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Japan Harvest
Winter 2016



Five Years On



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Winter 2016



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Tokyo Prayer Summit

Tuesday, May 10 to Friday, May 13, 2016
Okutama Bible Chalet

West Japan Prayer Summit

Monday, May 23 to Thursday, May 26, 2016
Nosegawa Bible Camp



June

Training for Trainers (T4T)

Friday, June 10, 2016
TBA, Tokyo

Training for Trainers (T4T)

Monday, June 13, 2016
TBA, Nagoya



Regular Contributors

Good Writing



Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's learnt most of what she knows about writing from her international critique group, Truth Talk. She's Australian and works with OMF International.

Focus on Prayer



Ken Reddington and his wife, Toshiko, are church-planting missionaries in Kochi-ken. Ken is an MK who returned to Japan as a missionary from the US more than 35 years ago.

Member Care



Eileen Nielsen and her husband, Jim, are church planters who have been working in Tohoku doing survivor care. Eileen has a masters in counseling and is available for Skype counseling. Contact her at eileenpielsen@gmail.com.

Pursuit of Excellence



Michael B. Essenburg (Christian Reformed Japan Mission) serves at Okinawa Christian School International. Time permitting, Michael works with missions.

New Voices is by missionaries who have been in Japan for less than five years. We welcome your submissions for future issues.

We also welcome your submissions for other Regular articles without a standing contributor

Japan Harvest publishes articles in either US English or Commonwealth English, depending upon the author's primary English background.

Encouraging, inspiring, and equipping the members of the JEMA community



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<http://www.jema.org/jh-writers-guidelines.html>

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Five Years On

There are moments that divide your life into “before” and “after”. Like graduations, marriage, children, and moving, I suspect that for anyone in Japan on the 11th of March, 2011, that date is a dividing moment. Even for those who weren’t in the Tohoku area or directly associated with relief and recovery efforts, it is a day that is marked in our memories for life.

Even this magazine has a story to go with that event. This is what I wrote in the editorial of the magazine issue we produced in May of that year:

Gary (Bauman, managing editor at the time) came to me only days after the March 11 disasters. He said, “Let’s put aside all our plans for the Spring [issue], do a special edition focus on the current events . . . and I want you to do it.” That meant a standing start—we had nothing. However, my immediate reaction was to agree . . . [My] next reaction was, “What! Me?” I’d only walked through one whole cycle of this magazine’s production with Gary and . . . I knew [so little].

Many of the people who usually write for Japan Harvest were hard at work with CRASH (Christian Relief, Assistance, Support, and Hope; a non-profit Christian disaster relief organization) or in relief work. However, only ten days after that standing start God had given me 22 potential articles, two assistant editors, six people taking first-hand accounts and turning them into articles, and two people with journalistic training sourcing or writing more articles. And now, just over a month later we have a completed magazine. Amazing! And the glory doesn’t go to me or any who helped me, because there is no way that we could have organized that by ourselves.

The magazine was full of stories of hope. First-hand stories of escape, God’s protection, guidance, and provision. At a time when the media was full of tragic stories and much doubt and hyperbole about the nuclear situation, JEMA was able to publish stories that showed our members and others in the Christian and missionary community serving Japan in practical, God-glorifying ways. I have also heard since that people came to Japan as missionaries partly because they saw that magazine. Praise God!

We sold out of the 3,400 copies of that issue that we printed, nearly four times our usual print run at the time. It usually only takes one day to pack the magazines for posting. However, the office staff (Atsuko Tateishi and Yuka Oguro) and I remember we worked several days in the office to mail all those magazines out.

What particularly stood out in that Spring 2011 issue was God’s provision of articles, resources, and people. As I’ve worked on this magazine for the last five years, I’ve seen the same provision over and over. God continues to provide us with a variety of talented team members and many writers. Our Japan Harvest team is now more than three times the size of what it was in 2010. This issue has an art director, three designers, two associate editors, an assistant editor, a proofreader, a fact checker, and me as managing editor.

It was a joy to read the stories of what God’s done in the last five years as we prepared this magazine: stories of unprecedented cooperation, of unexpected new developments, of new projects, and new churches. However, it’s been challenging to read about all that still needs to be done and the needs that are still unmet. I pray that this issue will both encourage you and spur you on to action.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

Touching the hearts of the 3.11 survivors

Tomohiro Hoshino's Poems and Art of Flowers Exhibition held in Ōfunato

Translated by Grace Koshino

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — October 18, 2015

Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun

In September, Ōfunato in Iwate hosted an exhibition of 90 of Tomohiro Hoshino's poems and pieces of art. Over the seven days, 2,424 people visited, including those living in temporary housing.

The exhibition was planned with the hope that Hoshino's artwork would encourage people in the region, which had been devastated by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Over 100 volunteers from all across Japan came to support the event.

Kōhei Koyama, the director of the event said, "Pastor Nobuo Abe from Sagamihara Grace Chapel, together with people from Sagamihara City who were experienced in holding such events, taught us how to hold an exhibition as well as supporting us financially and practically. Many people, including local people from Ōfunato and core members of the 3.11 Iwate Church Network, also gave us a hand."

To gauge people's responses to the exhibition, they asked visitors to fill in a questionnaire. A fifth of the visitors did that—a high number for such an exhibition. Koyama said, "This shows how touched the visitors were."

Here are some of the responses: "(The artwork) touched my heart. It made me want to be kind. Thank you very much" (female, 40s). "I first read a book by Hoshino in junior high; it was a book my mother recommended. My mother was killed in the earthquake.

Today I was reminded of the time we spoke together about Hoshino's paintings. I wish I could have come here with her" (female, 50s). "Each of the paintings and poems was inspirational. I would like to see more of his artwork to find out what Tomohiro considered 'more valuable than life'" (female, 20s). "I felt I didn't want to waste my life. I now have the desire to live" (male, 20s). "For the first time after the earthquake, tears naturally welled up in my eyes. I don't think I was able to genuinely cry up until then. Thank you very much" (female, 40s). "I lost my husband in the tsunami. After

looking at Tomohiro's paintings and poems, I felt comforted. Thank you very much" (female, 60s).

During the exhibition pastors took turns leading a time of devotions and each night the staff had a time of prayer. Koyama expressed his gratitude to "those who prayed for the event and offered their support."

Yoshiya Kondō, head of the executive committee and pastor of Morioka Bible Baptist Church, said, "In both the exhibition and the aid work we have been doing in the quake-stricken area, we have seen the Lord work in

places where there was nothing to begin with. People from across Japan and abroad have been showing their support and lending us a hand. We have also been blessed financially."

In the opening ceremony, Kondō stated that he "believed the exhibition would touch the hearts of the 3.11 survivors," and afterwards he was gratified that it had. ■



"I would like to see more of his artwork to find out what Tomohiro considered 'more valuable than life'."



Yoshiya Kondō speaking at the opening ceremony



West News

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!"

A 'ghost' that never gives thanks

Ayako Miura's play "Christmas at the Sparrow's Inn"

Translated by: Hiromi Kiuchi

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN — November 25, 2015

Photos contributed by Christian Shimbun

Ayako Miura wrote her only play in response to a request from the organizing committee of an annual Christmas event hosted by local evangelical and Catholic churches in Asahikawa city, Hokkaido. It was later published by Chea Japan as a picture book, *Christmas at the Sparrow's Inn*.

On November 17,

2015, a troupe called *Budō no Ki* (Grapevine) performed a dramatization of the story in a play titled "The Christmas of the Sparrow with a Cut Tongue" at the Korean YMCA in Japan in Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo. Following the performance,

Mr. Tatsue Morishita, a representative of Ayako Miura Book Appreciation Society, gave a talk on "The Wicker Basket that Swallows up Ghosts."

The main characters in the play are a sparrow that gets its tongue cut

(Chiko), a greedy old lady (Obāsan), her husband (Ojīsan), and Jesus. The story depicts sin as both a wicker basket and ghosts. It illustrates how Obāsan and even Ojīsan, who was regarded as a righteous man, had sin in their hearts, and how Jesus carried those sins to the cross and paid the price for them.

In his talk, Morishita commented, "Ayako was a sparrow that had its tongue cut. She was an elementary school teacher when World War 2 broke out in 1939. Ayako obeyed the militaristic orders and taught her students, 'You are to sacrifice your life for your country. This is the honorable Japanese way of living.' However, when Japan lost the war, she had to instruct

them to blot out the militaristic sections of their textbooks in black ink. Ayako no longer felt qualified to teach, and she resigned from her

position. I think I can say she was very much like a sparrow whose tongue had been cut."

"There were ghosts [symbolic of sin] inside Obāsan and Ojīsan. Do we realize in our daily lives, that we also have ghosts inside of us?" Morishita continued. "I feel Ayako is questioning through her story whether we have

become ghosts without realizing it. A large prideful ghost even came out of Ojīsan. A Bible was placed in Ojīsan's wicker basket, but he never read it. And it is the Bible that reminds us of the ghosts inside all of us."

Morishita had an aunt with mental disabilities. He continued with his testimony of how he became aware of a 'ghost' inside of him through this aunt. "Because of her mental disability, my aunt caused much trouble. Gradually I began to wish my aunt was gone. I stopped using her name to address her, but instead said 'Hey you.' But when my daughter was born, my aunt said to her, 'Thank you for being born.' It was my aunt who spoke heaven's language, and it was then that I realized I was a 'ghost' who never gave thanks."

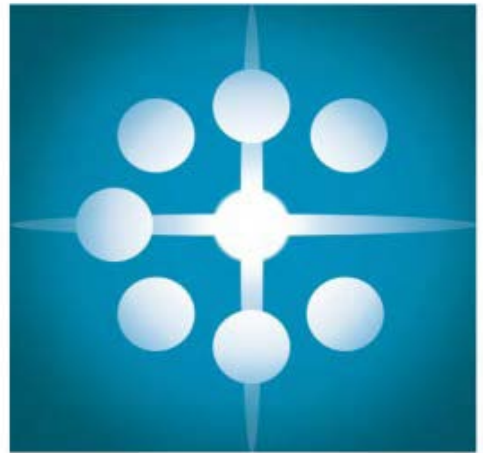
"Jesus says to me, 'Thank you,' just because of who I am and not because of my deeds. It is only a true Christmas if we can respond to Jesus' love by saying to Him, 'Thank you for coming into this world for someone like me.'"

