

Christmas Greetings from Japan

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.”
— Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)*

As Christmas draws near, we greet you with gratitude and with thanksgiving to God for His many blessings. Over these past months, the Lord has continued to gather His people through Word and Sacrament, sustain relationships, and open doors for learning and fellowship. At this season of Christ’s coming, we would like to share a few glimpses of that work with you.

A Conference Bearing Fruit



Pastors, church workers, and lay participants gathered for our October Lutheran theological conference in Echigo Yuzawa, Japan.

In October, we gathered in Echigo Yuzawa for a Lutheran theological conference focused on the doctrine of Justification. Pastors, church workers, and laypeople came from across Japan, joined by other church workers from the United States and other parts of the world. Several participants were attending for the first time.

Our keynote speaker, LCMS Wyoming District President John Hill, led us in thoughtful teaching and discussion. Between sessions, meals, and worship, conversations continued as friendships were strengthened and encouragement was shared. Once again, we were reminded how God uses these times together to support those laboring in often-isolated settings. Several participants noted how encouraging it was to study and confess this central article of the faith together.

Welcoming our New Vicar to Japan



This fall also brought an important milestone with the arrival of our first LCMS vicar assigned to Japan in more than fifty years. After many months of preparation—including visa arrangements, housing, and orientation—Vicar Turley arrived in November and began settling into life and ministry here.

Since his arrival, he has joined worship at several sites and begun language studies. We are thankful for the Lord's provision of additional help for the work here and for the many people whose efforts and prayers helped bring this about.

Continuing Word and Sacrament Ministry

Regular worship and pastoral care continue in Tokyo, Yokosuka, Numata, and Osaka. This ministry often involves travel, careful coordination, and flexibility, yet it remains a great privilege to serve those who rely on English-language Lutheran worship and pastoral care.

On one recent visit to Osaka, circumstances required an unexpected change of plans, and worship was held in a modest rented room rather than a familiar church space. Even so, the liturgy, hymns, and Scriptures sounded forth as they always do, bearing the same promises of Christ. Moments like these quietly remind us that the Church is not defined by place, but by God's Word faithfully proclaimed and received.

Looking Ahead

Alongside this ongoing work, we continue to encourage Japanese pastors, support translation efforts, and accompany Chinese Christians and immigrants in the Tokyo area as they grow in worship and catechesis. We move forward carefully and prayerfully, trusting the Lord to guide what lies ahead according to His will.

Thanksgiving at Christmas

At Christmas, we are especially mindful that this work is never carried out alone. We give thanks to God for you—for your prayers, encouragement, and support—and for the partnership we share in Christ's mission.

May the peace of Christ, born for us, guard your hearts and minds this Christmas season.

In Christ,
Dan and Joan Jastram
Japan