

buzz

January 18, 2015

Christmas Traditions in China

The following is an excerpt from an email sent out after Christmas by Waterford young adult Matthew Amstutz, who is serving with Mennonite Partners in China (through Mennonite Central Committee). Matthew teaches English at a university in the city of Zigong, in the province of Sichuan. Below Matthew is pictured at the Great Wall of China. Matthew writes:

I thought I'd just begin the new year with this long-overdue email. I haven't been able to send emails for the last week or so as China restored some sections of its Great Firewall, basically cutting off Gmail completely since sometime after Christmas. I just finished up my final grades for this semester, and I taught my last class on Christmas morning. It's been a busy semester for me. Although I was given less teaching hours (12 a week) I was given more total students (about 260) and one more lesson prep (three in total). The English Department did this by combining the six English classes into only three, which was great for my hours, but not so great for classroom dynamics. For English Listening & Speaking, each class had between 50-60 kids. As you can imagine, that caused a few problems with the "speaking" portion. I also taught a postgrad general English course and "An Introduction to Western Culture", which I changed to "American Culture."



On top of my normal teaching I also did a couple activities with the Goshen College SST unit, which was located in Nanchong, about 3 hours by bus from Zigong. This included accompanying them to Xi'an and Beijing as well as inviting them to Zigong for two days during National Week. During the last three weeks of the semester my girlfriend, Grace, was in Zigong following her semester on SST.

What are you bringing next week?



This is what Jenni Samuls is bringing to share with the children in worship on January 25. You, too, are asked to bring something that embodies your own personal mission or motto of faith. The worship theme is "Jesus – his mission."

My actual Christmas day wasn't too special. As I mentioned, my last class of the semester was on Christmas morning. All of their final presentations were finished, so I showed them the classic American Christmas film, *A Christmas Story*. I ate supper with some students and the Peace Corps Volunteer who lives in my building. Then we attended a Christmas party put on by The English Association (a student group on campus) where we sang songs, played games, ate sweets, and I shared what my family does during the holidays. If you're interested and have a spare moment in the next couple of days you should check out a podcast about the church in China, particularly during Christmas. It is an interview is with my big boss, Myrrl Byler, director of Mennonite Partners in China.

The spring semester doesn't start till March 9, so I've got more than two months of vacation to look forward to. The second semester is starting so late this year because Spring Festival (based on the lunar calendar) is later than usual. I don't have too many plans for these next two months. At the end of January MPC has our week-long winter retreat. Other winter break activities will include sipping tea at tea houses, catching up on my reading/movie list, and studying Chinese. I'm going to relax and enjoy the time to myself, especially because this summer is looking to be packed with visitors and travels. I continue to appreciate all the love and support from my home congregation.

—Matthew Amstutz



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The *Waterford Buzz* is normally published weekly for members of Waterford Mennonite Church. Items for inclusion should be given to the editor by 5 p.m. Tuesday preceding publication.

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Stephen Ministry Training Continues

An exciting adventure in learning and doing ministry, and in spiritual growth, began for five people two Wednesday evenings ago. These Stephen Ministry trainees have begun the task of studying, discussing, experiencing, and practicing skills involved in sharing God's love and compassion with those who especially need these gifts. Last week the Stephen Ministry training class was considering the subject of "Feelings: Yours, Mine and Ours." During this session they were learning about the importance of recognizing and accepting all the feelings that people have. This coming week the Stephen Ministry training class will be considering the subject of "The Art of Listening." During this session they will be honing their listening skills and finding out that listening well is extremely helpful and caring, but also hard work.

Family Life Ministry Team has New Lay Ministry Partners

The congregational affirmation vote on Jan. 11 gave overwhelming approval for Ron & Vicki Weirich to share leadership as the first Lay Ministry Partners for the newly formed Family Life Ministry Team. Blessings to Ron, Vicki and Pastor Lyle Miller as together they give shape to this new model of faith formation with our children and youth. More members of this team will yet be added.

YOTB Bookmark Corrections

We've caught two errors in the Year of the Bible bookmarks that you may be using in the spiritual practice of scripture reading. Please mark these changes:

- Week of Jan. 25, reading 1: The first reading should be Song of Solomon 5:2-8:14.
- Week of Feb. 8, reading 4: The final reading should be **Proverbs 30-31**.

Thank You

Thank you for your support and caring during the recent death of Phil's mother. The prayers, the plant, the cards, and the encouraging words were all deeply appreciated.

—Phil & Rebecca Ramer & Family

Membership Exploration Classes

Pastor Neil will be offering three Wednesday evening sessions that create an introduction to congregational life and membership at Waterford Mennonite Church. For recent attenders or anyone considering taking membership here, this is a good opportunity to meet other recent attenders and learn more of "the basics of Waterford." Letters to many households were already placed in church boxes by January 4, but you are welcome to participate even if you didn't get a letter. Sessions will be from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. on January 28, February 11 and March 4. RSVP to Neil directly if you are interested or have more questions.

Habitat for Humanity Families

Habitat needs 10-12 qualified, motivated families. Does the right family work with you, go to your church, or live next door? Please let them know about Habitat, which will build primarily in Elkhart and Goshen in the next year. Families chosen this round could build as soon as fall of 2015.

More information about program qualifications can be found at Habitat's website, or by calling their office 574-533-6109. Any families wishing to apply for Habitat's affordable home ownership program must attend one of the following Information meetings:

- Jan. 24, 10 am: Habitat Office, 2526 Peddlers Village Road, Goshen
- Jan. 26, 6:30 pm: Elkhart Public Library, 300 S. 2nd St., Elkhart
- Jan. 27, 12 pm: Habitat Office, 2526 Peddlers Village Road, Goshen
- Jan. 27, 6:30 pm: Boys & Girls Club of Goshen, 306 Crescent St., Goshen
- Jan. 28, 6:30 pm: Mary Beck Elementary, 818 McDonald St., Elkhart

Membership Transfer Request

Ministry Leadership Council has approved a request for membership transfer to Olive Mennonite Church in Elkhart from Beth Barwick. Since being baptized here in 2008, Beth has since graduated from college and is now active at the Olive congregation. Action will be taken this week on the transfer request. We wish God's blessings on Beth as she contributes to congregational life at Olive Mennonite Church.