Morishita concluded, "I believe Ayako's desire for all her readers was that they receive Jesus, who will carry their wicker baskets, into their hearts." ■





Member
MISSIONS



CONVERGE
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PIONEERS



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The year was 1948 and the Baptist General Conference (BGC) responded to the call to send missionaries to post-war Japan. However, the BGC did not possess the legal status necessary for that endeavor. That year, under a cooperative agreement with the Far East Gospel Crusade (now SEND), Francis and Marion Sorley arrived in Japan. Due to shortages at the time, they brought their own house trailer and vehicle with them. Since that time, 26 families and six single missionaries, along with countless short-term missionaries, have served the Lord in Japan under the BGC, now known as Converge Worldwide.

In 1965 the churches planted by missionaries working cooperatively with young Japanese pastors joined together to form the Japan Baptist Church Association Rengo (日本バプテスト教会連合). The Headquarters of the Rengo sits on the same land where the Sorleys first parked their house trailer in Nerima-ku, Tokyo. In November 2015, the Rengo celebrated 50 years of ministry. In that time, the Rengo has grown to an association of 66 churches stretching from Tokyo to the Kii Peninsula, Kansai, and Hokkaido. Currently, there are eight church projects underway, with more being planned.

Converge Worldwide has one mission—multiplying transformational churches. We are committed to developing communities of Jesus-followers who regularly meet and fellowship in reproducing, multiplying movements, which holistically impact individuals, communities and regions through the power of the gospel. In view of this mission, Converge Worldwide has one central ministry focus, namely, developing transformational leaders. Our role in Japan is to accomplish this in strategic partnership with the Japan Baptist Church Association Rengo.

Currently, Converge Worldwide Japan consists of nine missionaries involved in ministries such as teaching at Christian schools, providing leadership for the Church



Current Missionaries at the recent Ground-breaking Ceremony for the new missionary residence/guest house in Tokyo: L to R; Ian Smith, John and Elaine Mehn, Barb and Jeff Chapman, Christine and Rob Wright, Jane Fischer. On Home Assignment: Lori Harms

Planting Institute, church multiplication and outreach development, and care of Third Culture Kids. Our newest missionaries to the field are in language school, preparing for involvement in evangelistic and discipleship ministries.

In 2011 and 2012, we welcomed over 120 short-term missionaries, who had come to aid in disaster relief ministry in response to the triple disasters of March 2011 in Northeast Japan. Converge Worldwide missionaries, career and short-term, worked closely with various aid organizations to provide relief and rebuilding of lives, as well as homes. We are committed to showing God's mercy whenever disaster strikes.

We are united in our belief that God will continue to build his church in Japan according to his plan and timing. We are privileged to join our Lord in making his name known throughout the land of Japan and continue to pray that "the Lord of the harvest will send out workers into his harvest field."



Baptism held at the home of Jeff and Barb Chapman in Nara in May 2013. Mrs. Takemoto became the first Christian in her family.

Converge (Converge Worldwide Japan Mission)

**Converge
Worldwide has
one mission
— multiplying
transformational
churches.**

Pioneers Japan has a small but growing presence in Japan. Our desire is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to those areas of Japan that have little Christian influence. Wherever possible, we partner with national churches to support and strengthen the believers. We currently have people serving in Kamaishi, Ishinomaki, Nagoya, Hiroshima, Shimonoseki, and Fukuoka.

Our Vision

Pioneers' vision statement is to mobilize teams to glorify God among unreached peoples by initiating church-planting movements in partnership with local churches.

Core Values

Our core values serve as the heart and focus of each team.

1. **Passion for God**—The Great Commandment is our motive for the Great Commission. We want to live our lives fully surrendered to him so that all nations may know that he alone is God.
2. **Unreached Peoples**—Pioneer focuses on those with the least opportunity to hear and understand the gospel.
3. **Church-planting Movements**—We want to see new believers united in fellowship with other believers, forming churches that plant churches—until all peoples are reached.
4. **Ethos of Grace**—Understanding that each person bears the image of God, we endeavor to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect in all our relationships, encouraging each one to attain his or her full potential in Christ.
5. **The Local Church**—Pioneers partners with sending churches to plant new communities of Christians. We also work alongside local, indigenous fellowships wherever possible.

6. **Team-centered**—Teams that are both task- and member-focused are the core of Pioneers. This is crucial since many of the world's remaining unreached peoples are in difficult and isolated pockets of the world.
7. **Innovation and Flexibility**—Reaching the world's remaining unreached peoples requires creativity and sensitivity to the unique calling, vision, and needs of each missionary.
8. **Participatory Servant-leadership**—Pioneers has a decentralized leadership structure. We are principle-driven rather than policy-driven, applying an interactive approach to decision-making that is based on trust.

JAPAN Launch

To prepare new missionaries for long-term service and fruitfulness in ministry, Pioneers Japan has developed JAPAN Launch, which is a two-year process designed to:

- Support new missionaries as they systematically study Japanese language and culture.
- Provide skills and knowledge to evangelize and disciple in the Japanese context.
- Journey with new missionaries as they enter a country of intense spiritual warfare and learn to battle spiritually.
- Practice the skills necessary to flourish on a Pioneers team.
- Encourage character and spiritual formation as God prepares them to serve in a new context.

Pioneers Japan desires to partner with other mission organizations to become more effective at evangelizing and discipling our Japanese friends. We eagerly anticipate joining with God as he reaches this country.

- 1 Members of Pioneer Japan
- 2 Kid's lesson in Fukuoka
- 3 Worship karaoke in Tohoku
- 4 Hiroshima team prayer time



Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

1. You love Japan.
2. You want to build lifelong friendships with Japanese and international students from Asia, Africa, Europe, and America.
3. You want to live in the Greater Tokyo Area, the world's most populous metropolitan area.
4. You want to speak Japanese fluently.
5. You want to understand Japan, Asia, and the world.
6. You want to learn deeply and widely about Scripture, theology, church history, and Japanese religion.
7. You want to study subjects like philosophy, history, linguistics, anthropology, and education without ignoring the most important questions you have about life, faith, and God.
8. You want to go to a school of "big learning" (the literal meaning of *daigaku*, the Japanese word for college) without getting lost in the system.
9. You want to get a college degree without taking on debt that will take years and years to pay.
10. You want to network with today's and tomorrow's Christian leaders in Japan, and to work with them to solve problems facing Japanese church and society.

Come join us at Tokyo Christian University! What reasons do you have to go anywhere else?

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Fukushima's Long Uncertainty

by Andy Meeko

Recovery from the aftermath of the third disaster of March 2011 is far from over.

Five years have passed. Aside from Chernobyl, Fukushima is the only nuclear disaster with a Level 7 rating.¹ Doing justice to explaining the current and future needs in Fukushima in a short magazine article is a long shot, but here we go.

After the meltdown, I spent many months mobilizing care in the region. If I was to choose one word to summarize what I have seen since then, the word would be, unfortunately: neglect. Although personally I had far more previous connections to Miyagi than Fukushima, I noticed that the majority of disaster intervention effort was traversing Fukushima as quickly as possible to get further north. So now in Fukushima we have some regions and survivors that have been particularly neglected. Famous groups like Fukushima Daiichi Baptist, which evacuated from a stone's throw away from the reactor, have received marvelous support. However, there are others that have not even had one visit.

One reason for the neglect has obviously been the safety issue. Everyone going to Fukushima must make their own decision regarding safety, but currently people are likely to get substantially more radiation on an international flight or CT scan than from a trip to this prefecture. However, in October last year the first official meltdown-linked cancer was diagnosed.² Also a study by Okayama University of children from Fukushima shows them to have a 20-50 times higher chance of getting thyroid cancer than the national level, although it may be too early to draw conclusions.³

Fukushima survivors fall into three groups.

The Relocated

Currently there are 80,000 people displaced from the region around the reactor. These people have been forced to make their home elsewhere. Many

have still not normalized their lives. The transition out of temporary housing has been slow. Four years after the Great Hanshin Earthquake only 10% remained in temporary housing, but for the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake 70% still remained. At the four year anniversary, 21% of all survivors in Tohoku who lost their homes said they were hard up financially (とても困っている). Thirty-five percent who had an existing chronic disease reported the illness getting worse. Many had developed new illnesses; particularly prevalent was high blood pressure, but also diabetes, mental illness, heart disease, and gastrointestinal diseases.⁴

The Un-Evacuated

Radiation levels in Fukushima City itself (a "safe" destination for evacuees) was a concern and residents have continued to live with the uncertainty of danger. This has produced inordinate levels of stress. Radiation over the safe limit has been detected in milk, beef, fish, rice, *natto*, vegetables, seaweed, tea, and more. Nevertheless, the government did not begin actual safety testing until August 2011 and continued encouraging people nationwide to consume Fukushima products.⁵ It is hard to estimate the physical and emotional damage this has done. In a mothers' support group, in Miharu, I recall a mother telling how her son had an emotional meltdown at school, sitting in a corner and pounding his head with his fists. Their home is 55 km from the reactor.

The Re-Settlers

During 2015 a couple of towns were "decontaminated" and cleared for return. Naraha, 15 km from the reactor, received the first complete overhaul and reopened in September 2015. On my visit there that month, I found few ready to return. An elderly couple moving back from Iwaki bemoaned their grandchildren wouldn't be coming to

visit if they lived there. The town is lonely, dark at night, and as rumor has it, unsafe for women.⁶

In these settings, many have continued to minister, but they are generally fatigued and often burned out. Too many pastors have been vigilant for too long and are in emotional or psychosomatic danger. During a visit this October, a pastor's wife told me her husband was in need of mental health care.

