



Jan - Feb 2024

SERVING THE LORD IN

# Japan

News from  
Pastor Dan and Joan Jastram

<https://www.lcms.org/jastram>



Pastor Dan and Joan Jastram

**Rev. Jastram serves** as the  
Asia Lutheran Resource  
Coordinator:

*Making Lutheran resources of  
theology and worship  
available in Asia.*



To be added to or removed from  
this mailing list, send an email  
message to:

[daniel.jastram@lcms.org](mailto:daniel.jastram@lcms.org)

with the word ADD or REMOVE  
in the subject line.

Here's our newsletter archive link:

<https://bit.ly/3Xkd9W8>

Link to join our mailing list:

<https://tinyurl.com/47vyhnae>

888-THE LCMS • [lcms.org](http://lcms.org) • [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org)



## Expanding Horizons

*I* couldn't help but rejoice greatly  
over how things turned out.  
"How good and pleasant it is . . ."  
according to Ps. 133:1 !!

In early February, I took an  
exploratory trip north of Tokyo to  
become acquainted with the third of  
the three Japanese pastors serving the  
small confessional Lutheran Ev.  
Christian Church entity here in Japan.

Pastor Nidaira serves two  
congregations in Tochigi Prefecture,  
one in Ashikaga, the other in  
Utsunomia.



Ashikaga, Tochigi Prefecture

What a blessing to find a well-  
crafted sermon proclaiming Christ as  
Savior, clear distinctions of Law and  
Gospel, the traditional Japanese  
Lutheran liturgy, and solid catechesis  
following worship! At the same time,  
what a great need for prayer that God  
would bless the faithful ministry of His  
Word and Sacraments in such a  
resistant culture!

For those visiting Japan, the land  
and culture appears to be steeped in  
religion with shrines, temples, and  
sculptured images around every  
corner, in back yards, in the  
households, and along the country  
paths.

Paradoxically however, most  
Japanese consider themselves non-  
religious and simply follow societal  
"customs" without any obligations of  
specific doctrines or membership.

Their "religious viewpoint" of life  
along with their customs seem to lie  
on a moveable point somewhere  
between the religious and the non-  
religious depending on circumstance  
and perspective: sometimes as  
"Japanese spirituality", sometimes as  
superstitious folkways, sometimes as  
traditional customs, festivals, or  
holidays with religious origins but  
tenuous religious weight.

What functions as a glass barrier is  
that Japanese-ness seems embedded,  
in part, in its distinction against the  
"foreign" Christian faith.

At almost every funeral, ritual  
reverence for and communication  
with one's ancestors beyond the  
grave endures as the pervasive,  
religious substratum of the culture.

This is a major challenge for the  
proclamation of new life in Christ who  
was crucified for our trespasses and  
raised for our justification.



Utsunomia, Tochigi Prefecture

## Prayer and Thanksgiving:

- thanksgiving for the faithful ministry of the three pastors of the Lutheran Ev. Christian Church and specifically for Rev. Nidaira at Ashikaga and Utsunomia;
- prayer for wisdom in ministry due to the cultural barrier between old traditions and a new life in Christ;
- thanksgiving for new brethren in Christ: Barnett, Hetland, Terjesen;
- prayer for preparations with our Lutheran Theological Conference in Niigata coming up in May;
- thanksgiving for connections with LCMS member Matthew Strawn in Kyushu at great distance from Lutheran fellowship;
- thanksgiving for the privilege of Rev. Taguchi's attendance at the January CTS-FW Symposium series;
- prayer for those still suffering from the 7.5 magnitude January earthquake damage in the prefecture bordering Niigata;
- thanksgiving for Joan's three-week visit with family and grandchildren in the States;
- thanksgiving for wonderful headway on our newest translation project of Engelbrecht, *The Lutheran Difference* (CPH 2014) (about 55% completed);
- thanksgiving for God's blessings at our two current worship sites: Shinjuku and Yokosuka;
- thanksgiving for the faithful prayers and support provided by our LCMS Jastram-Asia mission partners.

## To support this LCMS mission work:

Give securely online through the LCMS page:

[lcms.org/givenow/jastram](https://lcms.org/givenow/jastram)



[L-to-R] Barnett (2), Jastram, Hetland; Terjesen (7)



## Growing Ministry

**I**n addition to occasional visitors, we are very pleased to welcome those staying in Japan for longer periods of time who often come from some distance in order to gather at our Shinjuku Tokyo worship site. Recently Cacey and Moeko Barnett (from the north), Matthew Hetland (from the south), and the Terjesen family from the Yokosuka military base, all found their way to us.

In January, we received news that a new LCMS military chaplain, Rev. Ryan Schnake, has begun serving in Okinawa Japan through the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. We are glad to entrust into his capable hands the work we have carried on there through our occasional visits these past two-and-a-half years.

At our current host congregation, I am particularly delighted that those who use only Japanese have a confessional, liturgical service available in the morning service with Pastor Yoshimura. Those who use only English have a confessional, liturgical service available in our twice-a-month Sunday afternoon service under my care. And those who are bilingual—

or who have invited someone to worship of either category—can worship at either service or at both depending on their preference. For example, on some occasions in the afternoon, everyone is either comfortably bilingual, or struggling to a greater or lesser degree with the English liturgy and sermon. So, for catechesis after the service we switched to Japanese for the greater comfort and understanding of those who were struggling. It reminds me that in heaven there will be those of many nations and languages all worshipping at the throne of Christ. ♦

Granddaughters Fiona and Salome at play during Joan's visit



**YOUR SUPPORT** is vital for our continued mission work in Japan: regular services at our worship sites, translation of theological resources, and nurturing relations with local Lutheran pastors facing individual challenges to the faith. We are humbly grateful for your continued prayers and support. **Thank you!**

Your missionaries, Dan and Joan Jastram

**"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil"**

(Eph. 6:11, First Sunday of Lent, Liturgical Verse).

[OR] Mail your tax-deductible gift to:

**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861**

Make checks payable to:

**The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod**

Mark checks:

**"Support of Asia-Jastram"**