

COMMON GROUND

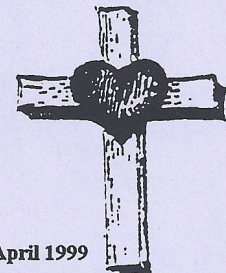
Newsletter of United Campus Ministry

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Letter from Tammy Chang, 1998 Graduate of UAF and UCM:

Dear All,

Well, as always, life is full of challenges! But as I take time to reflect, these challenges are really great blessings in disguise. Let me elaborate. Yesterday, it was decided that all of today's classes would be cancelled. This is not the first time something like this has happened to me, but it is the first time that the option to go to the office instead of the school under these circumstances was offered: I gladly accepted! You see, the office is an eight minute bus ride from my apartment (the office pays for the expense), I can write letters and do office work, and not be bothered by any nosey people who always want to look over my shoulder (like my head school teacher). The school is 30 minutes away by train, I pay my own way, I can't really do as I please, etc. Clearly, having an office day is a much more appealing option than going to school with nothing to do.

My JTE and I agreed that I would call my office to ask for permission while the JTE would inform my head teacher of the decision to go to the office. Somewhere in the communication process, the lines were not connected properly. My head teacher basically told me that going to the office was not an option and it would be better for the students to know that I was in the school (even though I would have no contact with them). My office is my boss, not the head teacher, I thought to myself. I was very bitter by the head teacher's controlling nature and unwillingness to let me do, as I wanted. Usually, I don't lose my cool over such situations. But yesterday I broke the tradition. I was REALLY fuming! As I packed up my belongings for the day and headed outside to retreat from this mess, God presented me with an awesome sight. The sun was shining. In Akita, it is rare to see the blue sky, let alone the sun! But there it was shining in all its glory. I could even see the neighboring mountains. In all situations, God is with us and reminds us that there is more glory to be experienced than what we can immediately see.

To change gears a little, here's an article called "A Pair of Pictures" from the JET (Japanese Exchange Teaching) Christian's newsletter called *JETS on FIRE!* By Ha Lam:

Sometimes, when I am quiet and still enough, God teaches me through pictures. Here are two I'd like to share with you. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. The sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10: 11, 27-8. Picture this: It's a beautiful afternoon. A girl decides to go on a bike ride with her dog. The dog is on a leash, but the girl lets the leash go. The dog runs around, sniffing here and there to her heart's content. Suddenly, the girl spots a cat nearby. Luckily her dog has not noticed yet. She quickly calls the dog, "Valentine, come here!" The dog obeys; the girl sighs -- happy and proud that her dog has obeyed.

God has used this everyday event to show me how He feels when I obey. Just as I am my dog's master, so God is our master. More than anything, I want to give my dog the freedom she craves to run around happily. But when I let go of her leash, I know that she has a mind of her own. I would hope that I have trained her and loved her enough that she will obey when she hears my voice. Now, just think of what might have happened if her dog hadn't obeyed her. The dog would have run after the cat and the girl would have been very angry. The pleasant afternoon would have been ruined and the bike ride would have been cut short. It is the same as when we do not obey. We make Him angry and we run straight into things best avoided. Valentine had not seen the cat; she knew only that I had called her to come to me. So it is with God and us; he sees things that we do not. When God lets us go, He trusts us to listen for His voice and respond when He commands. We must trust that He knows what is best for us and obey Him. How happy He is when we, His children, obey so that He can trust us and give us more.

The other picture was given to me at the Karuizawa retreat. I love meeting Christians from all over Japan at those retreats. The only downside to this is when I hear that lots of Christians are located near each other in one ken and I get envious. I ask God, "Hey, why can't I be in a ken with lot of cool Christians? His answer came to me in prayer and during a conversation with a cool sister. (Thanks, Claire!)

He told me to look up at the stars. So I looked up. What I saw awed and humbled me. When we look up at the stars, they seem to be carelessly thrown across the sky -- some are in groups, others are just shining there by themselves. The thing that awed and humbled me is that they AREN'T just carelessly there just as we aren't carelessly placed in Japan. God placed the stars and us exactly where He wants us to be. Each star has its job; its job is to shine -- not to question.