Churches on the whole in Japan have an uphill struggle, but for churches in

"In these settings many have continued to minister, but they are generally fatigued and often burned out."

Fukushima, the travail is more intense. Many continue without enough assistance. Fukushima's recovery is far from over. It is a very long task. When making plans to help, we must not think in terms of trips, but years, even decades. Can we begin to own up to the neglect? Can we be known for stepping up our commitment even when most others are leaving and forgetting? **JH**

Dr. Andy Meeko is a second-generation missionary with JBF. Designer of Survivor Care for CRASH the first nine months of the disasters. Director of RiskRide Campaign (suicide prevention) for Tohoku the second year post-disaster. Presently continuing church and community support for Fukushima.

1. "International Nuclear Event Scale," accessed January 12, 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Nuclear_Event_Scale.
2. "Back to the Nuclear Zone," *The Economist*, October 24, 2015.
3. "New report links thyroid cancer rise to Fukushima nuclear crisis" accessed January 12, 2016. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/07/national/science-health/new-report-links-thyroid-cancer-rise-fukushima-nuclear-crisis/#.VkvAo2zouUk>.
4. 03-08-14 NHK TV Broadcastシリーズ東日本大震災 震災4年 被災者1万人の声 ~復興はどこまで進んだのか~
5. "Radiation effects from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster," accessed Jan 12, 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiation_effects_from_the_Fukushima_Daiichi_nuclear_disaster.
6. "Back to the Nuclear Zone," *The Economist*.

THE UNEXPECTED CALLING

Through the disaster of 3.11, God has raised a new generation of workers, many of whom never thought they would become missionaries

By Virginia Lavallee

I was reluctant to consider mission work, because I knew how hard it was. My mom grew up as a missionary kid (MK) in the Philippines. I grew up with a huge map above our dining-room table covered with missionary prayer cards. My family often hosted missionaries and national workers. Many of my uncles, aunts, cousins, and siblings went to the mission field. The reality of raising money, meeting newsletter deadlines, traveling to churches, and coping with separation from friends and family was very real to me. While I had great experiences on short-term trips, I walked away aware of the hard realities of what it meant to minister in far-off places.

And yet, I can now see how God had prepared me for work in Tohoku. The disaster struck north-east Japan during my last semester in college. Just ten days after graduation, I found myself on a plane heading to Japan. What initially started as a three-month trip extended to almost five years of work with Ishinomaki Christian Center (ICC) under the title of “missionary.” During those five years, I’ve discovered many others who have been similarly prepared for ministry.

ICC Field Director Stephen Nakahashi (33) grew up as a preacher’s kid (PK) in Mie Prefecture and was also fully aware of the difficulties of full-time ministry. But as God would have it, Stephen was in Osaka looking for a job when he was pursued by Samaritan’s Purse to work as a translator. He initially turned down the job, but after deliberating for two more weeks, he finally decided to sign a contract for six months, after which he intended to switch to a “real”

“It soon became clear that God was doing much more through him than using him as a translator.”

job. It soon became clear that God was doing much more through him than using him as a translator. By the end of 2012, he was in full-time ministry with ICC.

Nozomi Houlette (24) is an MK from Saitama, Japan. Through an internship with Harvard University, she worked at ICC for a couple of summers. She said, “Being half North American and half Japanese, I had, and still continue to deal with, baggage concerning ministry and missions work in Japan.” But she confessed that, “Volunteering in Ishinomaki with foreign and local Christian workers who strove, with love, to rebuild the city, helped dislodge my cynical biases about missions. The work with ICC felt holistic and tangible, and I think that is what bringing God’s kingdom to earth should look like. My involvement with ICC paved the way for me to return to Japan and work with Megumi Project in Tohoku full-time.” She is committed to two more years in Onagawa, Miyagi.

Three years into his work in Ishinomaki, third-generation Japan MK Jordan Foxwell (27) realized that he was now a “missionary.”

His grandparents’ job description did not seem to apply to him. Their stories of arriving in post-World War II Japan seemed different from his story. They brought three years’ worth of food packed in a container because food was scarce, whereas his stories are of leading volunteer teams, rebuilding homes, refurbishing parks, and organizing children’s programs. Jordan said, “It’s mind-blowing what the work has involved and how God brought me into what he is doing in Ishinomaki.”

Many young relief workers have headed on to seminary. Satoshi Ueno (33) said, “As a surfer who never went to college, I didn’t think seminary was even an option for me, despite wanting to go.” He shared that, “Through the work in the disaster area, I came in contact with many pastors, missionaries, and ministry workers who spoke into my life. These people encouraged me and gave me the opportunity to be in full-time ministry. By God’s grace, I faced my weaknesses, and God shaped me to serve God and people. That’s what brought me to seminary.” Satoshi is now in his second year at Kansai Bible Institute.

Sometimes even shorter trips can make a big impact. Since 2012, Derek Yee (29), a Californian, has traveled multiple times to the Tohoku disaster area for trips between two weeks and three months. Half Japanese with a degree in Japanese language, he was perfectly prepared for ministry in Japan without realizing it. His first-hand experience of the needs in Japan led him to go to Fuller Seminary to prepare to become a pastor.

In the US, many young people go to seminary after tasting Christian leadership in college or youth ministry, but there is little opportunity for that in Japan. Instead, God opened a way through relief work. “When I took classes at Christ Bible Seminary in Nagoya, I was surprised at how many students were there because of the disaster,” said Roger Lowther (41), missionary with Mission to the World. “Every month, it seemed, different students shared their testimony in chapel about hearing God’s call to full-time ministry while doing relief work.”

Many more stories could be told! The disaster proved to be a gateway for PKs, MKs, and those reluctant to do mission work to enter full-time ministry. God guided us into a path for our lives that we had not anticipated. As the Teacher said, “Consider what God has done: who can straighten what he has made crooked?” (Ecclesiastes 7:13, NIV). God is working through the tragedy of 3.11 to raise a whole new generation in Japan, putting young workers in new and unexpected Christian leadership roles and redeeming brokenness in our world, all for the sake of His glory. Praise be to God! **JH**

Virginia Lavallee (26) from Mississippi, US, works with Ishinomaki Christian Center, a non-denominational Christian organization, helping local churches, developing volunteer projects, and running music programs for schools and communities. She is with Mission to the World.

Do for One What You Wish You Could Do for All

Faced with overwhelming need in the wake of the triple disaster, Richard Amos focused on helping those few that God put in his path.

*By Richard Amos
with Judy Amos*

As I watched the TV news reports of the horrendous destruction caused by Japan's 2011 tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear disasters, I could think of nothing but getting to Japan quickly to help. At age 76, I couldn't do heavy lifting, but having spent over 40 years in Japan, I did know my way around and could drive a truck to deliver supplies.

Initially, fellow-OMSer Steve King and I picked up and distributed supplies provided by Food for the Hungry, Samaritan's Purse, and CRASH. People were appreciative everywhere we went, but whatever we did seemed like a drop in the bucket. I began to

focus on needs I could meet, rather than be overwhelmed by all those I could not meet.

I tried unsuccessfully to rent a truck, but then a Japanese friend offered me his station wagon. I crammed supplies into the car and headed north of Sendai, praying that God would lead me to a place not yet reached.

The road was nearly impassable in many places. I seldom saw signs of life, except for Self-Defense Forces clearing roads and searching for victims. Eventually, I came upon the parking lot of a devastated convenience store in Minamisanriku, where people lined

up to receive hot noodles. They were camping out in what was left of their homes or staying with relatives. I asked a young man if people needed supplies. "Oh, yes," he replied. "You are the first one to come." God had answered my prayer! Volunteers in the area were supplying a simple hot meal once a day, but besides that no supplies had reached the area. We quickly distributed our supplies, and I promised to come back with more. When I asked the young man if there was anything in particular he needed, he said, "I surely would like a watch. I only have my stomach clock to go by."

I went back and forth from Sendai to Minamisanriku for a couple of weeks, filling and emptying the station wagon, mostly with essentials, but I didn't forget the watch. My wife, Judy, subsequently joined me and we did trips from Kantō. Sometimes we used the OMS truck. Many others came in to help the town, but there was still great need and opportunity to share the





each time, they began to take the initiative in 2013. Chiba District churches “adopted” the complex, and now do all the planning for cook-outs, fellowship, and distribution of supplies.

The needs in the area have changed over time. At first, people were desperate for the most basic things. But later people’s requirements changed to the need to connect with others. People were assigned to temporary housing complexes by lottery, not choice. The mostly elderly residents didn’t know the other residents and, despite living in such close quarters, they remained relatively isolated from one another. Someone told us that about the only time they use the community building that had been added to the complex is when we visit and provide dinner for everyone.

Last fall, the manager of the complex asked us again, “We appreciate what you do, but why do you keep coming to such a small place?” It gave us another chance to speak of the love of God that motivates us to share his love. One

of their greatest concerns is that they not be forgotten. Each time we go we assure them that we have not forgotten them and that God hasn’t either. **JH**

Dick served with OMS in evangelism (1958–60), and with his wife Judy in church planting and evangelism (1967–2005). Judy developed the series, At Ease in English. They now live in the US but minister in Japan two months a year.

Photos supplied by the author.

love of Christ with the residents of this fishing village, which had never had a Christian church and whose last Bible study had closed 20 years ago.

Eventually, the thousands of homeless in Minamisanriku were resettled into 59 temporary housing complexes, the largest of which had 222 units. We could not meet the needs of 222 households, so we concentrated on a smaller complex of 22 units. When that complex received help from other sources, we searched for a smaller complex where we could make a difference. That is when we were introduced to the 10-unit Kamihoro complex tucked back in the hills.

