

The Family that Delivered Love to the World

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We are now beginning the 125th year since Kwansei Gakuin's birth in Harada-no-Mori near Kobe. However, in 1854, before Kwansei Gakuin was even imagined, a young couple decided to leave their home in America, not to find better jobs, freedom from oppression, or a more comfortable life, but to share their faith and their love with people living on the other side of the earth. It is hard to imagine how much courage it took to leave family, friends, and familiar surroundings to brave a long and dangerous ocean voyage to live among people with totally different languages and cultures. However, this is what James and Mary Lambuth did soon after they were married.

The world of the mid-nineteenth century was shrinking quickly. Trade within countries and between them began to grow, and there was an increasing cultural exchange between America and Europe. Many Christian organizations began to look outside their own countries to address problems of poverty and lack of education or medical care, as well as to "spread the good news" of Christianity. Of course, some of these missionary efforts reflected a sense of superiority—going out to save the poor, ignorant, unbelievers— but others were rooted in a genuine love for their fellow human beings in faraway lands.

In this era, James and Mary Lambuth arrived in Shanghai, a very international port city, and two months later, their first child, Walter, was born. Growing up in Shanghai with his American parents, it is no wonder that during his life, Walter would feel comfortable working with people from many different cultures. In spite of the difficulties of international travel, he and his family made strong connections with people in various countries. In Japan, their American and Japanese colleagues collaborated in a multitude of projects, including the establishment of Kwansei Gakuin in 1889. Kobe in those days must have felt like a very international city too, with a harbor to welcome ships from around the world.

Although we assume that we are now in the era of "globalization," this process of interaction among people from different countries, regions, and cultures began thousands of years ago. The important point, both then and now, is how we interact with those who are different from ourselves. We can learn from the example shown by the Lambuth family, to base our encounters on an attitude of love and respect for others.

(Chancellor)