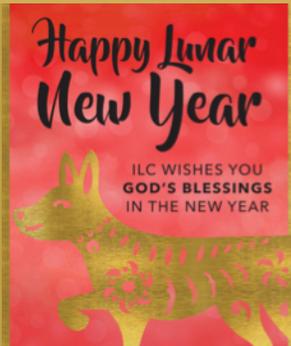


# CHANGING PATHS

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*left - a poster from our local church denoting this year as the Year of the Dog, one of the 12 animals used in one traditional calendar system; center - Lily and Olivia pose with a statue of the Winter Olympics mascot outside the train station near our house; right - one of hundreds of giant paper lanterns on display during the Lantern Festival which takes place 15 days after the Lunar New Year (it is an orange crab)*

The Lunar New Year in certain Asian countries (such as Taiwan and Korea), though celebrated by most in the manner of traditional folk religion with strong Buddhist overtones, evokes connections to light and all things new - meaningful analogies to our life in Christ. Other symbols are significant this time of year in these cultures, such as the animal that corresponds to a 12-year Chinese zodiac calendar. Popular animals you may have heard of are the dragon, tiger, and monkey. This year marks the Year of the Dog. According to this belief system, people born during this year are honest, just and faithful. (These themes, interestingly, also are evident in depictions of canines in later Medieval and Renaissance art.)

Looking ahead in the midst of the Lunar New Year, we are reminded of the newness we have in Christ, particularly a new, restored relationship with God through faith in what Jesus has done for the forgiveness of our sins. We always seek new relationships and opportunities to share this beautiful gospel message. And even so, it isn't solely about something 'new' - it is about being faithful in the work we have now, even if our callings in life may not always seem so novel or fresh. Furthermore, it is good to remember that though the Lord doesn't call us all to the same vocation, no matter the location we are called to be faithful to Him, to the faith He has given us, and in our service to others.

As the girls start up a new school semester, as Dee Dee steps into some new opportunities with expanded service at local orphanages, and as Matt learns about a new addition to his responsibilities, we ask for your continued support. You show that support through cards, notes, messages, gifts, concern and prayers and this partnership goes forth by God's grace into the new year. The Christmas and birthday cards and gifts you sent were humbly and joyfully received and we are working our way through our responses of thanksgiving. May the Lord of Lights bless and keep us all in the true knowledge of His Word revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.



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