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Missionary Rev. David Person

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Your missionary in Japan
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Family Birthdays

David- June 21, 1952
Wife- Nahoko-September 25, 1957
Son- John- March 24, 1979
Son- Andy- August 29, 1983



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,
May 12, 2004

Warm greetings to you all from Tokyo in the name of our Risen Lord!

As I mentioned in my last letter to you, I will be returning to Minnesota for home leave this summer. I am scheduled to arrive in Minnesota on June 30 and leave to return to Japan on August 18. It is going to be a busy time. One of the reasons for the busyness is that I will be accompanying three Japanese pastors to Minnesota, Chicago, and Tennessee for two weeks of that time. One of the pastors has been a leader in youth outreach for the last 12 years, and the other two are young pastors who are considered future leaders in youth outreach. During their two week stay we will be visiting various organizations which specialize in youth evangelism. I will accompany them, be their guide and translator. They will arrive in Minnesota on July 5. We will visit several youth specialists in Minnesota, then fly to Chicago on July 8 where we will visit ELCA headquarters and meet with camp and youth gathering staff there. We will then fly to Memphis, Tennessee on July 10 and attend a Group Workcamp from July 11-17. After that they will fly back to Japan on July 18. While they are in the U.S., I will devote all my time and energy to them. This is part of our

continued emphasis on youth evangelism and strengthening church leaders. I am very excited about this opportunity.

On July 25-29 I will be attending the Summer Missionary Conference in Kenosha, Wisconsin for all ELCA missionaries. I hope to visit a supporting church on Sunday, July 25 before leaving for the conference. It would be best if this church were in the Twin Cities since the conference begins in the early afternoon. We will be a little late for the conference, but I wanted to visit a church that day if possible. I have a limited amount of Sunday mornings and over 25 supporting churches.

If I visited your church on a Sunday morning last year, please understand that I will not be able to visit you this time on a Sunday morning. I am more than happy to visit churches for weekday worships or most any weekday event. If there is a church with an evening Sunday worship, and not too far from the Twin Cities, I am willing to visit on the evening of Sunday, July 18. That day I am flying into the Twin Cities (from Tennessee), arriving at 1:40 p.m. If someone has an evening worship that day, I will be happy to preach, if it is a doable distance from the airport.

And so the only open Sunday mornings I have in my schedule are: July 4, 25, August 1, 8 (August 15 I will use for a family time) As I mentioned above, Sunday, July 18 evening is also open.

Finally, if I visit your church, I would appreciate an honorarium to help cover the costs of renting a car. Car rental plus the necessary insurance is extremely expensive. Your assistance is deeply appreciated.

David Person

Tokyo, Japan

a Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ: April 30, 2004

Some people have asked if I could share a little more about our living arrangements, family, as well as the work here. With this letter, I will do that, and send our summer schedule with the next letter.

My wife Nahoko and I live right downtown Tokyo in a missionary house with our cat, Shims. Land in Tokyo is still astronomically expensive, so the house is just a little smaller than our lot. There is about a three foot space between our house and the fence separating our land from the neighbor's land. No yard.. none whatsoever. This means that my lawn mowing skills now lie dormant, which is just fine with me. It is a wonderful place to live and we truly love it. Surprisingly, it is a quiet place to live. It is about a 35 minute subway commute from my front door to the church office. Because of the great transportation system in Tokyo, we don't own a car. We have two bicycles, but rarely use them. We walk a lot and take the public transportation.

Tokyo is one of the safest cities in the world and has just about anything a person could want, including approximately 80,000 restaurants! The food here is terrific. Frankly, I don't think it can be beat. Besides eating, Nahoko and I are taking Japanese drum (Taiko) lessons every Friday. Nahoko is much better than I am. I just try to whack the drum when everyone else is whacking their drums. It is a lot of fun, and is something that deepens our cultural appreciation of Japan while helping us meet people we normally would not meet. Our teacher also teaches Taiko at the American Embassy, and was asked to give a special presentation to president Bush when he came through Japan

appreciated. If you would like me to visit your church, please email me. I will follow a "first come first serve" policy, giving precedence to churches I have not visited in the past.

