. He also lives at home. Her family lives in a small apartment about 300 square feet. I told her that maybe she should tell her brother and sister to get married and then she would have more room. "Yes, Yes," she said with a laugh.

Kristine and her family live on the 14th floor of a 35 floor apartment building. She and her sister share a room that doubles as the kitchen complete with stove, refrigerator and washing machine. "Very poor" is how she described her home.

Kristine has one school uniform dress, white. She washes it once a week. They hang clothes out the window to dry. "Better for the environment" she tells me. Kristine says that she cooks sometimes. Very much pressure, she says, to study and do well in school.

Kristine is not a Christian. "No, no," she said when I first asked her. Her parents have the old Chinese religion. They go back to family on the mainland about once a month. Kristine doesn't go with them very much any more. She doesn't like the mainland village. Very dirty, she says. Everybody smokes. Kristine says she doesn't have a religion. but I'm praying the spark of faith is already ignited and she becomes a devoted believer.

Kristine also loves music. She plays Chinese flute and would like to learn regular flute, but it's too expensive, she says. She plays in some kind of orchestra and they have performances. I left her a CD of songs. Hopefully that will help spark the faith also.

12:12 Home time. Sunday, October 19th, 2008. Getting ready to land in Newark. Talked to Melanie a few times during the trip. I asked her how she would get back to her apartment in New York City. She said she was thinking taxi, but that would be expensive. None of her friends have a car. Her parents live in Boston. I asked her if she had a church. "I'm Jewish," she said (as if that was the answer to all questions one might have about such things). "Well," I offered, "why don't you call a local Rabbi and ask him to come and rescue you." She smiled real big and said she thought that maybe that wouldn't work. "Sure," I said, "just ask him to send someone in a big Lincoln Continental." "I wish I did know a Rabbi here," she said. "That would make it a lot

easier.” That’s when I should have said, “Jesus was a Rabbi who you could get to know. He’s always there to help you.” But I didn’t think of it at the time. Maybe that’s best. She might have said something like “Well, tell your Jesus to come on over in his Lincoln Continental and give me a ride home.” After all, right then she was thinking about getting home to New York City not getting home to heaven. And I’ve been told those two places aren’t even close to each other. Still, there are many Christians in New York City. Lord, send one to Melanie to help get her home.

12:40 Home time. “Holding pattern over Newark.” That could be the title of a book. They say 25 minutes, but you never know. That could be the theme. One thing for sure. Whether we’re flying high in the sky or have our feet on the ground, God never puts us on hold. It may seem like He does, but God works together in all things for our good. God who gave His only Son for us all will guide and bless us through every journey in life and bring us safely to our final destination of heaven right on time. Touchdown 1:10 PM. It’s good to be back in the United States.

But our adventure was not quite over yet. We had to pick up all our bags and recheck them. Getting through customs was a bit of a tedious ordeal. Then they changed our departure gate. Down through a corridor and stairs. Wait for a minute. Hop on bus. Arrive at the outside of the gate and go in the way we would eventually go out. When we got everyone together in one place, we stood in a circle between the chairs and Kathy shared with us Psalm 22 and a good homecoming devotion. I offered an additional reminder of God’s grace throughout this trip in the midst of all the “bulls” that threatened to attack us and distract us along the way. We joined hands and prayed there in middle of crowded seats all around us, much as we had done when we began this mission trip. We sang the doxology together in praise to Almighty God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from whom all blessings flow. Soon we would be home. God is good. Amen.

Pastor Lonie Eatherton
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