



South Carolina Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Companion Synod Relationship between the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the ELCA South Carolina Synod

Sharing Prayers for Peace with our Companions in the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The ELCA South Carolina Synod is using the month of August to pray with and for our Companion partners in the JELC. We are taking their lead in offering up petitions of prayers for peace among friends and neighbors around the world. Petitions of Prayer have been provided for each Sunday in August by Pastors and Deacons of both the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the South Carolina Synod – ELCA. We are also including this brief summary below of our relationship with this Global Companion Partner. Please feel free to share this in your weekly bulletin or newsletter and to include the prayer petitions below in the Prayers of the Church each week. May our hearts and prayers be united in peace around the globe.

The beginnings of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church go back to 1892 when the first missionaries to Japan were sent by the United Synod of the South a predecessor of the Lutheran Church in America arrived in Yokohama. The first worship service in Japan was observed on Easter Sunday of 1893 in the city of Saga on the island of Kyushu under the leadership of Pastor James Sherer and R. B. Peery assisted by a Japanese co-worker, Ryohei Yamanouchi. Pastor Sherer was commissioned at St. John Lutheran Church, Charleston.

The first 16 believers were baptized within the first 2 years of the work and by 1898, the JELC was organized with 60 baptized members with the city of Kumamoto becoming the center of Japanese Lutheranism. The first expatriate workers were soon joined by missionaries from the American Danish Lutheran Church (1898) and Finland (1900). The first church building was also consecrated in the city of Saga in 1900.

In 1909, the Lutheran Theological Seminary was established in Kumamoto to train national workers and by 1920 congregations were being established in major cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe. In 1925, the Lutheran Theological Seminary was transferred to Nakano, Tokyo.

The Companion Synod relationship between the JELC and the SC Synod – ELCA is very historic and spans over 100 years. Pastor Jerry & Mrs. Janice Livingston were long term missionaries sent from the SC Synod who lived and worked in the JELC for many years. In more recent years we have had some exchange of Pastors between the churches, including Pastor Asano coming to South Carolina and Pastor Byrne going to Japan, each to serve for a year. We have enjoyed visits from several pastors for Synod Assembly and from several youth for Bishop's School. Some youth have also come to participate in the ELCA Youth Gatherings in the past years and have had a chance to visit Lutheridge and congregations of the South Carolina Synod. In 2016 a group of SC Synod leaders visited our sisters and brothers in various areas of the JELC to deepen our relationships and learn more about the Lutheran church and heritage, as well as our work together. The SC Synod also sent support to the JELC following the earthquake in Kumamoto.

August is a month when we remember the tragic history of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which happen in 1945. 76 years ago Atomic bombs seared the cities and the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which completely changed the landscapes and scarred the hearts of the people. Today, from the ashes of the past, Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been reborn as cities of peace. Young and old pray for peace around the world and recognize that as citizens of the world we each have the responsibility to live in peace with reverence for life so that no one else should ever suffer the effects of nuclear weapons. These cities lead the way in promoting and teaching peace and helping each generation of youth to know the value of living in harmony with one another.