



Dear Fellow Sojourners,

Our spirits groan. What words can convey how deeply we feel about the challenging days that you now face and that lie ahead in the coming weeks during this pandemic? Our thoughts turn constantly to our country, the United States, the church, our loved ones and you, our supporters and dear partners in mission. I have restarted this newsletter a number of times. Each time I return to it, the news seems so old and now, perhaps will seem trivial to you, our reader. But, we do want to communicate with you, so I won't rewrite it once again, because I'm afraid then it won't get out at all then! I want you to know that even as all your missionaries here in Asia are feeling ever more acutely the distance from family, churches, and supporters during the pandemic, wishing we could be near you; do know that we draw you close as we bring you before God's throne of grace in our prayers.

When we last communicated with you at the beginning of March—a lifetime ago as it almost seems for all of us—we had told you about Dan's slated trip to the States, scheduled March 9th for network support building in Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin, which was to last about two or three months. That is not how it panned out.

A QUICK TURN AROUND...BUT NOT IN THE USUAL SENSE

How it unfolded:

March 5th: Still in Tokyo, Dan receives guidelines about international travel restrictions for missionaries: travel to Japan at level 2 (caution if in high-risk category). Since Dan is planning to *leave* Japan, he is granted permission to travel to the US. Dan secures St. Louis seminary guest lodging.

March 6th: Disconcerting news from our telecare team in St Louis—they are having great difficulty scheduling *any* appointments after numerous attempts. (People are leery of visitors from Japan.) Dan lines up car rental for three months.

March 7th: An early report of February's gifts reveals an outpouring of support that moves us into the black. Thanks be to God! Dan decides that even if he is unable to schedule congregational visits (remember, nobody was talking about lockdowns or shelter in place at that time), one-on-one visits could still be an option. (Network support still needs to expand for the long-term.) Scheduling would be much easier while in the States. Dan packs. (continued)

March 9th: Dan heads to the airport; planes are crowded, but he arrives in the States in the evening without a hitch; no Covid-19 screening delays in his connecting flights. Instead of heading to the seminary, he is driven to a hotel, though; venue for the workshop moved from the International Center to the hotel because of Covid-19 fears.

March 11th – March 13th: Three full days of workshop sessions on network building. Plans made for presentations on the 14th. On the 13th, however, I call Dan. “I think you need to come home NOW.” (Trump had declared a national emergency; I worry he will not have a return flight if he delays.) Dan confers with synodical leaders and all are in agreement. Time to head back; a flight is expeditiously arranged. Now the plan is for Dan to continue effective mission work back in Japan and continue mission support building long-distance.

March 14th – March 15th: Dan leaves St. Louis from an eerily near-empty airport to arrive to a similarly near-empty Tokyo airport. And then hops on the train home to a much-relieved wife!

LIFE AND WORK BACK IN TOKYO

Everything is still in constant flux, as I am sure you can relate. Dan initially turned to some Japan-related work he was eager to move forward on. He got in touch with several Japanese pastors, made plans to visit and discuss projects that are in the works. (No travel restrictions here in Japan yet.) Days later, these domestic travel plans had to be cancelled after the Office of International Mission strongly (and wisely) recommended all missionaries who were in a high risk category to shelter at home. Dan changed gears and now is busy with much non-travel work, which include a slew of funded Asia mission projects that need attention (getting Lutheran resources out to those who are *most eager* to receive them—when that time comes once again, and it will, God-willing), as well as extra responsibilities related to supporting team missionaries during this pandemic.

OUR OTHER LCMS MISSIONARIES IN ASIA

The impact of this pandemic on our missionaries vary greatly depending on their location. In Taiwan, for instance, the response to the pandemic has been highly effective and cases are low thus far; before South Korea contained the spread and numbers sky-rocketed, life was extra stressful. And in Sri Lanka, missionary families must have their food delivered as they are under strict 24-hour curfew conditions. No matter our location, however, what is common to all is a desire to stay the course, despite the current trials and tribulations. Some of us, who were slated to return to the States—many this summer for missionary re-connects—have had those visits postponed indefinitely. We are all thinking of ways to stay connected (or make new connections!) long-distance, under these new realities.

PRAYERS

Now more than ever, our daily devotions and morning hymn-singing bring us strength and comfort. We encourage you during this time of difficulty to stay close to God’s Word, also. You may find Psalm 91 especially comforting during these times. We ask that you also please continue to keep us in your prayers.

Your servants in Christ,
Dan and Joan Jastram

If you are able, we encourage you to support, continue, or increase your financial support securely online through our secure LCMS website, lcms.org/jastram. We are committed *more than ever* to serve on your behalf, even in these times of tribulations and afterwards.

As a congregation, you can support us by adding us to your congregation’s mission budget as a *Together in Mission* partner (Call 888-930-4438 for details.)