May Theological Conference

These last two months, God has richly blessed his holy household of faith here in Japan. Two major events occurred in May with LCMS official visitors from the States.

Our 2024 May Lutheran Theological Conference convened at Kobari Lutheran Church in Niigata City on May 21-23 with LCMS Wyoming District President John Hill serving as keynote presenter.

We heard God’s Word expounded through Hill’s six major sessions on “Church and Ministry” with another seven subordinate presentations on local ministry contexts by assigned participants.

We welcomed 24 attendees including the majority of the confessional Japanese Lutheran pastors among whom I work, as well as our LCMS Asia Region Director, Rev. Charles Ferry, and his business manager, Mr. Sam Borgwardt, both from Taiwan.

Not only did the presentations strengthen a solid foundation for ministry with their teaching from Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, but the conference itself gathered together pastors and laypeople from different church backgrounds not currently in altar and pulpit fellowship but who have mutual good will and a goal of learning about each other as brothers inquiring about unity in doctrine and practice.

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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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To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to: 
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May - June 2024

SERVING THE LORD IN

Japan

News from 
Pastor Dan and Joan Jastram

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https://www.lcms.org/jastram
**Prayer and Thanksgiving:**

- thanksgiving for God’s blessings through the May Lutheran Theological Conference, the presentations of Wyoming Dist. Pres. Hill and those of other presenters, and the tireless hosting work of Rev. and Mrs. Wakabayashi;

- prayer that God might facilitate the work of final copy for text and translation of the conference sessions for printing and distribution to the participants;

- prayer that God reaches the hearts and minds of those who view and read the work of the LCMS Comms team members as they publicize the work of Gospel proclamation;

- prayer that God works growth in faith and life for those participating in our online Catechism sessions;

- thanksgiving for wonderful headway on our newest translation project of Shaw, Women’s Ordination (LCMS Office of the President 2023) (about 85% completed);

- thanksgiving for God’s arrangement of an additional translator and proofreader: Rev. Haga;

- thanksgiving for God’s blessings at our three current worship sites: Shinjuku (twice a month), Yokosuka (once a month), and Numata (once a month);

- thanksgiving for our LCMS Asia regional director Rev. Charles Ferry and fellow LCMS Asia missionaries each with individual challenges and blessings;

- thanksgiving for the faithful prayers and support provided by our LCMS Jastram-Asia mission partners.

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**LCMS Comms Visit**

The second major event occurred just a week before: another LCMS official visit, this time by two representatives from the International Center’s Communications Department.

Erik Lunsford serves as the LCMS Managing Photojournalist (to whom I must yield photographically), and Megan Mertz serves as Chief Copyeditor and also as managing editor of the “Lutherans Engage” magazine (on which we can rely for future publicity).

During their five days in Japan we visited ten significant sites to gather images, stories, interviews, and contexts of LCMS mission work. What a pleasure to facilitate their professional expertise in publicizing the spread of the Gospel!

**Dan & Joan Jastram with John & Angie Hill**

In addition to the May conference events, there were opportunities to visit some sites in the vicinity of Niigata: the famous Shibata castle built in the Edo period (see first-page masthead), and the Yasuda Anchiyakigama (preserving their handmade pottery tradition for 130 years). ♦

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**Other News**

God has gathered additional contacts into his circle of influence through our newly initiated online Catechism study sessions. For Japanese and international spouses who have attended our LCMS worship services but are new to the Lutheran faith, we wanted to provide a focused opportunity to study the Small Catechism in their own language.

In April, I realized that there were now four candidates who might profit from just such a group opportunity. Therefore, relying on a Japanese 1994 edition of our LCMS 1943 Catechism, we organized an online group study session in Japanese for native speakers and international associates taught by Rev. Taguchi. So far we have met five times. One of the four candidates who started with us seems to have lost interest; but the others have maintained and grown in their interest.

The resulting total group of six continues to meet weekly with wonderfully pertinent questions like “aren’t all Christian denominations supposed to respect and affirm each other no matter what their background”, or “isn’t it enough to believe in the bible”, or “how will I know when, where, and how to get baptized”, or “what is the process for confirmation as a communicant fellowship member?” What an open door for instruction! ♦

**OUR HOME SERVICE** dates for this year are from August 1 to September 17. Although our Sundays are already committed, check our schedule [here] and send us an email <daniel.jastram@lcms.org> to let us know if a midweek event might work out for your congregation, committee, or bible study to learn how to become partners in this exciting mission work.

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**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. Thank you!

Your missionaries, Daniel and Joan Jastram

“The LORD built the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1a, Third Sunday after Pentecost, Liturgical Verse).

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