Japanese pastors and church members began asking to go with us to Kamihoro each time we came back to Japan on a semi-annual ministry trip. At first, in 2012, they brought much-appreciated supplies, but were shy about interacting with residents. However, after concentrating on one location and taking the same core team



How Did I Get Here?

The people of Ishinomaki have seen truths of the Bible practically demonstrated as the body of Christ worked together in unity in their city.

By Jordan Foxwell

Just three months after I finished college in the US, the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident that struck the Tohoku region of Japan, called me to the country of my childhood. Looking back, I was a bit headstrong, truly believing I could make a significant difference. And I'm sure there was a certain amount of arrogance and naivety in my thinking at that time. Regardless, without too much planning, I hopped on a plane and headed back to Japan.

I worked hard during those early weeks, but I quickly learned that my heart needed a great deal of transformation. While I had uprooted my life in the US to serve God and the people of Japan, I had come with my own ideas of how God would use me, my own preconceptions of the paths he works in, and my own subconscious motivation and reward system. I had

to learn—and am still learning—that I need to recognize how big God is, how small I am on my own, and how much he loves and guides me.

In the initial years, I was privileged to work with several relief groups, beginning with Samaritan's Purse as a Volunteer Coordinator. I led teams into tsunami-affected areas and taught them how to do the proper demolition carpentry needed before a construction team would complete the renovation work after us. After Samaritan's Purse discontinued those projects at the end of 2012, I began organizing and working alongside carpenters building houses for Asian Access missionaries and a church and community center for a local neighborhood.

As we were completing the church building project, my colleagues and I began to conceive of a new type of organization. We saw the need for continued coordination between the churches and mission organizations in the region; one that would promote cross-denominational communication and collaboration to further build community. We formed a team that aimed to assist local missionaries and pastors in the area who had grown close through the relief work. Through this team we founded the Ishinomaki Christian Center in Ishinomaki,* a region that experienced nearly a third of the destruction of the triple disasters.

Our team goal remains to build and strengthen the bridges between the Christian communities in Ishinomaki and to connect them to the local community. One of the main ways we do this is by running a volunteer center that can be used by any local group. It is truly beautiful to join Evangelical Free, Presbyterian, Grace City, Baptist, JEMS, Japan Brethren, YWAM, and many other groups and denominations that are working hand-in-hand to share the joy of Christ and rebuild this city in his name. We coordinate work for interns and volunteers all across the city as well as house and feed them. We strive to create an atmosphere that catalyzes spiritual growth and community renewal through Christ.

What has changed in Ishinomaki since 3.11?

In the culture and language of Japan it is often difficult to articulate the Christian definitions of grace, sin, faith, and even Jesus himself. This causes a disconnect at times when the best intentions in our ministry are met with little response or understanding. We can end up frustrated if we don't understand a couple of important things about Japanese people.

If we quantify spiritual development on a scale of one to ten (where ten indicates that an individual recognizes Christ as their Lord and Savior, is following him, and desires to disciple others to do likewise, and one signifies a person who wants nothing to do with that kind of life), the average Japanese person would score less than zero. This is because there is so little context to understand the gospel in Japan. But recognizing the existence of this gap in a basic spiritual context can actually aid us in starting conversations about faith and allow us to communicate that





hope in Jesus is for all people and all nations, including Japan.

Over the past five years, I have seen in Ishinomaki a shift toward a new image of Christianity, a religion that most Japanese have historically viewed as being un-Japanese. I have seen biblical truths played out so viscerally that the definitions of some of our words of faith have gained new context. I believe a new platform is emerging, a framework for conversations about faith, about love, and about the hope found in Jesus. The stigma of Christianity in Ishinomaki as a foreign ideology is changing as believers portray a life of faith that leads to compassion, stewardship, and service. This new portrayal of the gospel does not encompass all of what it means to be a disciple of Christ, but it is still a much better place to start the conversation.

How did the conversation change?

There are many ways fellow believers all over the world are trying to connect with Japan. Thankfully, we recognize that Japan is not a lost cause to the gospel. I have observed three things that have brought about a catalytic movement in my Ishinomaki area.

First, there is real momentum in local churches coming together. This began with the disasters through a sheer

desperation to survive and continued with the recognition that the unity formed in the process was beautiful and healthy.

The second stimulus was the outpouring of the worldwide church. Huge numbers of volunteers came to serve, and showed that Christ is not bound by borders. The church's unusually large presence in those early months showed the suffering locals in Tohoku that they were not forgotten.

Third, residents of Ishinomaki have experienced tangible acts of love that help define many biblical truths. God's grace has been shown through acts of love that can never be repaid, like rebuilding homes and livelihoods. The people of Tohoku have been exposed to the faith of countless individuals and families who have discontinued their former lives in other areas and other countries, and continue to sacrificially

follow God's call for them to serve in this area.

I am so excited to be a part of what God is doing in the city of Ishinomaki and know that God is working in many other ways throughout this country.

How God is sustaining this movement

God's work in Ishinomaki is rooted in unity: unity in Christ as we work side by side; unity in the local churches as they seek to meet the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their communities; and unity in the church as a whole, as Christians of all nations, ages, cultures, denominations, and personalities come together to glorify the one God in all manner of unique ways.

"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16, NIV).

We are the body and Christ is the head. This metaphor is of course vitally important in all parts of the global church. As I reflect on the past five years and hope for the years to come, I am confident that Christ will do incredible things through our humility and our unity as his body. **JH**

*For more information about the Ishinomaki Christian Center, see their website: <http://ishinomakicc.org>

Jordan was born and raised in Japan. He studied Kinesiology at Calvin College followed by working as a personal fitness and wellness trainer. The tsunami brought him back to Japan. He now lives in the city of Ishinomaki.

Photos supplied by the author.



CRASH JAPAN: LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

By Helen Kwak

The triple disaster transformed CRASH Japan almost overnight, but it is still undergoing changes to better position it to respond to future disasters

Five years ago

Immediately after the 3.11 triple disaster, a great outpouring of love for Japan was channeled through the vision of Jonathan Wilson and CRASH Japan. Missionaries, pastors, and volunteers from all over the world worked together to provide relief. CRASH Japan established connections with local churches throughout the disaster zones and set up bases of operation in five locations from which to send out material relief and volunteers. The work was intense, exciting, and urgent. The need was so great that small differences of opinion were set aside and big goals were set and met. On March 12, 2011, CRASH Japan began its rapid transformation from a small ministry of one local church to a large organization staffed primarily by people who had never imagined being involved in disaster relief. Jonathan Wilson often likened it to trying to build an airplane while already in the air!

What we learned

We learned that after the basic needs are met, most of the real work of recovering from a disaster is internal to and driven by the individuals in a community. CRASH Japan realized early on that emotional and spiritual care is central to doing meaningful relief work. We discovered a lot about how to care for survivors, pastors, our teams, volunteers, and ourselves. Even five years after the disaster, there is still a great need for this kind of emotional and spiritual care. CRASH Japan continues to work to meet this need through educational workshops and seminars.

“CRASH Japan realized early on that emotional and spiritual care is central to doing meaningful relief work.”

Recent transitions

Recent transitions at CRASH Japan have been described as a handover from missionary to Japanese leadership. In March 2015, Jonathan Wilson resigned from leadership of CRASH Japan. At the same time, the child trauma care program, Operation SAFE, separated from CRASH Japan. Jonathan and Rie Wilson continue to lead Operation SAFE and have been active in Tibet in the past months.

The operation of CRASH Japan has been turned over to local unpaid staff. Pastor Toshio Nagai has taken the helm as a leader among peers. Finances are tight and operations have been scaled

back, but those who remain at CRASH Japan have a strong desire to continue to serve the Japanese church and the Christian community in times of disaster as well as help these communities prepare for future disasters. To build a stable and trustworthy organization, the new leadership is aiming to grow from the ground up. To represent this time of new growth, the CRASH Japan logo color has been changed to green.

Ongoing disaster response

In response to the recent flooding in Jōsō city, Ibaraki, relationships built over the last five years of response work were evidenced in a new cooperative effort. CRASH Japan coordinated a collective response that included CRASH headquarters staff, the Salvation Army with its canteen car, pastors, and believers from churches in Ibaraki, Tokyo and Saitama, and individuals from the Disaster Chaplaincy program. This



new era of cooperation gives us hope for the future of disaster response.

Looking to the future

CRASH Japan hopes to continue to serve the churches of Japan by providing a clearinghouse for information and volunteer exchange, educating all who are interested in the benefits of care programs, supporting the growth of a strong Disaster Chaplaincy program in Japan, encouraging churches and individuals to join together in preparation for future disasters, and being ready to deploy again in response to future disasters in Japan. **JH**

Helen Kwak is married to a Japanese-Korean and they have four adult children. She's worked as Care Coordinator for CRASH Japan from 2012. She's available to do workshops in Active Listening and Crisis Response in Japanese or English.

CRASH Japan sponsors a series of lectures and workshops on disaster preparation, emotional and spiritual care, survivor care, volunteer care, active listening, and chaplaincy. We run some in coordination with DRCnet through the Disaster Chaplaincy training program. We are available to come to churches or other organizations and will design programs specifically for them. CRASH is also running a series of workshops in Higashikurume, Tokyo, for anyone interested in furthering their understanding of and ability to respond in a disaster.

Kizuna: Blessed Be the Ties that Bind

Strong relational ties were forged with Japanese volunteers through serving together in the aftermath of 3.11

By Eileen Nielsen

It is no surprise that the Japanese kanji chosen for the year 2011 was *kizuna* (絆), which means human connections or ties. The kanji includes the *ito* radical (糸, thread), or that which binds us together. When everything is taken away—as it was in the aftermath of the 3.11 earthquake and tsunami—the one thing that keeps you going is the support of those who are left, the survivors, and those who came to help, the volunteers. Here, I focus on the volunteers.