Thank you for your continued prayers. I deeply appreciate them. I pray that this finds you full of the peace and joy found in our Savior Jesus Christ. The Lord be with you and fill you with his love.

We have two boys, John (25) and Andy (soon 21). John is in the doctorate program at the University of Chicago, and hopes to teach at the college level in the future. Andy is a sophomore at Gustavus Adolphus College, with no set plans for his future work. We trust that will come. At times it is difficult being away from our boys, especially when they have time off from school, with no home to return to. They both came to Japan to be with us for Christmas, for which we give thanks. It will be good to see them both this summer.

Japan is a beautiful nation with a deep history and culture. I was in the city of Kyoto last week on business. Kyoto is often called the "cultural capital" of Japan. I rode down to Kyoto on the Shinkansen "Bullet" train, traveling the 300 mile distance in two hours and ten minutes. As we sped along at over 125 miles an hour, I worked on my sermon on my laptop computer. I remember taking a break from my work to marvel at the advanced technology involved in my travel and sermon writing. Japan really is a land of technological wonders. We arrived at the ultramodern Kyoto station, which is just minutes away from a number of ancient temples and shrines. In Kyoto I was helping plan the upcoming Children's International Camp. It is a national church camp for fifth and sixth graders in which we have an international guest come to teach the children about their country and Christianity in their country. Last year two children from our church attended it. They came back and taught us all a Malaysian Christian song with accompanying hand movements. Their world had grown larger, their faith deeper. It was inspiring to see.

I dearly love the work I am doing here in Japan. In many ways I feel this is what I was made for. I have the honor and privilege of working with

people who are not only my colleagues, but also friends. They are very dedicated to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in this land where less than 1% of the people are Christian. Japan is a wealthy, safe country. But it is a country in which the story of the lost sheep is turned on its head. The lost sheep make up 99% of the population. It is truly a place that calls out for the preaching of the gospel. In Romans 10:17 Paul says that faith

Your missionary in Tokyo,

David Person

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May 19, 2003

Last time I wrote you we were preparing for our junior/senior high camp (now called, "Teens Camp"). Last year we had 85 young people attend our camp, this year our goal was 100. I am overjoyed to say we had 104 young people attend camp; the most ever! During the camp, a senior in high school shared his testimony with everyone. He said the first time he attended church he didn't really understand the liturgy, the sermon, or even sing many of the unfamiliar hymns. He also said that there weren't any people his age there. Yet he felt something stirring in his heart, so he continued to attend. Then someone told him about our Teens Camp. He attended last year and there decided to be baptized. He is now studying theology; and told everyone about the deep joy found in his faith. What a blessing to hear his story! One more comment about this year's Teens Camp, two thirds of the teens attending were non-Christians. This has become a wonderful way of outreach. We look forward to next year's camp!

Last year we sent 10 teens to workcamp in South Dakota, and as I reported earlier; two of those were baptized at Christmas. But there is another story from that camp I would like to share with you. One day during the camp some of us were sitting in the cafeteria after work. Glenn, who was the adult in Matsuri Kondo's (one of our Japanese youth) crew, came to our table and asked me to translate for him, saying he needed to tell Matsuri something. Glenn is an older, retired man. Little did I know that he came to workcamp under the burden of a hatred of Japan and the Japanese. He turned to Matsuri and said, "I became a Christian

Your missionary in Tokyo David Person dperson@jelc.or.jp

comes through hearing. The vast majority of these beautiful people in Japan haven't heard the good news of the love of Jesus Christ for them. It is my privilege to share this beautiful gift.

Thank you for your continued prayers. And don't forget to share this same gift with those around you.

Grace and peace to you all in the name of our risen Savior Jesus Christ

when I was 45 years old. Before that I didn't believe in anything. When I was very small, two of my uncles fought against the Japanese in World War II. They were both killed in battle. Since then I have harbored an anger toward Japan and the Japanese. But after working side by side with you during this camp, I have come to see that is wrong. I am in need of reconciliation. I want to say to you now that I have forgiven Japan and the Japanese. I now ask you for your forgiveness." Stunned, Matsuri gladly gave that forgiveness. Glenn stood up and walked away, forgiven, renewed, freed of his anger and hate. We sat there stunned. The Holy Spirit works in ways we cannot even begin to understand or imagine. God brought these two people together from faraway places, and there did his life-giving work of creating forgiveness and joy. And I saw that our Japanese teens were missionaries, messengers of God's good news! It was beautiful.

