



"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Ephesians 3:14-21 ESV

Paul's "prayer for spiritual strength" for the Christians in Ephesus was the theme for the recent ALEA (Asia Lutheran Education Association) conference, which I had the privilege of attending last month. Over a hundred educators, administrators, ministry leaders and non-profit workers assembled together in Hanoi, Vietnam in mid-September to share ideas and encourage each other in the work we have been called to. I was also invited to help lead one of the workshop sessions, together with my colleagues Persephone James and Beka House from CWEF and Concordia International School Shanghai.

Just before the conference began, we were also able to celebrate and thank God with everyone at Concordia International School Hanoi, as its beautiful new campus was dedicated. I reflected back to the last time I had been in Vietnam – over 8 years ago, just a few weeks after I had arrived in Hong Kong to begin my service with LCMS. An international school in Hanoi was still just an idea at that point. What a joy to see what He has done and is doing in that place!

The conference was a welcome shot of encouragement and spiritual strengthening during a very hectic period. August and September are typically extremely full of activity at CWEF –

- returning to China and trying to catch up on many things after summer travels in the U.S.
- preparing for and helping to lead our annual CWEF all-staff meeting in Hong Kong

- finalizing all the planning and budgeting for education and health development projects in Cambodia and China for the new fiscal (and school) year
- preparing for and helping to lead our annual collaboration with Concordia International School Shanghai – TRIBES service trips at the end of September with CISS high school students and teachers, this year to two of our project sites in Yunnan and Guangdong province, China.

And in the middle of all of that we also received the news from Persephone James, CWEF's executive director, that she will be stepping down in late January and will be repatriating to the U.S. to care for her ailing father. We affirm that this is the right decision for her and her family, and we also wish she could stay! Persephone has been a great leader for us in her brief time with CWEF and has been an awesome supporter and encourager for me personally and in my work. We'll miss her dearly.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Persephone – thanksgiving that God allowed her to serve with us during this season, and blessings and protection as she prepares to complete her service in Asia and to continue her service in the U.S. with her dad and family.
- For CWEF's board of directors and regional LCMS leadership – wisdom as they seek out a new executive director for CWEF.
- For everyone at Concordia International School Hanoi – thanksgiving for their new campus and blessing as they carry out His mission.
- For Coco's dad – protection and good recovery from surgery.
- For me – spiritual strength, good health and protection as I help lead CWEF through more transition.

Thank you so much for your support!

Josh, Coco and John