The volunteers that poured into northern Japan after the 3.11 disaster came from all over the world. Over 600 volunteers from more than 35 countries came to our volunteer base. In these situations, we found ourselves experiencing *kizuna*, the deep bonding that can only happen when working together to overcome tragedy and help people rebuild their lives. Within this group, one set of volunteers stand out—the Japanese volunteers, or more specifically, Japanese Christians.

Japanese Christians were the perfect fit when it came to working together in the nearly insurmountable task of rebuilding the northern coast of Japan physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They offered a perspective that very few

other volunteers had. First, as wonderful as the international volunteers were, for the Japanese, this was their country and their people. They were already invested. Second, in their experiences as laypeople and pastors of churches in Japan, they have always worked in overwhelming situations. Japanese Christians know what it's like to work with little or no money to reach out to their neighbors and families for Christ, knowing that

there will likely be a less than a

1% response. One volunteer not only pastored a church and ran a Christian school, he also led teams to help us monthly, often including his family. This capacity to give above and beyond anyone else's normal level of giving was typical of most of our Japanese volunteers.

"This capacity to give above and beyond anyone else's normal level of giving was typical of most of our Japanese volunteers."

The way in which we worked with these volunteers varied. There were more formal working relationships like with our staff, which included two Japanese women, one who ran our cafés and another who did visitation. There were less formal but regular interactions with those who came more often, who we called returnee volunteers. These included the Christian baker who regularly made the 20-hour round-trip drive to deliver baked goods and an older couple who came and sang Christian *enka* (traditional Japanese songs supplied with new words) with the survivors. We also had regular visits from a newly-graduated seminary student who went out on visitation all day but then stayed all evening to help in the kitchen and a pastor who struggled with depression



for years but still came every month with a team. There were also the one-time-only volunteers whose visits were short but equally as important. One group traveled all night to arrive early in the morning, worked all day, and then drove back that evening. These Japanese volunteers were the reason we were able to continue doing a good job, even when funds and other volunteers began to fall away.

We will never forget all the *kizuna* we had with the survivors of 3.11. But we feel our deepest ties are with our Japanese sisters and brothers who volunteered. This showed us what real *kizuna* looks like. The words to the hymn "Blessed be the Ties" seem a fitting conclusion:

*Blessed be the ties that bind
our hearts in Christian, in Christian love.
So close, so close the knit, the knit,
that joins us, joins us to Him.¹ JH*

Eileen Nielsen, and her husband Jim, ran a CRASH volunteer base in Iwate for two years and four months in the aftermath of 3.11.

1. "Blessed be the Ties," Thomas Whitfield, The Whitfield Company Lyrics, accessed December 10, 2015. http://www.music-lyrics-gospel.com/gospel_music_lyrics/blessed_be_the_ties_6139.asp.

Photos provided by the author.



Osaka Church Ministered in Tohoku

By Sara Wolsey

This is the story of one of many churches in Japan who sent groups to Tohoku to minister after the disaster in 2011.

The recovery from the Tohoku disaster of 2011 saw many groups and individuals work together to help in the stricken area. My church, Osaka International Church (OIC),¹ like many others, organized relief and ministry trips to Tohoku. Between August 2011 and September 2015, I participated in seven trips with various members of my church. This article is an overview of these trips, with highlights on the ongoing progress in various areas.

First Trip: Ishinomaki (August 2011, 5 months on)

The first OIC team, three Americans, one Japanese, and myself, a Briton, stayed with a Japanese–American missionary couple who worked for Committed Relief Japan.² Throughout the week, the five of us ministered in Ishinomaki with helpers from Calvary Chapel Natomas (Sacramento),³ the J’s Café team,⁴ and some Samaritan’s Purse missionaries. We cleared mud and debris from drains and gutters so that people could get their household water systems working again. We also organised several barbecues and film nights for survivors. It was good to see the initial work that the J’s Café team had made on converting an old, disused building into J’s Café, a haven of life, hope, and encouragement to the local community. During the week, we ministered to and prayed with all

kinds of people—the hopeless, the hopeful, and the thankful. Although some people felt hopeless about their situation, everyone we met was very thankful that many teams from across Japan and overseas had come to bring hope and healing to the people of Tohoku.

Second Trip: Ishinomaki (December 2011, 9 months on)

This time the seven-member OIC team ministered at J’s Café with a team from Kokubunji Calvary Chapel⁵ in Tokyo. We distributed winter clothing to residents in several temporary housing units and assisted with a Christmas party at J’s Café for survivors. It was encouraging to see several locals attending a weekly Bible study.



Third Trip: Ishinomaki (August 2012, 17 months on)

I ministered in Ishinomaki with two other teams that included both Japanese and foreigners. Our main task

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoner.”

Isaiah 61:1 (NIV)

was to do the latter stages of restoring Ishinomaki Panda Park, a park for children. We built a path, scattered gravel on the path, and planted flowers. One highlight was hearing amazing stories of God’s provision from an American missionary based in Ishinomaki. This missionary often prayed earnestly and expectantly for specific amounts of money needed for various relief projects but never told anyone the amounts prayed for. Days after praying, God always provided the exact amounts in the form of cheques in the post or electronic bank transfers from overseas supporters! On our last night, all the teams and some survivors gathered at a local community centre and sang and worshipped God together. One of the most powerful and poignant moments was when we all sang “God of This City” by Bluetree.



Fourth Trip: Ishinomaki (December 2012, 20 months on)

The ministry team distributed winter clothing to residents of several temporary housing units and assisted with the annual Christmas party at J's Café for survivors. Seven locals who had been attending the weekly Bible studies since the summer of 2011 became Christians at the Christmas party!



Fifth Trip: Iwate (April/May 2013, just over two years on)

The OIC team ministered with Dawn Birkner, RJTA missionary and planter of North Sanriku Christ Church in Iwaizumi, Iwate. The team assisted with several social events for temporary housing residents, cooked meals for survivors, distributed donated clothing from OIC members, and distributed event flyers in various towns. Two years previously, some rural towns in Iwate were closed to help from outsiders. But as a result of prayer and relationship-building, several of these towns had become much more open to outsiders, especially non-Japanese Christian groups.



Sixth Trip: Ishinomaki (August 2013, nearly two and a half years on)

I ministered with six ministry groups including a large group of Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians who mainly communicated in Portuguese. Morning announcements at Ishinomaki Christian Center were given in Japanese, English, and Portuguese! One of our



main tasks for the week was to erect industrial-sized storage tents for the local fishermen who had lost their storage sheds in the tsunami. I also worked at the Nozomi Project for a few days at the request of the project leaders. I polished jewelry and took photos of all the workers in action.



Seventh Trip, Iwate (September 2015, 4½ years on)

During the Silver Week holiday, the OIC team and I ministered in Iwaizumi and surrounding towns with Dawn Birkner and a small church team from Florida, USA. Dawn and the North Sanriku Christ Church had recently relocated to a much bigger building with better plumbing. This building was the answer to much earnest prayer by Dawn, church members, and prayer warriors worldwide. I helped Dawn and the Florida team putty and paint the walls of the new building, to be used as both church and volunteer relief base. We also distributed over 500 event flyers in Iwaizumi and Noda, a nearby coastal town. It was



so good to see that many residents of several temporary housing areas had moved into permanent housing. One temporary housing village had recently been completely dismantled. I was also encouraged to see that a lot of progress had been made since OIC's first trip to Iwaizumi and the Sanriku coast in 2013.



Conclusion

It was an incredible blessing for these OIC teams to have seven opportunities to show God's love to the people of Tohoku with 16 ministry groups and the involvement of nine nationalities. We saw firsthand the amazing things God has done in Ishinomaki, Iwaizumi, and other areas. And in the words of Bluetree we pray that "Greater things have yet to come; And greater things are still to be done in this city"⁶ and throughout the region of Tohoku. **JH**

Sara Wolsey first came to Japan from the UK in 1998 as an Assistant English Teacher in public schools. As well as teaching English in Kansai, Sara is the chair of the Osaka International Church Council.

1. <http://oicjapan.org>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/Committed-Relief-229324413864832>
3. <http://ccnatomas.com/>
4. <http://ljscafecchi.wordpress.com/ljs-cafel>
5. <http://www.calvarykb.org/>
6. <http://www.songlyrics.com/bluetree/god-of-this-city-lyrics/#QFvAZBMKcs4x:CCx1.99>

Photos supplied by the author.

"Although some people felt hopeless about their situation, everyone we met was very thankful that many teams from across Japan and overseas had come to bring hope and healing to the people of Tohoku."

RELIEF WORK IS KINGDOM WORK

Compiled by Sue Plumb Takamoto with input and help from the Be One team: Chad & Jennifer Huddleston, Eric Takamoto, Joey & Ai Millard, Lora Christenberry, Beth Johnson, Esther Benedict, and Cam & Ayami Hartman

The Be One team has been serving in Ishinomaki for five years; here they share six lessons they've learned along the way.

1. Presence is powerful

The friends and disciples of Jesus lived with him. That is significant. They experienced the joys and sorrows of life together. Jesus built a trust relationship with them, and they with him. Living in community with our friends in Ishinomaki has built trust and given us the chance to walk with them through the many challenges that followed 3.11. Our presence, possibly more than our actions or words, has been a huge testimony to the people here. Jesus came and dwelt among us, and if we as the body of Christ can go and dwell, we can have a tremendous impact.

As the news continues to report that NPOs and large organizations are pulling out of Tohoku, we are still asked by locals, "So when are you leaving?" Our long-term presence here gives us the privilege of being the hands, feet, and ears of God. Through our lives, people are able to see glimpses of who God is. We were with our friends during the aftershocks. Our children sang next to local children at the reopening of the local school. We shop, share meals, laugh, and cry together. Our presence as God's body communicates the essence of the gospel unlike any other platform.

The immediacy of the disaster has passed, but we still sense that people are seeking and wanting something. There is a continued longing for meaning and a need for something beyond themselves. We don't always know how to bring the gospel to meet that need, but our daily presence allows us to explore the openness and hunger.

