



May to June 2026

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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Sacred Stones

Every now and then I
stumble across something
particularly fascinating with
significant cultural
relevance. Recently it was a
pair of Sacred Stones
(Sazare-ishi).

It was during my monthly
visit to Niigata working with
Vicar Turley at our LCMS
sister-congregation Kobari

Lutheran Church. I borrowed vicar's bicycle to become more familiar with the
neighborhood. I wandered into the nearby Shinto shrine (Niigata-ken Gokoku Shrine)
dedicated to the veteran souls of those who gave their lives in service to their country
now enshrined there as deities. There I noticed the curious Sacred Stones.

Online sources say these "sazare-ishi" (small-pebble conglomerate rocks) are
deeply revered in Japan because they are celebrated in the national anthem Kimigayo:
"May our Lord's reign [*that is, the Japanese Emperor's reign*] / Continue for a
thousand, eight thousand generations / Until the tiny pebbles / Grow into massive
rocks [*sazare-ishi*] / Lush with moss."

These Sacred Stones symbolize the citizens of Japan united homogeneously under
the Emperor by a common Japanese mindset into an eternal unity of a long-lasting
nation.

Although obviously an ideal stereotype, I often consider how far this mindset
proves an obstacle to our LCMS Japan mission work, dedicated to a different Lord, to a
different spiritual homogeneity, and to a different Kingdom—everlasting and Heavenly.



the same time: the Schaff couple (center-right, LCMS teachers from Illinois), and the
Yamamoto couple (center-left, LCMS pastor and wife from Tennessee). They attended
our specially scheduled mission-field, house-church Sunday service. Then we all
enjoyed fellowship, conversation, and pizza at a nearby restaurant.

Visitors

We frequently
have the pleasure
of welcoming
LCMS visitors who
are eager to learn
about LCMS work
in Japan.

Two couples
recently came at

Thanksgiving and Prayer:

- thanksgiving for God's blessings at our five-point ministry worship sites: Niigata (weekly support ministry of Vicar Turley with Pastor Wakabayashi at Kobari Niigata); Shinjuku (twice a month); Yokosuka (once a month); Numata (once a month); Osaka (once a month);
- thanksgiving for the continuing assistance of Vicar Turley and for the recent three additional candidates for confirmation instruction;
- prayer for a fruitful stateside home service agenda to raise support for our LCMS mission work in Japan;
- prayer for the six Japanese Lutheran pastors who are dedicated to following the Book of Concord as faithful witness to the truths of Scripture;
- thanksgiving for additional progress on our current Japanese translation project of Luther's Small Catechism (CPH 2017) (about 80% completed);
- thanksgiving for our interim Asia regional director, Rev. Dr. Brian Gauthier, our Asia facilitator Rev. Matthew Wood, and our fellow LCMS Asia missionaries each with individual challenges and blessings;
- prayer that God might prosper his mission work throughout the world "to conserve and promote the unity of the true faith" (cf. Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10);
- 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



[The crane, right-of-center in the image above, is the one depicted in the newsletter masthead.]

Carved Wood Panel

On a recent evangelism visit to the small village of Yonekura, Niigata-ken, I noticed a beautiful "ranma" panel (a decorative carving placed between a sliding door frame and the ceiling beam).

I brought it home, where it now reminds us daily of the rich artistic heritage of Japan and the people among whom we serve. We pray that, just as this carving reflects the gifts God has given its maker, many Japanese will come to know the Creator whose beauty and creativity are reflected throughout His creation.



Confirmation Instruction

God has recently arranged an additional three candidates for confirmation instruction: two youths on the Yokosuka naval base, and one single adult in Tokyo.

We are using an individualized eight-part, home-study catechism-confirmation curriculum to accommodate distance learning under parents, pastor, and vicar at our various five-point ministry worship sites.

OUR HOME SERVICE

Our stateside mission visits this year go from July 14 to September 8.

We have a number of mid-week days in August still available for scheduling in Minnesota.

So, if your bible study, men's or ladies' group, or mid-week worship gathering is free to learn about their LCMS mission work in Japan, please schedule with us soon.

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. We couldn't do it without you.

Thank you!

Your missionaries, Dan and Joan Jastram

**"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest."**

(Matthew 11:28, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost—Proper 9A, Liturgical Verse)

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