

Mask

MASKS OF GOD



SUNDAY SCHOOL



MISSION OF CHRIST NETWORK



FAMILY



Mask

noun

- 1 a covering for all or part of the face, worn as a disguise, or to amuse or frighten others
- 2 a manner or expression that hides one's true character or feelings

verb

- 1 to cover or conceal

The first national opera in China was formed in 8th century, but opera as an art form has existed in China since the 3rd century B.C. The sounds of Chinese opera are very rhythmic in

nature and the singing style is surprising to Western ears. Strolling through a tourist market anywhere in China and you can usually find some small masks of the opera faces to purchase and take home as a souvenir. The coloration and lines of these painted masks indicate characteristics of that role in the opera - sickly or trustworthy or impulsive or stubborn, for example. Masks are not unique to Chinese culture, and I really enjoy seeing the different uses and styles of masks as I travel to new places in the world.



Hong Kong person wearing mask in October;



Hong Kong person wearing mask this week

In October, the Hong Kong government, in response to actions on the streets by citizens wearing masks, as shown in the left-handed picture, issued a law forbidding mask-wearing within Hong Kong. Today, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong insists that law remains in effect, although Hong Kong courts found it unconstitutional. Regardless of a law or not, the streets and trains of Hong Kong are now filled with mask wearers, as in the right-side photo, seeking to avoid infection by the coronavirus while needing to travel through the city. Each of these masks, how they are worn, and where they are

面具

miànjù

The literal translation of the Chinese characters for the word "mask" is *face-tool*. We often talk about ourselves as God's instruments (*tools*) in the world to be doing His mission. Missionary is one important vocation, as are parent, child, worker, and more. God's toolbox of His people includes a variety of *tools* (us!) that he calls and equips for various purposes throughout His creation. Luther wrote (LW6:10) that as we are called by the Gospel and exercise our response-abilities, we are "masks of God" through whom he is caring for His creation. As you "work" today, take joy that God has a chosen for you to work as His mask - his face - towards reaching all people you touch with comfort and grace in Christ.

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worn, gives us some indication of characteristics of the wearer: filled with feelings of injustice, fear of illness, uncertainty of the future, lack of trust in people in proximity, and many more.

As a Christ-sent missionaries, part of the role God gives us is to be present with people with the love of Christ and His Word in such a way that they realize that Jesus sees them under whatever external masks and layers of mask-paint they have donned or spread to cover the brokenness and sin in their lives. That knowledge, covered with grace, over time, grants them hope for eternity and trust in a God who is trustworthy.

Sunday School

One of the problems I run into as a missionary is that I sometimes compartmentalize the various aspects of ministry in which I participate. I have specific roles that I serve for the Mission of Christ Network team. They include directing the Concordia Mission Institute training for missionaries and Field Lead for some of our mission partners serving in Asia. I focus my newsletter updates on these activities because I feel that my prayer partners are somehow especially supporting those ministry aspects. I teach various groups during the week. Some are outreach groups of students who are not Christian and some are discipleship groups. I am a mother and the wife of a pastor.

How do I separate the Christian nurturing of my children and my prayerful support of congregational ministry, including Sunday School teacher and musician, from my “official” roles with MCN? I typically do not write about congregational ministry roles in my newsletters because those are things that I would do as a member anyway. Since this newsletter specifically touches on the idea of vocation, it is a good time for me to bring these all into a holistic combination of how God has called and placed me in Hong Kong at this time. This includes facilitating the Sunday School team. In this role I communicate with the teaching team and lead group opening for our community’s youngest people of faith. Each Sunday I have a group of 5-20 children who start with Luther’s Morning prayer song, talk together about Bible literacy, observe the color and architecture of the church and season, and learn a memory Bible verse song before being sent off to their age-level classrooms. I am thankful to sing or play piano for worship. Thanks be to God for the way he forms each of us as a unique “tool” to meet the needs of witness, life together, and compassion where he has placed us. Thanks be to God for each of you who prayerfully partner with me, my family, and this community in sharing the Gospel here in Hong Kong and beyond.

Prayers

- Schools in Hong Kong have been closed since January 25th and will remain closed until at least April 20th. Please pray for the educators who are straining to find ways to meet the learning needs of students so they don’t fall behind in the local system during this time of isolation due to the coronavirus.
- Please pray for the continued efforts of containment worldwide, that lives be spared and the spread of the virus would end.
- Prayers for the Christian faithful in those communities directly impacted by illness, that they witness love and hope through Christ in the midst of isolation and loss.

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