



Inspired

to Share the Gospel

BY BECKY WEHRSPANN, FEATURES EDITOR

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.
Matthew 28:19-20

Melinda (Mindy) Thews and Hannah Shull had similar beginnings — attending Lutheran elementary schools and graduating from CUW, Concordia University Wisconsin (although a few years apart). Their education backgrounds inspired both of them to pursue careers in Lutheran education, where they are now joyfully sharing the Gospel with the children and youth at Concordia Middle School in Chiayi, Taiwan. The two women are among the recipients of the Women’s Witness and Mercy Asia LWML Mission Grant through Mission Central. They have graciously accepted our invitation to share their unique perspective of a Lutheran school on a small island in Southeast Asia, as we prayerfully support them in the work God has called them to do.



Hannah Shull teaching Sunday school at Salvation Lutheran Church in Chiayi, Taiwan. Chiayi is considered by locals to be the “country” of Taiwan, even with a population of almost 280,000! Hannah lives on the campus of Concordia Middle School with other American missionaries. She does most of her shopping in a little village nearby, riding her bike to pick up everyday ingredients from the grocery store, and fruits and vegetables from the stands along the street.



Mindy Thews with students at Concordia Middle School. Mindy and another American missionary share an apartment, which includes typical Western amenities like a washing machine and dryer. One thing she misses, however, is an oven for baking, since she enjoys cooking for herself. She and her roommate use two small counter-top ovens (slightly larger versions of an Easy Bake Oven). Pineapple season has become one of her favorite seasons!

How did you become a missionary?

Hannah: I grew up with a father who was a Lutheran elementary school educator and principal. Having attended Lutheran schools throughout my early years, I gained a deep-rooted desire to become a teacher. While at CUW I began feeling a pull toward work in the mission field. A dear friend had grown up in Taiwan, and I knew the story of how her mother and aunt became Christians. I knew there were more who needed to hear the life-saving Gospel. I wanted everyone to know the gift of grace that Jesus gives through His Word, Baptism, and the Holy Supper. I’ve been a missionary for more than two years, all in Taiwan. Taiwan, thankfully, is a place where I can share my faith without having to hide or feel government oppression.

Mindy: I grew up in rural Wisconsin on a dairy farm. In third grade, I knew I wanted to become a Lutheran educator. While attending CUW, I had the opportunity to student teach at Hong Kong International School. That inspired me to consider serving overseas. I trusted God’s timing would be perfect to call me to the mission field, and, after 22 years, God opened the door to Taiwan.

Tell us about your responsibilities.

Hannah: I teach kindergarten through fifth graders the Bible, English-grammar, and conversation. I also help lead an English Bible study and on-campus student fellowship. I helped launch a Sunday school at Salvation Lutheran Church in Chiayi. It is easy to get caught up with all the work to be done, but I constantly remind myself why I have been called to Taiwan — to share the Good News of Jesus; I am called to show the love of Christ through my actions and words.

Mindy: My primary responsibilities are Bible and English classes. Old Testament studies reveal the coming Savior. New Testament stories focus on the life of Christ, His suffering, and resurrection. I often include Scripture in English classes as we study poetry, figurative language, parts of speech, and dialogue. God’s love for all people is real; I love bringing that message! I also assist with some responsibilities at Salvation Lutheran Church. A primary task is English Bible studies for children through adults. Congregation members, CMS students, neighborhood residents, and Christians from other churches join us to practice English and learn more about God’s Word.

What inspires you to share the Gospel?

Hannah: Sharing the Gospel message in my daily life is easy because I teach students every day. My students have Bible class once a week; however, they all know why I’m here. My actions and morals show where my faith is founded, and I pray that it is made known to those around me. My inspiration primarily comes from the Word of God and the promises it offers. He gives us words of action, comfort, and assurance — assurance that the Gospel is for everyone and is to be shared (Romans 1:16).

