

Message from Missionary Pastor Sarah Wilson

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ at Tokyo Lutheran Church,

I am filled with gratitude to God for calling me to Japan to serve as a missionary. I am also grateful to you for accepting a missionary who knows only a few words of Japanese! I am working hard on the language but it will probably be some time before I can speak easily with most of you. I beg your patience and understanding. God has called us together in ministry for a reason!

My family and I have been in our new home for just about one month now. We live on the campus of Japan Lutheran College and Theological Seminary in Mitaka. My husband Andrew has been called to serve there as Professor of Church History. He is also working hard on Japanese! Our son Zeke (short for Ezekiel) is a 7th grade student at the Christian Academy in Japan. He is enjoying learning about Japan, too. His favorite discovery so far is ゼリー!

I am returning to congregational work after 10 years away from it. From 2006 to 2008 I served a small city church in Trenton, New Jersey, USA. Then from 2008 to 2016 we lived in Strasbourg, France, where I worked at the Institute for Ecumenical Research. The Institute is a partner of the Lutheran World Federation. It works to improve the relationships between the world's Lutheran churches and other Christian churches. My specialty was Orthodox churches 正教会 and Pentecostal churches ペンテコステ派. I continue to serve as a consultant for the Institute on the Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogue. In October I will travel to Santiago de Chile サンティアゴ (チリ) to participate in this year's dialogue. I also teach a course every November for two weeks in Wittenberg, Germany. It is about Martin Luther's theology and is for Lutheran pastors from all over the world.

From 2016 to the middle of 2018, we lived again in America, with Andrew's family in Minnesota. We knew it was time to leave France but we weren't sure yet where God was calling us next. It was very good to have time to be close to our family again after our years in France, and good preparation for our next adventure! Over the past year we discerned a call for our whole family to come to Japan and work for the kingdom of God.

I am very happy to have the chance again to preach regularly, celebrate the liturgy and the Lord's Supper, pray with people and teach them to pray, and help Christians understand the Holy Scripture more deeply. I also look forward to new opportunities for sharing the gospel with people who don't know it yet, both Japanese and foreigners living here in Japan. I am extremely happy to have such excellent colleagues to help me. There is so much to learn! I feel like a complete beginner again. But I begin this work in complete confidence that God is saying to me: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, like St. Paul, "I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (II Corinthians 12:9).

Please pray for my work, for my partnership with Sekino-sensei and Gotoh-sensei, and for the ministry of every Christian at Tokyo Lutheran Church. We are all called to be God's lights in the world!