

Sent: Tuesday, January 22, 2008 5:42 PM

Subject: Greetings from Japan

To all of our sponsoring congregations,

For those of you who don't know who this email is from, my name is Eric Anspach-Hanson, and you are sponsoring my wife Christie and my mission here in Tokyo Japan! I recently graduated from Luther Seminary this past August and Christie graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Nursing as well in May. We thought that there would be no better place to begin our careers than overseas. So, for that reason, we applied to the ELCA's Division for Global Mission and to make a long story short, we arrived here in Tokyo a little over four months ago.

This may not be surprise you, but Japan is definitely a lot different than Minnesota! Tokyo is the largest city I've ever seen. It spreads for miles from the oceans to the mountains and beyond. Since Christie and I are both from relatively rural areas in the States it will definitely take some getting used to. Our time at the present moment is focused primarily on learning Japanese. I have been called as the pastor of Tokyo Lutheran Church's English speaking congregation, but Christie and I both will be doing a lot of youth ministry here in Japan as well, which will require us to be somewhat proficient in Japanese.

The Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) is facing similar struggles as the ELCA in the states, but on a much larger scale. Membership has been in decline for years, especially among young adults and teenagers. Some projections predict that the JELC will actually cease to exist by 2012. The Church here is literally a Church in crisis. For that reason the JELC is focusing a tremendous amount of their evangelism and outreach on young adults. Christie and I, as well as many of the ELCA English teachers that came over with us, are working to form relationships with many of the young adults that are involved with or even slightly involved with our churches in order to support the JELC's ministry. We are also doing different outreach projects with TNG (The Next Generation), which is the youth ministry engine of the JELC. The Church here faces a lot of challenges, but the people that we've met and have been working with seem up to the task and they have a lot of energy. Please keep the mission of the JELC in your thoughts and prayers.

We would both like to thank you all for your support of our mission! We are so happy to receive support from congregations that we've already formed relationships with as well as congregations that we have yet to meet. God bless all of you and know that your missions are also in Christie's and my prayers as well!

Pastor Eric Anspach-Hanson and Christie Hanson