

TOM PARK

An interview that exposes the viewpoints and struggles of an international student who was led by the Holy Spirit to attend the Educational system of the WELS.



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Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

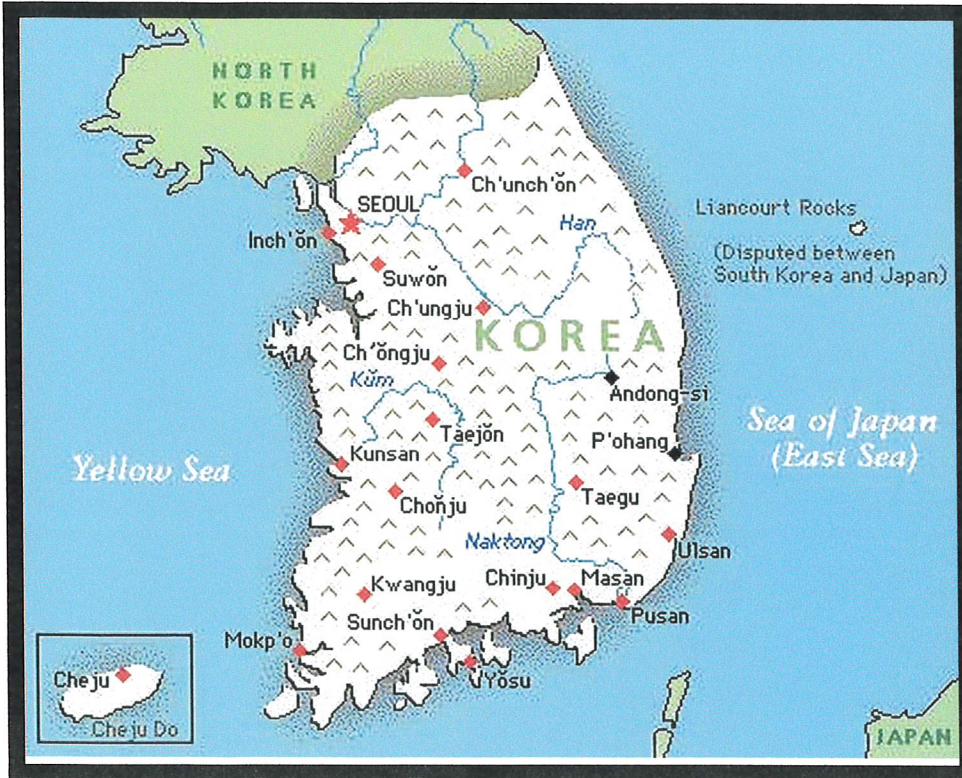
Dam (Tom) Park is just one of the many unique building blocks with which God makes his Holy church. He was born on January 12, 1979 in Seoul, Korea. As the only child, his parents not only wanted the best possible education for their son but also the best career opportunities. They believed that the United States offered both. In 1992 the Park family sent Tom to Hawaii so that he could attend the *Niu Valley Intermediate School* in Honolulu.

At the end of the grade school education in Hawaii Tom was interested in continuing his education in the United States. He came into contact with some distant cousins in Seattle, Washington, and in 1994 moved there. The family with which he was staying inquired from their Presbyterian pastor if he could recommend to them a good high school. The pastor who had sent one of his own children to a Wisconsin Synod grade school suggested *Evergreen Lutheran High School* in Des Moines, Washington. In the fall of 1994 the Holy Spirit led Tom Park to enroll at *Evergreen Lutheran High School* and from there his spiritual journey in the WELS began.

Tom Park's story is so intriguing and moving because of the many challenges that he faced. The influences that he was exposed to in his youth do not lend themselves compatible with the teachings of the WELS. The Park family raised Tom to be Catholic and continue to practice their religion in Korea. While Tom was living in Korea the Korean Methodist Church and the Church of Christ had an impact upon him. The Korean culture also has a large Buddhist influence that is prevalent. Along with all of this there is not much support from the family for becoming a Lutheran pastor. Yet, the Holy Spirit works in ways that we will never be able to

comprehend and allowed Tom to come into contact with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

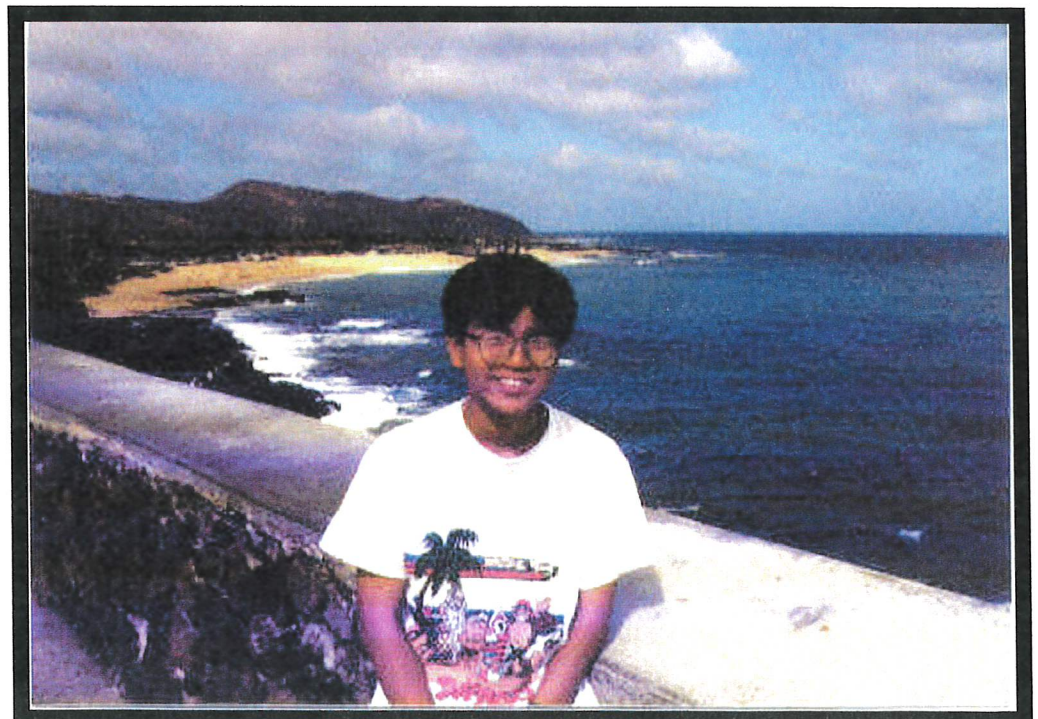
The following interview was conducted in order to get a different and very unique viewpoint concerning the WELS educational system. It is the goal of this paper and video to educate individual members of the synod on how we can better assist minority cultures who are led by the Spirit to train in our schools. It is also the goal that the information and insights that Tom presents can be used by the WELS educational system as whole to better prepare themselves to train international students and be even more sensitive to their needs and concerns. I am confident that all who have the opportunity to view the interview will be uplifted spiritually and encouraged through Tom's faith and dedication that he has for his Lord and Savior.