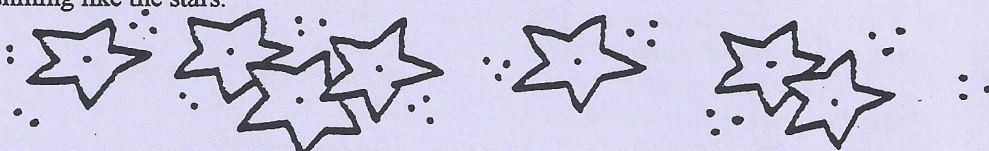
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When you get lonely and wonder why you are where you are, just remember, your job, too, is to shine for Jesus. And when you might ask, "God, when will I meet someone special?" Look up at the sky and if you're lucky, you'll see two stars coming together in a burst of brightness. God's got it under control. He knows the perfect timing for when two stars come together, so it will be with you. So look up and take heart. You are where you are for a reason. How lopsided the sky would be if all the stars were together!
(End of article)

Going back to my story, God has a plan for me to be here at Akita, even though it wasn't apparent at first. As I know now, it DOES make a difference to the students, that I would come to their school knowing that I wouldn't have any classes with them. The students are very proud of their school and desperately want for me to be just as proud. I am. As Ha wrote in her article, as Christians we are like the stars; there is a purpose for our existence. I, too, think we are like stars. As it states in Philippians 2:14-16, we are to do all things without complaining or arguing, so that we can be beacons of God's love; blameless and shining like the stars.

With love, hope and prayers,

Tammy



Special Upcoming Events!!

CORRECTION

EXTRA! EXTRA! Join us in celebrating **Matt Weaver and Aimee Munn's wedding!** This blessed occasion will take place at St. Paul United Methodist Church on Saturday, April 10th at 2 P.M. I repeat, 2 P.M. (Not at 1 p.m. as printed in the last newsletter edition.) Reception will follow at the Dog Musher's Hall on Farmers Loop. Call 474-7804 for more information or to carpool.

The Last Leadership meeting of the semester will be on Sunday, April 11th at 3 p.m. in Gruening 307. This is an especially important meeting as we will reflect on this past year and start to envision next Fall!

Contradancing! Meet at the office at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 17th. We will carpool to Alaskaland. The cost is FREE for first timers/\$3.00 for all others. Bring a clean pair of shoes for dancing.

Annual Meeting and Lasagna Dinner will be held Sunday, April 18th. We will kick-off this fun event for everyone at 4 p.m. at University Community Presbyterian Church. Meet downstairs in the big Education Building located next to Beaver Sports on College Road. We will prepare dinner, have a chance to meet UCM donors and board members, and sing some favorite songs. Hope to see you there!

24 Hour Fast/12 Hour Day to Pray will take place 7 p.m. Wed. April 21st - 7 p.m. Thurs. April 22nd. Take part in this special time for clarity and focus on God! Please sign up or drop in to fill one (or more) 30-minute prayer slot(s) in the office from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday. At 7 p.m. on Thursday we will all meet at the office to pray, discuss the fast, and go out to dinner! Bring \$\$\$ for dinner. **For further insight, testimonies, and discussion on fasting, come to a special Vespers service on Tuesday, April 20th at 7:30 p.m. upstairs in the Lola Tilly Commons.**

Finals CARE Package Preparation will take place on Sunday, April 25th. Meet at the UCM office at 5 p.m. to help put our packages together and enjoy some pizza afterwards! As we have discovered, many hands make for light work! And don't forget about our flag football game at 9 p.m.!©

Celebration Cookout! Meet at the office at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, April 30th for transportation to David and Clarice Moore's home. Get ready for a fun evening of games, good food, and friends. Cost: FREE. Ultimate Frisbee, anyone?

Leadership is out to Lunch! Anyone who was involved in Leadership this semester is invited to lunch at Food Factory on Saturday, May 1st. We will meet at the office at 11:30 a.m. Come celebrate a successful semester!

The UCM Intramural Flag Football Team's Season Schedule:

(UAF Policy requires signing up at SRC to play at least 24 hrs. prior to game)

Sunday, April 4th @ 8 p.m.

Sunday, April 11th @ 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 18th @ 9 p.m.

Sunday, April 25th @ 9 p.m.

Come out and play or cheer us on!

