

The Bencke Family in Japan

Volume 24, April 26th, 2010



Spring has sprung –

...and with it comes renewal – renewal of life and faith (Easter) and renewal of commitments (new school year gets underway) and renewal of relationships (having seen some family over spring break). A word of explanation for these three, seemingly unrelated photos:

The far left photo is simple – it's our daughter Hannah, on Easter Sunday. Patrick and I were occupied the entire day with church related activities, starting with providing music support for the Japanese congregation we serve, followed by a lunch (for which Emilie decorated Easter cupcakes!), and finally attending and providing music for the English service in the evening. It was a long day, joyous in that we were celebrating the greatest victory the human race has ever experienced, but tiring nonetheless. Hannah, while she is quick to smile, is also quick to get herself into whatever she's not supposed to get into, so it was tough to keep her in tow while Patrick and I fulfilled our responsibilities. We treasure these days where Hannah is so full of life, but look forward to a day when we're not chasing after her while we play piano or lead music! ☺

The second photo is of my "Christianity and Music" students. This is a course I've taught several times. The content of the class is so rich and wonderful, but it's a tough class to teach because of the level of Japanese required to teach well. The students in this class happened to all be English majors, so I was able to tweak the curriculum to reflect their interest in learning English as well as delve into topics that I hope were thought-provoking and interesting. Their favorite? The Bible and musical theatre, where we examined biblical themes in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Children of Eden, Godspell, and Jesus Christ Superstar. Through these musicals, I introduced stories of both the Old Testament and New Testament and we compared them against how they were portrayed as musicals. Since none of the students had ever read any of those stories from Genesis or the gospels outside of hearing passages in chapel, nor had they ever seen a live musical, it was quite an experience to walk and talk together through the Word for the first time alongside of them.

The picture on the right is Emilie, holding "Flat Anna," the famous world traveler based on the Flat Stanley stories. This past February, we traveled as a family together to the U.S. to have some family time. Since Patrick was unable to return to the U.S. for his brother's funeral this past October, we made a point to make sure he was able to connect with all of his family members. This meant travelling to New Mexico and Seattle as well as Minnesota. Emilie was able to see 12 of her 17 cousins, meeting a couple of them for the very first time. It was a splendid opportunity for us to build and renew some family relationships.

As for the coming months, we will be busy with our respective school responsibilities, taking care of normal day-to-day business, and preparing for our two-month home assignment this summer.

We'd like to extend a message of thanks for your continued support of our ministries here in Japan. We recognize that in these turbulent economic times that supporting a ministry so far away requires a little extra leap of faith. Know that your prayers and financial support are appreciated, especially by those who have come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Thank you for making these important ministries possible.



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Missionary Sponsorship

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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

If you wish to support the efforts of the Comprehensive Rural Health Project in Jamkhed, India, 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. We are thrilled that this past year some college students from Kumamoto went to Jamkhed as a part of the work camp! These students called the trip 'life changing.'

Kids Corner

OK, kiddos. Here's something for you to think about. Do you have a Bible? What does it look like? Maybe someone special gave it to you. Maybe you have the "NIV Student Bible," or other version that has special commentaries for you to think about.

Here in Japan, very few kids have Bibles, although there are some nice "children's bibles" available. Instead, the growing trend is for students to look at and read "Bible Manga," which are comic books, in five volumes, based on the Bible and used to tell the story of Jesus Christ. Check it out!

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manga_Bible_%28series%29



SUMMER 2010: Bencke Home Assignment

Thank you to all who have responded! We'll be available for visits to congregations this summer from **August 1st through September 19th**. Most of the schedule has been set, but if your congregation is still interested in having us visit, please contact me soon! We may still be able to schedule you in for a weekday evening. Here is the schedule so far:

- July 26th -30th SMC/CND in Kenosha, Wisconsin
- Sun. Aug. 1st Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Wheat Ridge, CO
- Sat. Aug. 7th JOINT: LeRoy, St. John's Elkton, OSL Rochester
- Sun. Aug. 8th Faith Lutheran, Forest Lake, MN
- Wed. Aug. 11th All Saint's, Norwood, MN
- Sun. Aug. 15th First Lutheran, Bemidji, MN
- Sun. Aug. 15th (p.m.) OSL, Warren, MN (? pending)
- Wed. Aug. 18th First Lutheran, Kenyon, MN
- Thurs. Aug. 19th Central Lutheran, Mondovi, WI
- Sun. Aug. 22nd OSL, Menomonie, WI
- Sun. Aug. 29th Paynesville Lutheran, Paynesville, MN
- Mon. Aug. 30th Word of Peace, Rogers, MN
- Sun. Sept. 5th ORL, Benson, MN
- Sun. Sept. 12th Peace Lutheran, Ashby, MN
- Sun. Sept. 19th Bethesda Lutheran, Alexandria, MN

*Please let me know if you see any errors here or if you wish to be included on the itinerary. Or, if you won't be asking us to visit your congregation this year, a quick note or email indicating such would be helpful! Thanks much!