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Do I See Books on Their Desks?



JOAN AND DAN JASTRAM



DR JASTRAM'S CALL

Pastor Jastram serves as a manager for theological education in Asia, based in Tokyo, Japan. He assists the regional director in mission planning as well as developing, coordinating, and supporting theological educational activities; makes periodic visits to seminaries in the region; and supervises theological educators throughout Asia.



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Four dedicated seminary students in a dogmatics course at the Lutheran Theological Seminary and Training Center in Bagiuo, Philippines. (May 2019)

I don't think any of you are particularly surprised to see books in the classroom, right? Classroom textbooks are pretty basic after all. But having books to use is actually a little more challenging than would appear on the face of it.

Now, Dan was filling in again for LCMS missionary Roger James who visited the States for intensive studies. Rev. James is working on his doctorate in order to *assist and strengthen our sister church body in the area of theological education*. This is a major goal for LCMS mission work in Asia as well as the world.

But back to books. The Philippines climate is tropical, which means plenty of humidity—not a friend to textbooks, by any means. And ideally a seminary library would be air-conditioned to keep books in good condition. However, this is not available at this time and would require some serious renovation and expense, not to mention funds to maintain equipment. Perhaps electronic books, you might say? Well, perhaps if

students actually had access to computers, which is not always the case. And finally, students (and professors!) are often hard-put to find or purchase the necessary books because they can be scarce and expensive. The question therefore about how best to support our sister churches in carrying out theological education with regard to educational material does not lend itself to easy or quick solutions. But Dan, others on the Asia team and our Asian Lutheran brothers are grappling with this issue to find some solutions.

In the meantime, Dan has been tasked to develop a list of theological resources that can be a sort of gold standard as we (you and your missionaries) support both established partner seminaries as well as emerging training centers in Asia. These church bodies as well as we missionaries are grateful for your support in LCMS second-generation missionary work for theological education!

Changing “NSM” to “SMM (So Much More)”!

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- *Wise solutions for theological education resource needs*
- *Safe travels for missionaries on home service.*
- *God's blessing in providing future Lutheran pastors both at home and abroad.*

GIVE THANKS FOR:

- *Concord in doctrine and practice as we work with various partner church bodies.*
- *God's blessings of His clear teaching as witnessed in our Catechism.*

PRAISE GOD FOR:

- *You! The many congregations and individuals who pray for us, encourage us and support us. Thank you!*

You may already be familiar with the “NSM” acronym for “not so much.” Well, in our church body it also means Network-Supported Missionary with you, dear readers and all LCMS congregations as our network. Yes, *every* LCMS missionary is an “NSM” now-a-days, which is why this summer, seven out of nine theological educators on Dan’s team will be in the States, building and/or maintaining their network of support—including Dan. ALL of their support comes from monies that you designate to their specific account and lands in their account only. And it must be sustainable or we can’t stay on the field.

How do they do it? First of all, plenty of time and energy goes into preparing for these trips in the form of presentation and display preparation and the tricky work of scheduling visits across time zones, this all the while they carry on their mission work, which for the educators, usually means teaching classes. (Teachers, imagine having to maintain your own support every two years *while* teaching!)

Once in the States, the challenges remain. Parents with large families may struggle to find ways to keep children happy during weeks and weeks of being on the road as they move from one location to the next. One of my missionary friends wistfully noted that “Motel 8’s aren’t quite what they used to be,” but had a way of “making lemonade out of lemons” in their particular case.

It’s also a challenge to plan time with family. Let me tell you, missionary children’s grandparents are *not* happy to hear that grandchildren they may not have seen in two years are only

visiting for less than a week! (I heard that one missionary had originally only planned for four days. That got changed real fast!)

Missionaries are hard-working folks—committed to fulfilling their vocation despite numerous hardships. You, our supporters, have the power (and privilege) of easing that burden by remembering them, being gracious hosts, and generous with your time, talents and treasures.

Some days we may look a bit bedraggled, or our powerpoint presentations a little rough around the edges; maybe not all of us are the best public speakers, but all of us are committed to the work, otherwise we would be coming back to the States for good, not running around the countryside! I listened to a podcast of one of our missionary mothers recently, their wrenching experience of having to leave that country where they had worked as missionaries and raised their family for ten years. They had to return to the States for eight months before arrangements to a new mission were made in a neighboring country. Despite loving their friends and relatives in the States, they rejoiced in returning “home” to the work and people they had come to love. This pretty well captures your LCMS missionary spirit.

As Dan and I visit other Asian countries, we are made aware of just how rich we are. And as a consequence, we are motivated to share those riches through our support of fellow missionaries. (What better gift than the Gospel do we have to offer?) We ask that you be generous in your support also. If your support has been “NSM” in the past, maybe now would be a good time to change it to “SMM!”



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at lcms.org/service. Click on “Service Opportunities.”

To support the LCMS through the work of Daniel Jastram, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
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Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks “Support of Asia-Jastram.” Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at lcms.org/jastram.