2. We are called to serve and be served-

Early on in Sue's missionary years, her colleague Takeshi Takazawa expressed the importance of missionaries not being experts and teachers. Rather it is best to build relationships where we allow Japanese people to serve us. Our team has found this principle especially true in seeking to minister to those devastated by the tsunami. Human dignity requires a mutual respect that allows for the give and take of serving and receiving.

We have been blessed by the kindness and generosity of those who have seemingly lost everything. In the beginning, our new local friends found individuals who needed help that day. The neighborhood grandma friends helped us distribute the 25 fans we had to give away. When our teams were shoveling out a home that had been filled with tsunami gunk, the owners would appear with cold drinks and ice cream for us. As we moved into these neighborhoods with our families, we intentionally relied on other moms to help us with such things as the various school regulations, where to buy gym clothes, and changes in bus schedules. We all need God's grace and help, even when serving the most desperate.

One of the greatest joys of our ministry to date was seeing our Ishinomaki friends lead us into ministry last year at Jōsō, Ibaraki, the city that experienced terrible flooding from a typhoon. Our local friends, who had experienced being helped five years ago, joined with



some of our staff to offer assistance for three weeks. It was such a blessing to see one of our newly baptized men pray for home owners who had recently experienced so much loss. We all need to be extenders and recipients of grace.

3. Unity is essential for kingdom expansion

During our early days of ministry in Ishinomaki, the local people did not differentiate between the various church groups and missionaries here, but rather they called us all *Kirisuto-santachi*—Christ people. They did not need to know the difference between the groups; they saw love being expressed and recognized the heart of Jesus. Amazing things happen when the church body comes together and functions as it's meant to. It's been awesome seeing the body of Christ across Japan and internationally ache for Tohoku and come together through prayer, giving, and service. We've been impressed to see God's people want to find ways to serve. We've been able to provide some structure for people to come together and serve. Even without all the answers, there need

to be leaders during crisis times who can provide openings for the body to move and work.

It has also been a joy to see Christians in Ishinomaki choose to work together to transform the city. While it has not always been smooth, we are thankful for the many opportunities to partner across missions and denominations for the sake of God's kingdom. This past Saturday, for example, we saw one church group doing an outreach at a local special-needs school—they called up three other Christian groups to help out. That evening we had a prayer-and-worship night in our home in which friends from several groups participated. We want to see this happen more, as we recognize the unique ways God works through his body when we choose unity.

4. Team is vital for maximizing kingdom work

In a similar vein, we have also recognized the value of being part of a team. We need the variety of gifts that a team offers. Relief work is incredibly stressful, and burnout is prevalent. Being a team helps us keep track of the many necessary details. We love and care for each other and our families. We need each other. Working as a team has been a great blessing for each of us serving with Be One.

The team approach also validates our Christian witness. Gary Fujino wrote about the importance of the many layers of Christian witness that it takes to lead a Japanese person to Christ.¹ He conjectured that nonbelievers in this culture are more likely to see the greater picture of who the body of Christ is when they meet different Christians and have different experiences with them. This wonderful layering effect has happened in our local area with the many volunteers, missionaries, and

Japanese Christians who have come to Ishinomaki to serve.

Through this layering of Christian witness, we have also found that God has done a wonderful work in the volunteers who have come through our doors. Many are now on the road to being missionaries or are following Jesus in new ways. We've seen nonbelievers come to help, and later return home with a newfound love in their Savior because they worked beside many Christians. Discipleship happens as we live out the gospel together. Kingdom work was always meant to be a team sport!

5. Kingdom work should be centered in faith and grounded in prayer

The work we are called to do is God's work, not ours. Numerous times over the past few years, we've realized anew that it is God who is at work, and we are called to respond by faith.

In all of our team's combined years of ministry in Japan, we have never had a chance to serve the Japanese like this before. We've never experienced the power of prayer so greatly. It has never been so easy or so natural to pray with nonbelievers.

And because our community friends have witnessed the results, they come and ask us to pray.

When we first began doing relief ministry, we had no plan. We would gather in the morning to pray and ask God what he wanted us to do. In the evening we would gather and share testimonies that attested to how God had been at work.

God opens doors and prepares the way when we go into new places by faith. It was mind-blowing how much fell into place because we were sensitive to God leading us to the right people and places. We always had enough without being organized. We often felt

like we witnessed the five thousand people being fed with our meager loaves and fishes. The power of daily reliance on God and the testimonies that emerged continue to impact how we do church planting today.

6. Our long-term calling is to the deep spiritual needs of a community

We came here to help with the relief and recovery needs after the tsunami. But it is the social and spiritual needs that existed before the disaster that have kept us here. That's likely the real reason that God brought our families to live here.

We hypothesize that disasters bring out the deep spiritual and social needs of a community. These are deep places in people's lives that are often well-covered in Japanese society, but the tsunami broke those facades down and revealed the messiness that was hidden away (everyone has it). This gave us an entrance. Broken families, divorce, high drop-out rate from school, suicide, and depression—these are the things that are emerging as symptoms of deep spiritual issues. Jesus has called us to bring his kingdom into the broken areas of this community. This is where we are focused in our ministry as we continue incarnational ministry.

Conclusion

Relief work is kingdom work. Through our involvement in relief work these last five years we've seen God's kingdom expanded, and we have each experienced transformation. It's been a great blessing to see God work and change lives, including our own, through the power of the Gospel. **JH**

The Be One team (Japanese and North American missionaries) all felt called to move to Ishinomaki following the tsunami. While living incarnationally and trying to make disciples, they also are involved in leading the Nozomi Project and a youth outreach center.

1. Gary Fujino, "Ukiyoe Church Planting: Layers and Evangelism in Japan" Japan Harvest (Fall 2006).

Gloves photo by Flickr user Barbara Partee, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bhpartee/8179754730> (background removed)

A Story of Hope & Grace

Two projects characterized by hope and grace are touching the lives of many residents of coastal regions in Miyagi prefecture as well as those living further afield.

by Chami Nagai & Sue Plumb Takamoto

Hope (*nozomi*) and grace (*megumi*). As we reflect on the past five years and speculate about the next five, these are the two words that feel central in our social enterprise ministries to women in the tsunami-stricken areas of Ishinomaki and Onagawa. Hope was so desperately needed in the days after the unbelievable wall of sea crashed upon our towns, while grace continues to be needed as we work daily in the community, committed to the long-term growth and transformation of individuals and these communities.

Megumi Project in Onagawa and Nozomi Project in Ishinomaki are social enterprises started by missionaries who moved into this region following the triple disaster. Megumi Project transforms vintage kimonos donated by people from all over Japan into fashion items, while Nozomi Project takes broken pottery left from the tsunami and other recycled pieces and converts them into jewelry. Both projects employ local women and provide sustainable income, community, and dignity.



QUESTION: *How do you see your organization developing in the next five years?*

CHAMI: When Kizuna Friends (the Christian group managing Megumi Project) first came to Onagawa in 2012, we didn't have any local contacts. As relationships were gradually built, we were welcomed with open hearts to start this project. It's been beautiful to see how it has been a source of encouragement to the people in this town. We are very excited to be invited by the town to open a retail space in front of the newly reopened train station. This will be a gathering space for various Kizuna Friends activities and a retail space not only for Megumi but also for other local artisans who we will invite to sell with us. Through this new opportunity to be in the heart of the redeveloping town, we hope to be a source of encouragement for the people of Onagawa by sharing our lives and the love of Jesus. We also hope to expand our business and hire more local staff. We have taken time to reflect on the interests and experiences of each staff member, and our hope is that more leadership and ownership will emerge out of this new season for Megumi.

SUE: As we look ahead to the next five years, surprisingly, we don't imagine the organizational structure looking very different. While we had originally thought we'd eventually hand over all the leadership to Japanese hands, we have begun to recognize that perhaps our core DNA is the unique mix created by a working team consisting of both Western Christians and local Japanese. Our Japanese staff has excelled in organizing and systematizing; our Western staff has brought the vision, networks, and fun-loving approach to work that has kept the ethos from becoming stiff. While shared leadership has meant a great deal of work and effort, this special synergy seems to have worked really well in our context. We hope to continue slowly growing our staff numerically, while maintaining this unique collaborative style of leadership.

We have currently maxed out the space of our current location (an awesome problem!). Our Be One team has been praying about building or buying a multipurpose community center that could also house Nozomi Project. We are excited about new opportunities that have emerged to be part of the greater artisan movement

being birthed in this region. As we continue exploring multicultural leadership development together, we have also been taking women on Japan-wide and overseas sales trips, and we pray that God will continue to broaden the Kingdom perspective of our staff as well as our influence and impact.

QUESTION: *What are some of the values that will grow your organization over the next five years?*

CHAMI: One thing we value at Megumi is the daily sharing time over a cup of tea. Kizuna Friends staff members take turns sharing from the Bible; each one gets to share something of their lives once a week. Sometimes tears flow as someone shares their story of loss or pain. Sometimes there are nods of agreement or bursts of laughter as someone relates an incident from their family life. And sometimes, someone shares about a recent craft project that they've been working on at home, which has led to new products. We love our headbands and kimono accessories that we recently launched because from start to finish they were designed and produced by our staff. And some of them didn't even know how to use a sewing machine when they started working at Megumi! Over the next five years we want to continue cultivating a safe space to share life, prayers, hopes, and dreams. Out of that, we hope to be a true community that can build each other up, foster creativity, and encourage professional development.

» *Both projects employ local women and provide sustainable income, community, and dignity.* «

SUE: We anticipate continuing to learn and explore what it means to serve as Christians who are operating a professional business. If we stop struggling with the delicate balance between community and business in the next five years, we will probably be doing something wrong. We love doing "life on life" in the context of an ongoing business, discipleship that happens alongside and in the midst of making and selling jewelry.