Tom Park's home is Seoul, Korea. His father and mother are currently living there along with his extended family.

1993

Tom attended grammar school in Hawaii. Here he is enjoying the view in Honolulu.



June 6, 1998

Tom graduated from Evergreen
Lutheran High School in Kent,
Washington.



2002

Tom celebrates
his graduation
from Martin
Luther College in
New Ulm,
Minnesota.

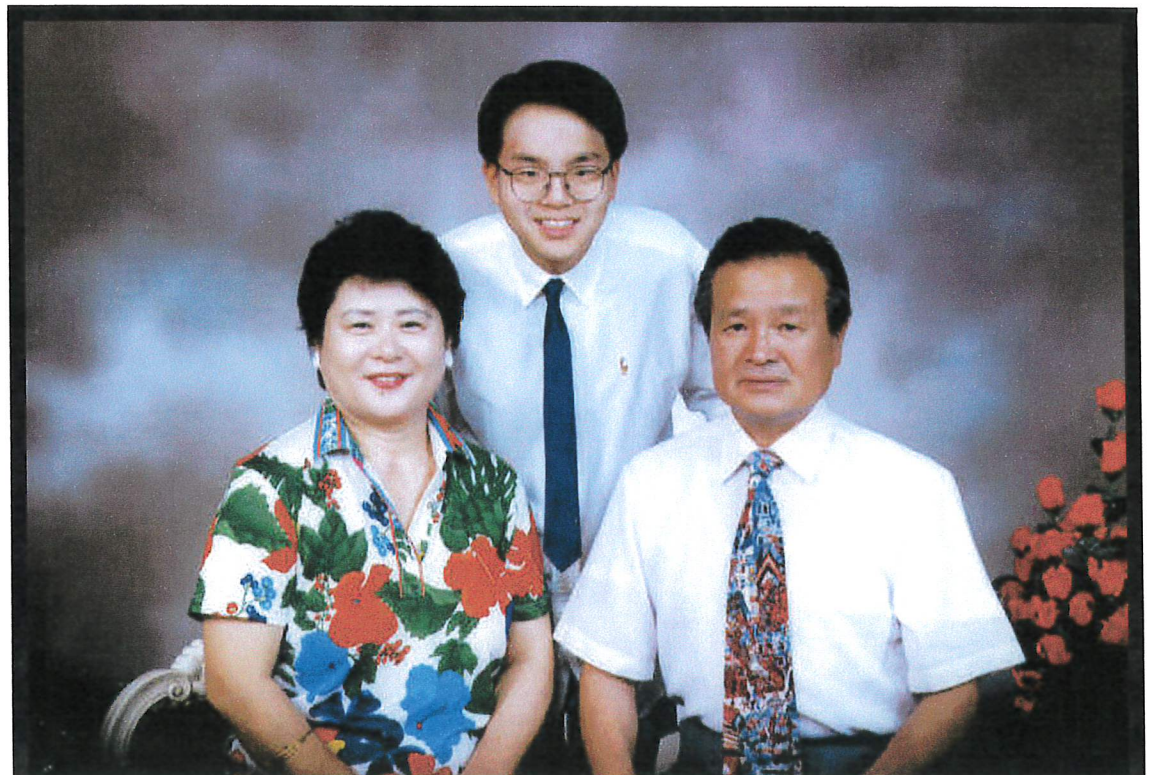


June 19, 2001

Tom was able to travel back to Seoul, Korea before his final year at Martin Luther College.



Tom is seen here with his Father and Mother.



The WELS Educational Experience From the Viewpoint of Dam Park

- I. Personal Life of Dam Park
 - A. Korea and family
 - B. Reason for coming to the United states
 - C. Sentiment of living in the Unites States
- II. Dam Park's involvement with the WELS
 - A. Introduction to the WELS
 - a. Contact with WELS
 - b. Influences in the WELS
 - B. Evaluation of the WELS Educational system on a whole
 - a. Obstacles
 - b. Positives compared with Korean education
 - C. Ways that WELS can improve in the Area of accommodating different ethnic groups and cultures
 - a. Support from faculty
 - b. Encouragement for peers
 - D. Future
 - a. Parental feelings of the ministry
 - b. Return to Korea or remain in US for ministry