

The Bencke Family in Japan

Volume 31, June 15th, 2011



Moments

Since we moved to this neighborhood several years ago, I've been walking a certain 5-kilometer route several times a week. It's a route that takes me down a sort of suburban street past a military ground, then through a fairly busy urbanesque area, and then past a series of rice fields and other vegetable fields, and finally down a long, winding road that is replete with lush vegetation all year round, a small shrine back in the woods, and no residences whatsoever... all within 5 kilometers (3 miles). I was thinking about how interesting it was that the scenery, demographics, sights, smells, and sounds can change so quickly within a small area, which led me to think about how 'moments' are framed in our minds – in an instant, how our lives can change. This thought seemed even more poignant as I considered how the hundreds of thousands of people's lives changed three months ago when what's now called "The Great Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami" hit northeastern Japan.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of companion synods and congregations in the United States and elsewhere, the Japan Lutheran Emergency Response (JLER) organization is positioned to help many people as they continue to pull their lives together from the rubble that remains of their former homes and livelihoods. This organization is an amalgamate of the Lutheran agencies within Japan, partnering together in their efforts to provide material relief as well as counseling and other forms of emotional and spiritual support to survivors. The JLER is now also equipped to receive volunteers on a small scale to come to the area and offer their assistance.

I know many of the readers of this newsletter would like to read some of the stories about how JLER is engaged, so I'd like to provide an abbreviated list of some of the activities where our Lutheran family is involved:

- Providing Chest High Waders for the self-defense force and fire department to search for survivors or bodies in areas still experiencing high water levels
- Providing shoes, jerseys, and uniforms to school aged students
- Providing over 5000 cotton, terry-cloth strong rags for cleaning families' homes and a nursing home facility that have not been destroyed
- 48 bicycles for staff to make medical rounds



For more detailed information about these projects, check out this weblink:

<http://www.jler.org/page/5.1.html>

Prayer Corner

We give thanks to God for His promise to be always at our side.

We give thanks for the 53 years of service of Pastor Andrew Ellis, who officiated at his last English service with our international congregation this past Sunday evening.

Prayers are requested for the family and friends of Dr. Arole, director and founder of the Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India. Dr. Arole passed away this past May. Dr. Arole was deeply committed to health care and community development for the people of rural India and his commitment to Christian outreach in this context was indescribable. He will be deeply missed here on earth, but certainly welcomed into the arms of Jesus. Well done, faithful servant of Jesus. Well done.

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Missionary Sponsorship

For more information on ELCA missionary sponsorship, please contact:

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(800) 638-3522, ext. 2641
twila.schock@elca.org OR
www.elca.org/missionsponsorship

Did we miss anyone?

If you know anyone who might like to receive our newsletters, please have them send us an e-mail requesting to be added to our mailing list.

ELCA— Global Mission

If you are interested in learning more about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's global mission, please visit:
www.elca.org/globalmission

JELC: Mission in India

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association work together to create opportunities for young Japanese Christians and those who are 'seeking' to participate in a life changing outreach program in Jamkhed, India. If you wish to support these efforts, please send donations to Rev. Twila Schock (address above). **Please make sure to mark donations as "Level 2 funding (JELA): Helping Children in Need."** A gift of \$25 will buy materials for an artificial leg for someone who cannot afford that expense on his/her own. This new leg will allow an individual to return to work in his/her fields, go back to a job, take care of a family, or go to school. The loss of a leg in India is usually due to car accidents, leprosy, or in some areas, land mines.

Moments (cont'd)

So as you can see, while the task ahead in re-building and healing is still beyond comprehension, good work is being done, one small step at a time. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your continuing prayers of support for us and for the people of Tohoku. Your generosity in these tough economic times, where needs are so great almost everywhere you look, is appreciated with overflowing hearts.



"Thank you for giving to the Lord! I am a life that was changed!" Pastor Andrew Ellis, a missionary in Japan for 53 years (!), has been providing pastoral leadership for our English International service one Sunday a month for the past several years. He celebrated his final service with us this past Sunday evening for our Pentecost and Holy Communion celebration. We will miss him, but are glad that he no longer has to make the 2-hour round trip (night times are a particularly difficult drive for him) to provide this service.

Lights, camera, and.... action!



Our home assignment is still a year away, but learning technology takes a LONG time for me. So, I thought I'd see if I could get the ball rolling to make a short video presentation in time for 2012.

I was wondering, however, if I could solicit some ideas from you, our readers, about what to include. What would *you* like to see or hear about regarding our work and/or life in Japan? Please feel free to send ideas to jackie@bencke.com. Please include the words "video ideas" within the subject line. This might be a good project for youth groups, too! We love to address the thoughts of the littlest ones in the congregations! ☺