For example, recently the theme of forgiveness has emerged in our staff meetings

and prayer times, and it's even resurfaced many times in our individual biannual reviews. We cannot, and do not want to, ever prevent Kingdom realities from spilling over into our everyday lives.

Restoration is one of our three core values. On many levels, we believe that God has the power to transform what is broken in all of us into something beautiful. As we seek to daily live out the reality of following Jesus at the Nozomi Project, it has been so encouraging to see many of our staff moving toward Jesus and experiencing transformation. We continue experimenting with smaller house-church gatherings, parenting seminars, violin lessons, and other opportunities in order to give not just women but also their families opportunities for growth and transformation. Our hope for the next five years is that there will be multiple generations of transformed families across Ishinomaki.

QUESTION: *What impact do you hope to continue to make?*

CHAMI AND SUE: Both of our projects recognize with great thanksgiving that the impact of our projects extends much further than our staff members; our sphere includes those who are donating, volunteering, spreading the word about what we do, and helping us sell. And as each piece of merchandise is sent around the world, it becomes an invitation to others to become part of the story of hope and grace that continues to flow from these towns.

Our organizations are not defined by the tragedy that occurred five years ago, but rather we are helping to write new stories, which include the emergence of some creative women as artisans and the transformation of families and communities that continue to be characterized by hope and grace. We have the amazing privilege of being part of something much bigger than ourselves as we see God sending out hope and grace to many parts of the world. **JH**

Chami Nagai is the manager at Megumi Project. She grew up in Japan, Taiwan, and Papua New Guinea, and is now a part of Kizuna Friends, a church-planting team. She recently married David Nagai.

Sue Plumb Takamoto and her husband, Eric, are missionaries with Asian Access. They are part of Be One, a house-church network in Ishinomaki and Osaka, which oversees the Nozomi Project.

Needles + Yarn

THE TSUNAMI PROMPTED NEW PROJECTS TO BEGIN.
YARN ALIVE IS ONE OF THOSE SURPRISING PROJECTS.

BY KUMI JENKINS

It started with what we had—needles and yarn

Probably not many people would hit upon the idea of using yarn and knitting needles to help tsunami victims, but Teddy Sawka, the founder of our mission and a missionary in Japan for over 40 years, had always enjoyed knitting. The tsunami from the Great East Japan Earthquake wiped areas of the little town of Shichigahama (Miyagi prefecture) below the hill on which her house is located. Her heart went out to the people who had lost their homes and were forced to live in the temporary housing, especially the older ladies. What could they do so they could have their minds on something other than the destruction that surrounded them? Teddy took what she had: some knitting needles and yarn.

Soon Teddy had gathered a small group of ladies to knit and crochet together in one of the temporary-housing meeting rooms. These ladies started sharing their lives and forming friendships. So in July 2011 Yarn Alive was born. The news about the knitting circle spread, and boxes of yarn started arriving from all over the world.

Freely we have received, freely we give

Paul said, “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35, ESV). Teddy knew the ladies needed to realise that they had something to give to others. In 2013 and 2014, through a connection with another missionary who had come to Tohoku to help with the relief work and was now working in the Middle East, they sent hats and scarves to Syrian refugees in Jordan. “It feels so good to be able to help other people, even if we’re in a tough situation ourselves,” said Mayumi Hoshi, one of our members. Yarn Alive creations have been

sent to the Philippines (2014), Mozambique (2015), Nepal (2015), as well as other disaster-affected areas in Tohoku (the first donation was to Kesenuma in 2011). Our current project is to send hats as part of Operation Christmas Child run by Samaritan’s Purse.

Yarn Alive House

From the beginning, Teddy envisioned having their own building—a friendly and welcoming place to meet after people had moved out of the temporary housing units. Four years later, to everyone’s surprise, the town gave Yarn Alive exclusive use of a piece of land with permission to build on it. The bright red Yarn Alive House, in the middle of the tsunami-affected area, was completed in August 2015. It was miraculously paid for by donations from all over the world, including some significant contributions from Taiwan.

Looking to the future

Donated yarn continues to come in, and the flow of giving and blessing others keeps spreading from this little town. Yarn Alive has many plans to use this wonderful facility to serve the people of Shichigahama, both young and old. Even the simple presence of this bright red building brings smiles to people around. One comment from an elderly gentleman in the neighbourhood says it best, “It makes me so happy to see it there.”

What are our plans for Yarn Alive? We will continue to be a place where people can come and gather, feel welcomed and accepted—a place where they can find their place. **JH**

Kumiko Jenkins manages communications (email, website, SNS, press) for Yarn Alive. Mother of three, she and her husband Jeremy pastored in Sendai for nine years before moving to Sano, Tochigi in 2015 where they currently reside.





by Joel Loewen

A new church, a new partnership and new believers

God has brought many surprising things out of the triple disaster

If the disaster of March 11, 2011 hadn't happened, our mission would very likely not be working in Tohoku; the church we partner with probably wouldn't exist; and we wouldn't know the Japanese people with whom we are building trust and sharing the gospel.

The triple disaster of March 11, 2011 forced our mission to consider the needs of Tohoku. It caused us to think about how we could personally assist the church there, and it brought us in contact with displaced people who were without hope.

My wife and I are now assisting Watari Bible Christ Church, which is in the coastal village of Arahama in southern Miyagi Prefecture.

This church was begun by Pastor Kumada in November 2011 in a house that had been flooded. He, together with many volunteers, remodeled the first floor of a home owned by Christians. One thing that attracted us to help him was his heart and passion to reach out to those who had been displaced. Having previously worked in a yakitori van, he used this as a way to connect with residents in the temporary housing units. Several of those he connected with early on now attend the church.

People did not immediately become spiritually open following the disaster. However, it did give them a chance to encounter Jesus through meeting Christian volunteers. As we considered moving to Watari, I spent a couple of days helping Kumada clean out another home that had been flooded. He had already cleaned many homes for local residents. I found this work fulfilling. It made me feel as if I was doing something worthwhile in the disaster recovery. I also saw neighbors looking on with interest.

Imagine my surprise when about a year later, when we were living in Watari, I met the owner of that home on a Sunday morning in church. She had been attending for about a year. We have since enjoyed visiting her in her newly remodeled home. **If the**

disaster had not occurred, she probably would never have come to church.

The disaster has enabled many more people in Tohoku to see and hear the gospel. It has also made it possible for missionaries to partner with national workers in evangelizing communities and starting new churches.

Pastor Kumada told us that it was only after the disaster that he desired to work with missionaries. Now, after almost two years of ministering together, we are very thankful for the Lord's grace and faithfulness in this partnership.

Some keys to our ability to work together include:

» **Freedom.** Pastor Kumada gives us freedom to use our God-given gifts and abilities. Early on, he gave us time to figure out how to fit into the ministry here. Naturally, he wanted us to support him in his yakitori distribution and in his way of "doing church," but aside from that, we had the freedom to sense what God wanted us to do. The result is that we have some English classes, but we also lead worship on Sunday mornings. And we have discovered other ways to make contacts and build relationships with people in the community.

» **Humility.** This is an essential component of partnerships between missionaries and Japanese pastors. When we committed ourselves to working here with the Kumadas, we basically said "we will do things your way." That was not human nature speaking! Rather, it was humility in the power of the Spirit. However, in our weakness, this quality waxes and wanes.

» **Communication and prayer.** We've discovered that the potential for misunderstanding and conflict balloons when we don't communicate honestly with each other. Starting a new church may seem glamorous at first, but it is slow going. We are seeking to gather people who don't have a lot in common, except maybe their age and being in temporary housing together. There is potential for a lot of friction, which in turn can affect our relationship

as leaders. However, when we talk about it transparently and pray about it, desperately seeking the Lord's help together, there is victory.

Five years on, there is a church in Arahama! That is saying a lot. There are many reasons why this would not necessarily be the case:

» The volunteers have stopped coming. This church was helped tremendously by those who came and ministered in the community and also assisted in the remodeling of the church building. However, that number has drastically decreased.

» The outside donations have dropped off. There is always something to spend money on: land, yakitori, utilities, Sunday lunch, and advertising. We have been blessed to receive much. However, the contributions have decreased.

» The leaders have lost their passion. This is a pretty big one. A lot of people respond to events, but the Sunday morning attendance is small. And, the committed core of believers, uh well . . . sometimes we wonder where it is. And just when we thought we had one, somebody leaves. And it leaves us with less passion.

There is a church in Arahama because of the sovereignty of God and also because of our partnership and our commitment to each other. Because of the good news in Jesus Christ and also because of the disaster, we find ourselves in this place, doing this ministry. It's not because we particularly wanted to, or even because of some great strategy to reach Tohoku. It is because God made a way where there wasn't one. And he is bringing people together who will someday make up his church and accomplish his will. We are able to say together, "May your kingdom come, Lord!" Five years on, that's what keeps us going. **JH**

Joel Loewen (US), with his wife Elaine, has been church planting in Japan with SEND International since 1986. Their son Bradley lives and works in Tokyo. Joel enjoys running along the beach in Arahama and frequenting the local onsen.

NEW CHURCHES IN TOHOKU

Japan Assemblies of God Working in Tohoku

While most people around the world were interested in how the relief work was going in Japan, God was quietly working in people's hearts.

by Brian Snider

After the 3.11 triple disasters, the Japan Assemblies of God (JAG) started three relief centers in Tohoku through the impetus of three local JAG pastors. In Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture; Higashi Matsushima, Miyagi Prefecture; and Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture.

Kamaishi

The relief center in Kamaishi started with Pastor Shibuya and Aomori Christ Church members driving to Kamaishi to distribute relief goods. Through the miraculous provision of God, JAG was able to rent the first floor of a building right next to an evacuation center. Thus the Kamaishi Amazing Grace Relief Center was started even at a time when renting buildings was next to impossible.