These are just two of the stories that have brought me joy. There have been difficult times too, that is for sure. I continue to covet your prayers. Please know, however; that we continue to search for new ways to reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ. And Christ continues to use us in new and surprising ways. I feel so very privileged to be part of this beautiful journey. There is nothing I would rather be doing.

Please keep the 16 Japanese young people who will be attending workcamp in Ohio this July/August in your prayers. May God work in and through them. God also bless you all.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

July 27, 2001

There is a crisis brewing in the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC). It is the crisis of a growing shortage of pastors, that will peak in the next few years, with many of our churches having to struggle on without a pastor. There is and will be pain associated with this crisis as the church searches for new ways of organizing new ways of doing ministry. However, in the midst of this crisis

turned to Matsuri and said, "I became a Christian when I was 45 years old. Before that I didn't believe in anything. When I was very small, two of my uncles fought against the Japanese in World War II. They were both killed in battle. Since then I have harbored an anger toward Japan and the Japanese. But after working side by side with you during this camp, I have come to see that is wrong. I am in need of reconciliation. I want to say to you now that I have forgiven Japan and the Japanese. I now ask you for your forgiveness." Stunned, Matsuri gladly gave that forgiveness. Glenn stood up and walked away, forgiven, renewed, freed of his anger and hate. We sat there stunned. The Holy Spirit works in ways we cannot even begin to understand or imagine. God brought these two people together from faraway places, and there did his life-giving work of creating forgiveness and joy. And I saw that our Japanese teens were missionaries, messengers of God's good news! It was beautiful.

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I see beautiful signs of hope, and that is what I will write about today.

The president of the JBLC, Rev. Jun Koizumi has put a great emphasis on evangelism and it has shown in the past few years. We have a group of young pastors who are now part of the TNG committee, or The Next Generation Committee. Through the years they have organized annual

camps for elementary, junior/senior high, and youth. This year the junior/senior high camp had the most participants ever and shows signs of continuing growth as we put renewed emphasis on evangelizing the next generation. It is exciting and we see God continuing to provide growth and light.

As a part of this emphasis on youth evangelism, three Japanese colleagues and I recently flew to the U.S. and participated in a Group Workcamp in Blanding, Utah in which 400 high school students gathered from across the United States to help fix 56 homes of the needy in that area while being deepened in their faith through Bible studies and evening programs. It was inspiring, and we hope to bring this idea back to Japan to further outreach to the youth of Japan while serving those in need. It is so exciting and I see the Holy Spirit moving in remarkable ways.

The vast majority of ELCA missionaries in Japan either served as short term lay missionaries before coming as career missionaries, or served the church in some other capacity. In other words, we were led to long-term service through short-term lay programs in which we served the church and her people. With this in mind, that is, growing leaders through service our Lutheran Foundation in Japan has begun several programs in which

Japanese lay people can serve as volunteers overseas. We just sent three teenagers to the United States to participate in a Group Workcamp, fixing the homes of the needy. The day after we sent these three teenagers, we sent our first two Japanese lay short-term volunteer missionaries to India to work with a Lutheran World Relief sponsored project there. We also send volunteers to Brazil to work with children in danger of becoming street children, and still others to serve as camp counselors in ELCA summer camps in the United States. In this way, we hope to raise new leaders through service in the name of our lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is extremely exciting and a joy to participate in these programs.

These are just a few of the areas in which we are working as we reach out with the good news of Jesus Christ to youth and people of all ages while providing opportunities so that others can do the same and experience the joy of service in the name of Jesus Christ.

It is truly a joy and privilege for me to be a part of all of this and I give thanks to all who make this possible. I pray too that you may know the joy and privilege of service in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. That joy and peace fill you all and guide you.