

The Bencke Family in Japan



July 2022: 94 番



July 1st, 2022

**Special Prayer Service for
Ukraine**

Kyushu Lutheran College

***Blessed are the
peacemakers, for
they will be called
children of God.***

Matthew 5:9 (NIV)

For today's morning worship at Kyushu Lutheran College, we held a special service in remembrance of all that is transpiring so many miles away from Japan in the country of Ukraine. While news of the war is on television broadcasts daily, it is easy to become numb to it or even dismiss it as something happening "somewhere else." As Christians, we are a part of a Body, empowered only by the Holy Spirit to stretch arms around the world in an embrace of solidarity, hope, love, and compassion. We do so, too, for our Russian brothers and sisters who are caught in the middle between their government and warring factions.

The choir sang a hymn entitled Prayer for Ukraine, in the Ukrainian language. We invited the faculty and staff to join in about 8 rehearsals, so the end result was a choir of about 50 members accompanied by a nine-member brass ensemble. The handbell team also played a selection re-titled A Child's Prayer for Peace. It was really a profoundly moving experience, I think, for everyone involved, including those who came and participated in the worship service as a part of the assembly.

When we listen to larger groups performing at worship, I explained, the music is not to be perceived as a performance for the worshippers. Instead, we consider it a corporate offering made by the musicians on behalf of the entire congregation, to God. We do our best to work toward excellence, as that is what is befitting for an offering to the Creator of the universe, but we understand our

shortcomings both artistically and as human beings. It is in a posture of humility that we offer what we have both individually and collectively through the music we create.

Home assignment 2022

In a few weeks, our family will be heading back to the United States for the first home assignment we've had in four years. We look forward to visiting our partners in mission to catch up after a long period or meeting some congregations for the first time. We will be visiting congregations in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota this year. The reasons for having home assignment are many, but among the most important include the nurturing of relationships that define us as Church. As members of that larger Body of believers around the world, it is vitally important that we remain alert and apprised of the very real physical and spiritual needs of those who share in the Great Commission. The goal is not only to preach the gospel, but also to foster and strengthen one another's faith. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1 Thess 5:11)."

I (Jackie) will have our first opportunity to "move our daughter in" to college (she'll be a junior), which will be a gift. Emilie had the chance to come home for a spell this summer, so she is enjoying re-connecting with friends she hadn't seen since graduating from high school in Feb 2020. Hannah will have a chance to attend middle school (8th grade) while in the U.S. She's looking forward to it... I'm not exactly sure why.... But I'll take it! We will leave Hannah in the U.S. for an extra few weeks before she comes back to Japan so she can experience a more meaningful chunk of time in her passport culture. We found that that was a game changer for Emilie, allowing her to become familiar with U.S. culture while she mentally prepared for college.

If we don't cross paths this year, I pray that the opportunity arises in the future! In the meantime, I pray that you are blessed with rest and refreshment these summer months.



One of the little projects our chapel committee does is collecting bottle caps to earn money for immunizations in one of our JELA companion projects. Here, the girls are doing the tedious work of counting caps, but doing so with a joyful spirit and plenty of laughter.