

From Pastor Eric and Christie Anspach Hanson

Overwhelming and exciting doesn't even begin to describe the initial part of this experience. Its amazing... every single day we see a part of the world that we've never seen before. Japanese culture is sooooo different from American culture. They are very formal over here and their social interactions are very careful and mindful. As you know, I am not the most formal person, so it takes a lot of energy for me to constantly be aware of all the little social rules and such that a person should follow. It looks like I will begin my service at Tokyo Lutheran this Sunday, but won't begin preaching until Oct. 7th. They want Christie and I to take some language lessons first and learn some more about the culture and about the area before I begin working full time at the church. Plus, they don't have an office for me yet. We're living right now in a temporary apartment in a "suburb" called Fuchu. You won't believe it, but they put us about a mile away from a gigantic river called the Tamagawa. The river is full of carp, so I have already found my first fishing hole. Another sign that this was the right decision is the fact that the Japanese Evangelical Lutheran Church office headquarters is only 3 blocks away from a stocked pond that charges a person \$9 for two hours of fishing. When I get to heaven, I'm going to give God a big high-five for that one.

The work here is going to be interesting and challenging. The English speaking congregation is very small and we're going to work on ways that we can reach out to the large English speaking community in Tokyo in order to hopefully gain more members. As far as my youth ministry responsibilities are concerned, it appears that the Japanese Lutheran church is facing the same challenges in attracting youth and young adults as our churches in America. There are so many other things competing for people's attention and time, faith oftentimes takes a back seat.

I think its a great idea to link our congregation's website with Zumbro's. The more exposure that our church has with churches in the U.S. and the more exposure Zumbro has with Tokyo Lutheran the more ministry opportunities for both communities can be created and explored. Who knows, maybe some day we do an exchange or something with the Zumbro youth. Hopefully God will let us know!

Our living quarters small (I've hit my head on the door post about 5 times) but not as small as we had feared. We spend a lot of time running around Tokyo, so we're not in our apartment that much. Eventually they will move us to something bigger anyway. We are starting language training courses next week and will get to go to some lectures on Japanese culture. I think most of our education though will be practical and experiential.

My email address will stay the same. Here's the URL for Tokyo Lutheran.

[www.jelc-tokyo.org/indexE.htm](http://www.jelc-tokyo.org/indexE.htm)

Its easy to find too without the address by just googling "Tokyo Lutheran." Hope everything is going well at Zumbro.

Eric

