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From Afar, But Close to the Heart

“I am not living in America right now, but not a day has gone by these past 3 months that I haven't felt a strong physical and emotional toll about what is happening and I continue to pray so much for our country and for the world...”

I read these words from one of our LCMS missionaries on social media the other week, which has reflected the reality for many of us missionaries far from home. In fact, until recently, I myself have found it difficult to write to you because of the distress of it all.

So, what has it been like? Dan and I watched throughout the days (your late afternoon and night) as events unfolded in the States, from the gut-wrenching video of George Floyd's death to streets convulsed with protests followed by riots. Watching the live newscasts those early days in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area was especially frightening because our three children and their families call it home (also *our* home of twenty-six years before

moving to Japan); it touched all of them in different ways, but has been particularly hard for our son-in-law, a police officer, and his family. We pray for wisdom in the days ahead as our country addresses the many factors fueling protests and unrest. (Peaceful protests have also taken place here in Tokyo, but have been quite small.)

How do we understand and move forward ourselves as Christians? We have appreciated words from our LCMS president that point us to God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions about sin, justice and action. You can read President Harrison's June 2nd statement in its entirety, but I will share two verses from the passage he quotes in his conclusion (and which will be our guide):

And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony... And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:14,17 ESV).

Asia Life and Work During the Pandemic

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- *South Dakota District congregations and pastors for their sacrificial giving!*

WE PRAISE GOD FOR:

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

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- *Continued good health and protection as we live and work in Japan.*
- *the emotional and physical wellbeing of our LCMS missionaries, especially those living in challenging environments because of the pandemic.*

NEWSLETTERS INFO

Want to catch up? Here's our archive link: tiny.cc/dvv9iz

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GOOD NEWS//BAD NEWS

The good news in our life: just last week, Tokyo lifted the last of its restrictions with nearly all businesses able to reopen—including those popular karaoke parlors, which definitely need special coronavirus protection measures in place. They set very stringent criteria to meet before restrictions were lifted. Daily infections in all of Japan are now typically under 100 these days; in Tokyo, in the 20's when restrictions were lifted. (For comparison's sake, the US reports daily cases in the tens of thousands, with a population roughly two and a half times as large as Japan.)

The bad news: a re-entry ban for non-Japanese residents is in place, except for humanitarian reasons. This means that while Dan and I are free to leave Japan, we currently would not be free to return to our Tokyo home. My once or twice annual trips to the States as well as Dan's work travel are not yet possible for the time being. Nearly all other nations currently allow long-term residents to travel abroad and return to their current residence. Pray that the government lifts this ban soon!

THE WORK

Theological educators in Asia (which you support!) continue to find avenues for sharing our legacy of solid Lutheran resource materials where they currently work and live, despite a current project budget freeze. In reports Dan has received from these men, we can be encouraged to hear that in Cambodia, grants not only provided urgent mercy work (food for those hard-hit by the pandemic), but also Lutheran literature resources and encouragement for Cambodian Lutheran pastors.

Other examples include Taiwan, where work is being finalized for an official Chinese partner-church synodical version of Luther's Catechism. And, of course, Dan continues with his Japanese contacts, which include options for a Large Catechism version as well as Walther's *Law and Gospel*.

Thank you for walking aside us throughout all the many shared challenges we face! And now may God grant you strength, patience and steadfastness as you cling to His word and promises!

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

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

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/givenow/jastram.

