

The Bencke Family in Japan



November 2019- 78 番

Typhoon season

It's typhoon season in Japan. Probably most of you have seen the news footage of the devastation wrought upon northeastern Japan, where Typhoon Hagibis brought wrath. At this time, the account is 78 dead and 9 still missing. Hagibis was the 19th typhoon of the season.

When we are notified that bad weather is coming, we prepare. We prepare for wind, rain, lightning, landslides, and flooding. We prepare our emergency kits, buy water, and check batteries. Usually we have plenty of notice. Sometimes not.

We can sometimes experience metaphorical storms in our lives. Sometimes we can prepare for them, sometimes not. Our family is in the midst of a storm didn't see coming. This past August, Patrick suffered another mild stroke, followed several weeks later with what was diagnosed as pneumonia, but was really the early stages of heart failure. A surgery was scheduled for October 16th, but because the heart failure advanced so quickly and dramatically, was postponed until the 17th while the doctor and surgeon created a new plan of action.

On the evening of the 17th, Patrick underwent an almost six-hour surgery, ablating seven full areas of the heart, and one partial area. As of today, he continues to be monitored at the hospital, with the main complication being with his lungs, which were quite full of fluid. The prognosis for recovery is good, and Patrick expects to make a full recovery, but the experience was terrifying for me.

Furthermore, as anyone who has experienced something similar would attest to,

Some of the prayers of our hearts...

Thanksgiving:

For the team of doctors and specialists who provided such wonderful care for Patrick at the hospital. Dr. Kaneko even made a special trip to the hospital on Saturday morning, his only day off of the week, *just* to check in on Patrick. Dr. Okumura made sure everything was explained thoroughly *in English* so both Patrick and I could feel assured of the processes. Our staff and colleagues at Kyushu Lutheran College made sure that Patrick's classes would all be covered for the unforeseeable future so that Patrick and rest and recover without the pressure of having to make-up classes. My friend and colleague Katie, who made the trip to the hospital late at night to hold my hand while I trembled and who held my hair out of my face while I dry-heaved into the toilet as the stress took over my body, even as she has two young children of her own to care for. We are thankful for our Lutheran friends at church, who have been steadfast in their offers to help care for kids, provide food, drive, and do whatever – even laundry – while we push through this. Our friends and family have extended their prayers across the ocean from the very beginning, interceding in prayer for us, even offering to travel to Japan as Patrick begins the journey of recovery.

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ELCA— Global Mission

If you are interested in learning more about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's global mission and/or opportunities to serve, please visit: www.elca.org/globalmission

For more information on mission funding, please contact any of the following individuals:

Global Mission
8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago IL 60631
(800) 638-3522, ext. 2769

Andrew Steele continues to lead the major fundraising efforts on behalf of missionary sponsorship and programs of ELCA Global Mission. His new title is Director, Global Mission Funding. Andrew is often on the road, visiting with the major donors who make much of this work possible.

Jessica Hacker is the Director of Stewardship, Operations and Planning. Her work (and the larger team) includes not only Global Mission Funding, but the scholarship operations of the ELCA Fund for Leaders and donor relations related to all gifts made to ELCA ministries. She has been with the Mission Advancement Unit for 9 years and is a returned missionary, having served as a GM2 in Germany.

Jenny Ackerman joins the Global Mission Funding team as Global Mission Operations Manager. She serves as the main contact for any fundraising or home assignment questions, facilitates reporting of fundraising and best practice trainings and leads donor relations. She previously held a role with ELCA World Hunger's network engagement team.

Diane Wilk is the project assistant for Global Mission Funding. Diane has been a part of the Global Mission Funding (previously the Global Church Sponsorship) team for 8 years and provides wonderful continuity and wisdom for those of us who are new to this work. She helps steward congregational covenants and resource donors with information about our ministry and why their continued support is important.

balancing the need to be forthcoming with information and at the same time cognizant of my children's ability to handle the information was *incredibly* difficult. Our family and friends in the U.S. have been steadfast, and it is only now that I have had the time and strength to share our story with our wider base of support among the churches we serve.

It is not always easy to be joyful. It is not always easy to hear the Word of light and love. I have to confess my faltering faith at times, wondering how I could feel so abandoned when I need Him the most. The words of Psalm 130 bring peace to me. The psalms give me a vast vision of who God is and how to deal with life.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJUqY_6tqo

And while my voice trembles too much these days, and Patrick's lung are too weak to sing, singing reminds me of what God has done in my life. Like asking others to pray for me, I invite you to sing for us.

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever will be*

We hold tight to the Promise of eternal life and in God's bountiful mercy and grace. We cling to the hand of the Father who created us for His purposes. We look into the eyes of Jesus, searching for the comfort He promises.



Holding hands pre-surgery

And we look toward Tomorrow, even as we rejoice in the miracle of Now.