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“Masks of God” to Unmask His Word

Children are back to school in Japan. And the teachers are facing challenges. A recent TV news segment showed a Japanese teacher of English asking his masked students, “Do you have colored pencils?” The students respond, “I have many colored pencils.” The teacher commented later that, without visual cues, he has great difficulty assessing their language proficiency.

How *do* you teach students wearing masks then? Making unmasked recorded responses on an iPad—in the school hallway—was one strategy demonstrated for us viewers of the news segment. Of course, the ideal is unmasked communication.

UNMASKING GOD’S WORD

We in the LCMS want to share the Gospel “unmasked” in Asia. However, some of our rich theological resources are “masked” by language barriers that muffle transmission. But unlike the coronavirus, which can be life-depriving, we *want* the life-giving Gospel to spread. How do we unmask them? Through translations, naturally.

At the present time, many of our partner churches have God’s Word, Luther’s Small Catechism and often, hymns, and perhaps hymnals in their own language. However, for theological education and the training of pastors, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are eager for more resources to be translated and distributed. That is what those eighty plus Lutheran resources projects are all about, that we have written about before, and that Dan is helping to coordinate. Which brings us to those other masks.

“MASKS OF GOD”

You and me. *We* are the “masks of God” in this world. Now, I hadn’t heard of this phrase until the other day from Dan. He explained that Luther used it in reference to God working through us, his agents, each in his or her particular vocation.

Of course, I wanted to learn more and consequently happened upon Gene Vieth’s [excellent article](#) on vocation, which explains:

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- *TIM (Together in Mission) congregations for their sustaining support.*

WE PRAISE GOD FOR:

- *God's blessings of His clear teaching as witnessed in our Catechism.*
- *Concord in doctrine and practice as we work with various partner church bodies.*

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- *Generous support so that mission project funds can be unfrozen.*
- *The emotional and physical wellbeing of our LCMS missionaries during the pandemic.*

NEWSLETTERS INFO

Want to catch up? Here's our archive link: tiny.cc/dvv9lz

Want to self-subscribe? Go here to receive your own email newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/ddOobf>

To be ADDED or REMOVED from our mailing list, you can also send an email message to daniel.jastram@lcms.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.

To support the LCMS through the work of Daniel Jastram, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

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

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Asia-Jastram."

Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/givenow/jastram.



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In other words, in his earthly kingdom, just as in his spiritual kingdom, God bestows his gifts through means. God ordained that human beings be bound together in love, in relationships and communities existing in a state of interdependence. In this context, God is providentially at work caring for his people, each of whom contributes according to his or her God-given talents, gifts, opportunities, and stations. *Each thereby becomes what Luther terms a "mask of God"* (italics mine).

Aha! As Americans, we take pride in being "self-sufficient," but we really do need each other. And as we each serve our neighbor in our vocation, we function as "masks of God." Veith also points out that God does NOT need our good works, but our neighbor does. So, too, as your agents in Asia, we work together to carry out the Great Commission to share the Gospel with our "neighbors" in Asia.

The other day, shortly after Dan had digitized a Japanese catechism, a pastor in the States contacted him about possible catechetical material for a Japanese fiancée in his congregation. You can imagine how delighted Dan was to have this resource just recently available to share online—and in an unexpected corner of the world. It is truly a blessing to give and receive support as we serve Christ in our own vocations—as "masks of God." Our prayer is that, even as we all serve our neighbor in many different capacities, as "masks of God" in love and care, we will also work together to unmask God's message of salvation for all the world to see and hear.

~Dan and Joan Jastram
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Did you know....? We received this idea from a current supporter (and fundraiser!): You can support Jastram-Asia mission work through asset-based giving. Contact LCMS Mission Advancement (mission.advancement@lcms.org, 888-930-4438) or the LCMS Foundation (info@lfnf.org, 800-325-7912) for further information. Or, explore the possibilities yourself online at <https://www.lcms.org/make-a-gift/asset-based-giving>.