

Challenges for the Taiwan Church

I am often asked what the biggest challenges to missionary work in Taiwan are.

Many could be mentioned, including the secularism and materialism that’s also common in the United States. Two challenges that are *not* as common in the US, however, are ancestor worship and a strong Confucian ethical system. Ancestor worship presents a challenge in at least two different ways. We often find that *non-Christians* are unwilling to even consider what Christians believe. This is because they know that Christians are not supposed to worship their ancestors, and the family and societal pressure to worship one’s ancestors is very strong. For example, many times women have told us they can’t come to our Bible Studies or worship because of their husbands’ objection. Since they absolutely must worship their ancestors, any contact with the Christian Church is off limits. The other challenge of ancestor worship we see is that some *Christians* still engage in at least occasional ancestor worship. For example, we recently met a young man who told us that although he was baptized many years ago, he still has not told his parents, and also still participates in ancestor worship practices with his parents at least once a year.



one example of ancestor worship

The strong Confucian ethical system here also presents challenges to the Christian Church. Confucianism has provided a very strong ethical base for traditional Chinese culture for well over a thousand years. Although it seems obvious to us that Confucianism’s influence on the Taiwanese is quickly fading, there is still a strong notion in many that being a “good person” is not only a good ideal, but also an attainable one. Thus, if I can be a good enough person on my own, why would I need Jesus? But not only does the Confucian ethic prevent non-Christians from seeing the need for Christianity, it also clearly impacts the Christian Church. Taiwanese Christians are naturally so focused on right Christian behavior that it’s easy for them to forget that they’re still sinners who daily need God’s forgiveness in Christ. Thus the clear Biblical Lutheran understanding of God’s Law--which most importantly reveals and condemns our sin, and His Gospel--which continually forgives our sin for Christ’s sake, is so needed in the Taiwan Church.



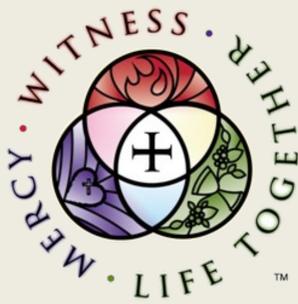
Pastor Paul’s Call

Pastor Paul is a theological educator in Taiwan, serving with the China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC). He teaches God’s Word at seminary and congregational levels, and develops text, audio, and video resources for the Chinese Church.

To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to michael.paul@lcms.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

There is salvation in no one else,
for there is no other name [than Jesus]
under heaven given among men by
which we must be saved.
Acts 4:12 (ESV)





What can you pray for?

Thanks for:

- all of you who support us with your prayers and offerings, so that we can bring God’s Word to the people of Taiwan
- safe travels, good health, and a blessed time for our family together over the past month

Petitions for:

- the people of Taiwan, that God’s Word and Spirit would grant them faith in Christ
- that God would raise up more pastors for the CELC
- good progress on book and hymnal production in the coming two months

Our mailing address:

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VDMA
the Word of the Lord
endures forever

our official website:
www.lcms.org/paul

There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at www.lcms.org/service. Click on “Service Opportunities.”

Meet the CELC



The China Evangelical Lutheran Church (CELC), officially established as a Church body in Taiwan in 1967, resulted from missionary work by the LCMS that began in 1951 when LCMS missionaries expelled from China began arriving here. The CELC today has nine congregations, seven pastors, two vicars, and 300-400 worshipers a Sunday. Aside from the nine congregations, there are already Church building facilities in at least five more locations...but with no one available to serve. Of the seven pastors, one intends to retire this year, and two more will be ready in the next few years. Thus, one of the great needs of the CELC is more pastors. Currently the CELC has no seminarians, so men from other denominations that could colloquize into the CELC are also sought. In fact, of the nine current pastors and vicars, only five were originally from the CELC. Given this situation, one of my primary roles is to teach current and future CELC pastors the basics of Lutheran theology and practice. I have often taught at the synodical level, as well as for small groups of colloquizing men and “continuing education” courses. A new focus for me this year will be teaching lay courses open to any Christians, in part hoping to identify future seminarians and Church workers for the CELC. Aside from these and other teaching opportunities, I also do my best to find time to coordinate the production of text, audio, and video resources that can be used not only by the Taiwan Church, but also by the Chinese Church worldwide. My YouTube channel (@baimushi) is one example of my efforts in this regard.



our family all together at Christmas

Keeping up-to-date: If you’re not receiving this newsletter by email but would like to, please contact us at michael.paul@lcms.org. For frequent Facebook updates, go to the Facebook group: “Michael Paul family Taiwan mission.”

To support our work financially, you may make checks payable (memo line: “Support of Missionary Michael Paul”) to “The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” and send your tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861



You can **ALSO** make checks payable to “**Mission Central**” and send your tax-deductible gift to our friends at: Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034.