Mindy: I’m able to share the Gospel in Bible and English classes in both the junior and senior high school. The Great Commission is my ultimate source of inspiration. Jesus gives us a job to do — take His message to all nations. Jesus uses clear and simple directions. As a teacher, I’m pretty fond of that! I’ll go where He calls me. I’ll tell others. Even better, Jesus is with me no matter how tough the day may be. I’m not alone.



We remember before
our God and Father
your work produced
by faith, your labor
prompted by love,
and your endurance
inspired by hope in our
Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (NIV)



What is worship like in Taiwan?

Mindy: I worship at Salvation Lutheran Church in Chiayi. Pastor Alex Wu, a St. Louis seminary graduate and Taiwanese native, leads services. He is specially equipped to minister to both the Taiwanese and Americans. Services are conducted in Chinese, with English translation provided during the sermon. Scripture readings are displayed in both Mandarin and English. Pastor leads the liturgy in Chinese, and the congregation responds in both languages. Hymns are also sung simultaneously in both languages. It's beautiful!

How has the community of Chiayi inspired you?

Hannah: My kindergarteners are so inspiring! They are always excited to hear Bible stories for the first time. After Easter, "Jesus is alive" is shouted during class for a month! Although Taiwan is primarily non-Christian and deeply rooted in folk religion — Taoism, Buddhism, and ancestor worship — people of Taiwan are respectful and receptive to hearing the Gospel. I think that being in a place long-term plays a role in the community's openness to hearing the Gospel. As relationships grow, I have more opportunities to share my faith in love. Of course, I know that the work of creating faith is not my own, and God works through imperfect people just like me.

Mindy: Christian students at CMS are a huge inspiration. Most are not Christians, yet those who are live a life that is counter to their culture. They are bold in their faith when peers pressure them to conform to the non-Christian world. They value God's love and boldly share it. Taiwan embodies a culture of community, and your first community is your family. Often, households are comprised of three generations living together, and personal actions reflect on the reputation of the family as a whole. In Taiwan, family is a complicated mix — a source of strength, support, anxiety, and friction — that's both beautiful and messy.

Please share a meaningful event as a result of sharing the Gospel.

Hannah: While teaching the story of the thief on the cross, my [second grade] students began to ask questions. "Miss Hannah, these people did bad things. Will they go down, down, down (hell)?" I explained that the thief on the cross knew he did a bad thing, but he also knew Who Jesus was and that He had the power to save. I said, "Even though he is a bad man, he loves Jesus and knows that he will go up, up, up (heaven)!" The children were fascinated with great hope. One girl chimed in, "Love Jesus, go up, up, up?" I said, "Yes!" She quickly threw her arms up in the air and shouted, "I love Jesus!"

Mindy: My Taiwanese friend, Boni, is a particular inspiration. Boni challenged her family dynamics more than 20 years ago when she became a Christian. She began sharing the Good News with her family, and her mother became a Christian, but Boni's father remained strongly opposed. This past year, Boni's 90-year-old father was baptized, after more than 20 years of prayer, witnessing, and support of other Christians. He had an accident that required months of recuperation. During that time, Pastor Alex regularly visited him, sharing the Gospel, praying, and instructing from *Luther's Small Catechism*. Her father expressed an interest in being baptized. Boni's relief was clear — her father was a member of God's family. I rejoiced with Boni and her family. Her father is part of a new community, the body of Christ.

What encouragement can you give to others who are considering entering the mission field?

Hannah: God calls His children to many places to serve as His hands and feet. Seek the Lord in His Word, and do not stray from it. In all the struggles of life, keep His promises for you and all people at the forefront of your mind. In love, our God comforts us, peace He gives us, and hope is always abounding in His name.

Mindy: Support from the U.S. is incredible. We have many dedicated supporters eager to financially support and prayerfully encourage missionaries. I am both humbled and grateful to be given an opportunity such as this to fulfill the Great Commission. Q