



March - April 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.*



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Visitation Snapshots

In a totally typical Japanese small town, the sight of such a grand, magnificent cathedral, pictured above-left in the masthead, startled me.

I was visiting a well-catechized LCMS member far from Tokyo. After getting off the high-speed bullet train, I approached the suburban area by foot. The rice fields began to fade into farmhouses, homes, and a small business district. Suddenly there sprang into view this grand, magnificent cathedral!

In my excitement to learn more about this church, I was totally deflated to learn that a wedding industry company had purchased the building in Europe, shipped it to this location in Japan, and set it up with all the amenities to suit every desire of wedding planners, caterers, photographers, and customers.

Absolutely no worship or congregation associated with the building at all.

In fact, the lone desk clerk on duty asked me to explain the curious features of the sanctuary: "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus"; "Alpha and Omega"; "INRI" (Latin abbreviation for Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews); along with the carvings and stained glass.

The setting was grand. My sermon was off the cuff and to the point. But the lone congregant must have wondered greatly at the rich meaning imbedded in this European sacred space now used only for show.

By contrast, faithful Lutherans, sometimes scattered by great

distances, eagerly receive the Word and Sacrament even where no cathedral is present.

Whether far south in Kyushu or somewhat north in Gunma, we LCMS missionaries in far parts deliver life and salvation through pastoral visitation.



Numata, Gunma Prefecture

Again, on one such visit I was startled a second time by a humble roadside mirror firmly held in place near the fence by its living tree post: as you can see, the tree had over the years, grown completely around the supporting bar of the mirror.

In some strange way, both the cathedral and the mirror had come to share their incongruity of context.



Roadside Mirror

Prayer and Thanksgiving:

- thanksgiving for life and salvation in the Gospel administered through the visitation of missionary agents sent throughout the world by our supporting partners in mission;
- thanksgiving for the availability and growth of Lutheran resources to meet critical needs in Japan;
- thanksgiving for the start of our first online Japanese Small Catechism study group of 8-10 participants led by Rev. Taguchi;
- prayer for grace at the recent news that the Japan Lutheran College in Mitaka Tokyo will be closing after this academic year;
- thanksgiving for completion of our specially requested project for the translation of Shaw, *Women's Ordination Through the Lens of the Apostles' Creed* (LCMS Church Relations, 2023);
- thanksgiving for God's long-awaited arrangement of a translation proofreader with plans to start project work the middle of April;
- thanksgiving for God's blessings at our three current worship sites: Shinjuku (twice a month), Yokosuka (once a month), Numata (starting up, once a month);
- thanksgiving for our LCMS Asia regional director Rev. Charles Ferry and fellow LCMS Asia missionaries each with individual challenges and blessings;
- thanksgiving for the faithful prayers and support provided by our LCMS Jastram-Asia mission partners.

Lutheran Resources

In preparation for our May Lutheran Theological Conference in Niigata, I have assembled some Lutheran resources: plenty of Japanese Small Catechism booklets; four of the expensive Japanese Book of Concord volumes and four of the reasonably priced Japanese Small Catechism with Explanation books (translation of the LCMS 1943 version) for donation to the Kobari Niigata church lending library.

Our conference is organized according to the historic Lutheran "free conference" pattern in which those of various Lutheran backgrounds can meet for mutual discussion and understanding about unity in confession and practice without engaging in unionism in the process.

Our keynote speaker will be the Wyoming District President John Hill presenting six sessions on "Church and Ministry" interspersed with shorter presentations by designated participants about their local contexts of ministry.

Not to overlook Lutheran resources of the past, my long-standing ambition to accurately organize an up-to-date time-line chart

Chronology of Japan LCMS Career Missionaries

documenting the chronology of our past LCMS career missionaries in Japan, has finally borne fruit. It traces the continuous LCMS missionary presence in Japan—since its 1948 beginning to the present—of 79 LCMS missionary family units, surging to an all-time high in 1964 of 40 LCMS missionary units serving at the same time in Japan. What a cloud of witnesses to cheer on your current individual missionary unit here! ♦



May Conference Supplies

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

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

(Luke 24:32, Third Sunday of Easter, Liturgical Verse).

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