The drive to Kamaishi from Aomori was a five-hour one-way trip and Pastor Shibuya and members of his congregation were also reaching out to two other disaster-stricken towns. So they were only able to go to Kamaishi once or twice a month. During this time, the center was only open a couple of times a month, whenever Pastor Shibuya and church members were able to make the trip to the town.

However, two years and three months after the disaster, a team of six members from the First Assembly of God in Honolulu came to work at the Amazing Grace Relief Center for one year. They were able to establish relationships with various people in the community by going door to door with invitations to special events. The team taught Hawaiian dance and held special events including concerts at a community center across the street.

Although the team was not able to share their faith at the community center, people started coming to the Amazing Grace Relief Center as the team developed relationships. Most of the people who came were elderly. Keizo,

the team leader, said, “People were filled with hopelessness and despair and were glad for the chance to share their stories and just have someone to talk with.” These informal times of sharing gave the team members opportunities to share their faith and tell their stories of coming to Christ.

Keizo became the pastor of the newly-formed church after the rest of the team returned to Hawaii. He reports that an important turning point for the church plant was when the team announced the Amazing Grace Relief Center was a church and they began to have worship services on Sunday. Until then people in the community did not know the relief center was also a church. At first only team members were there for Sunday morning worship services, but people they had had contact with at the relief center during the week began coming to church on Sundays. When they first started having church and no one was coming, God spoke to Keizo’s heart and promised that he would send people to them if there were believers in the church who would share the good news about Jesus to those who came.

At present, five to seven people attend Sunday worship, although sometimes ten people come. Two people have been baptized plus about four or five of those in attendance have truly believed.

Higashi Matsushima

A second JAG relief center was established in Higashi Matsushima in Miyagi Prefecture. Pastor Ito and members of the Izumi Gospel Christ Church in Sendai began making weekly trips to the area. They helped clean up debris, distributed aid, and 10 days after the disaster they started to serve hot meals (*takidashi*) at a local park.

Several months later Pastor Ito gradually introduced the gospel during times of distributions, *takidashi*, and community festivals. Christian outreach literature and Bibles were also made available during these events.

In September 2011, they began to have worship times, testimonies, and shared the Word of God along

with relief aid. Pastor Ito reports that the Lord began to open the hearts of many people to the gospel at that time. Doing relief support and sharing the gospel at the same time was effective.

In November 2011, they were able to rent and renovate a store that had flooded during the tsunami. Higashi Matsushima Amazing Grace Relief Center was born. This allowed the church to minister to many more people. They used a coffee house approach with a tea time meeting (*ocha nomikai*) once a month to provide a peaceful place for those who were suffering from trauma.

In March 2012, 70 people from Higashi Matsushima attended a Franklin Graham convention and some people decided to receive Jesus into their hearts while many others opened their hearts to hear more about Jesus. Concerts, seminars, and Christian movies were held at the Amazing Grace Relief Center with the help of volunteer guests. There were many opportunities to show the grace of God through these events.

The church held an Amazing Grace Relief Center Festival three times (with the help of Convoy of Hope),¹ with one thousand people attending each time.

In June 2012, Sunday afternoon services were started at the Amazing Grace Relief Center twice a month, along with Sunday school. Worship, Bible teaching, and prayer filled the Center.

“Amazing Mother’s Club” was started with the help of an Asian Access missionary in April 2014, after learning that young mothers living in temporary housing were going through a lot of stress. They have been able to reach out to individual families in surrounding cities, visiting them in their homes and have seen family members come to Christ.

Now, around 40 people attend the church each week and four people have been baptized, although about 30–40 have expressed faith in Christ.

The Amazing Grace Relief Center has recently bought property and is constructing a church building that will also enable continued relief work.

The new church is located half a block from the park where they first began relief work.

Koriyama

The Koriyama Christ Church was an established church that also became a relief center. Pastor Sanga and his congregation reached out to thousands of displaced families that were evacuated to Koriyama. The church supplied relief goods through the Convoy of Hope, and also gave out “Starter Kits” to families who had lost everything. A Starter Kit included basics such as a refrigerator, cooking stove, microwave, washing machine, pans, dishes, etc. Outreach festivals and *ocha nomikai* were held and the gospel message was presented.

Unexpected joy

Convoy of Hope, the Samaritan’s Purse, local churches of the Japan Assemblies of God, and the American Assemblies of God provided relief supplies, which allowed them to reach out initially and in an on-going way to these three cities. Teams from within Japan and outside of Japan came to evangelize and present the gospel message.

One of the things that amazed me after having made many trips to two of the three relief centers over the course of several years is the unexpected joy of salvation I saw on the faces of some of these believers. After going through the trauma of the earthquake and tsunami devastation and experiencing a deep sense of hopelessness and despair, these new believers experienced now the joy of newfound salvation. The joy and thankfulness of unexpected joy and freedom in Christ radiated from their faces. Unexpected because prior to this they had never experienced it nor known it was even possible. **JH**

Brian Snider, from California, U.S.A., is married to Sally. They’ve done church planting and OneHope literature ministry in Japan with the Assemblies of God for 30 years. We are believing God for revival in Japan!

Convoy of Hope is a relief mission organization that focuses on responding to disasters around the world with immediate relief aid, and then ongoing rebuilding for the long haul, helped supply relief aid to the Amazing Grace Relief Centers.



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Stop Praying “In Jesus’ Name, Amen”?

In my experience it is common, even traditional, in English and in Japanese to end prayers with, “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” However, have you ever been in a church meeting or Bible study when someone prays from the heart but doesn’t end with “in Jesus’ name Amen”? Some might gasp in astonishment. Though sincere, we might think the pray-er doesn’t know how to pray. Or maybe we think, “Didn’t anyone teach them how to pray properly?”

Two Questions

Is this traditional three-word prayer ending really what Jesus meant when He told His disciples to ask and pray “in My name”? If not, what do we need to know and do to pray as He asked?

The Scriptures

- John 14:13-14: “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (NASB). God has promised to answer and do the things we pray in Jesus’ name and the purpose of praying in Jesus’ name is to glorify the Father.
- John 15:16: “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.” He chose us so that we would be fruitful as we pray in His name.
- John 16:23-24: “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.” We experience full joy when we pray in His name.

So, is this “carte blanche?” Was Jesus saying, “Pray anything you want—just put these three words at the end and you’ll have it”? Does tacking these three words onto the end of our prayers guarantee fruit . . . joy . . . glory to the Father? No, it is clear that prayer is not just about the three words we so often unthinkingly add.

What Does It Mean?

To understand better, we could consider what other things we are to do in His name. Jesus tells us to gather “in My name” (Matthew 18:2), receive a child “in My name” (Mark 9:37), give a cup of cold water “in My name” (Mark 9:41). We are told that we become children of God when we believe “in His name” (John 1:12) and that by believing we “have life in His name” (John 20:31).

We can see Jesus means far more than our three-word benediction. In both Testaments, to do something in the “name” of God, or another person, was to do it just as that person would do it, and in a way that honors the reputation of that person.

Therefore, we are to gather in a way that honors Christ. We are to receive children and give a cup of cold water in the very spirit and heart that He would. To become a child of God, by believing in His name, is done with total faith in His character, His work, and His words.

Praying in Jesus’ Name

So, what did Jesus have in mind when he told us to pray “in His name”? He really meant that we should pray in accordance with His character. Pray just as He would pray, to honor His reputation and purposes in this world. So how can we do that more effectively?

His Pattern for Prayer

When His disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1-4), He taught them the same pattern He gave in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9-13). This was his clear teaching about how we can practically and truly pray “in His name.” We do so by praising God for who He is, responding to His attributes, making requests based on His will, then thanking and praising Him once more. If we do not follow these principles, we can add anything we want at the end of our prayers, but we are not praying “in Jesus’ name.”

That’s why our prayers should be worship-based prayer, not a grocery list telling Jesus what we think He should do to make our lives happy and problem-free. Truly praying “in Jesus’ name” as He instructed fulfills the promises He made about prayer. And, it transforms us into His image.

In Conclusion

So, the next time you pray, think about really praying in His name. And maybe, to get your point across, don’t use those three words before the “Amen.” Instead, pray something like: “For your glory, in honor of your purposes, and according to Your will I pray . . . Amen.” I wonder how people will respond! **JH**

Ken Reddington and his wife, Toshiko, are church-planting missionaries in Kochi-ken. Ken is an MK who returned to Japan as a missionary from the US more than 35 years ago.

“The purpose of prayer is not to change God but to change us.”
Max Lucado

Effective Language Exchange

Language exchange is a great way to improve your conversational Japanese and discover more about Japanese culture

Speaking—unlike listening, reading, and writing—is hard to practice without a partner. An effective and enjoyable way to improve your conversational listening and speaking skills is language exchange—meeting up with an English learner and taking turns to converse in Japanese and English. Since starting to learn Japanese 15 years ago, I've done language exchange many times in both Japan and Australia.

Language exchange has many advantages: it's free and fun, it's mutually beneficial, and it's a fantastic way to get to know Japanese people and culture. It can even provide a natural and non-threatening environment for sharing God's love. Language exchange partners are often curious about people of other faiths and feel much freer to discuss religion in a one-on-one context than with a group. These days, communication tools like Skype make it possible to do language exchange even if there are no Japanese people living near you, so you can maintain or even improve your Japanese while on home assignment. The main downside of language exchange is that you have to spend half the time speaking English.

The first thing to consider is whether language exchange is the most effective way for you to practice conversation. It's probably best suited for intermediate learners. Beginners will find it hard to sustain a conversation. On the other hand advanced learners are better off finding ways to spend all their time speaking in Japanese (for example, joining a club or spending time with Japanese friends who can't speak English).

Things to look for in a partner

While language exchange can occur in small groups, one-to-one is best for maximizing speaking time. If you find yourself in a group with equal numbers of Japanese and English speakers, it's best to pair off.

A good language exchange partner is worth their weight in gold—when you've found one, be sure never to let them go! Ideally, a language partner should be roughly the same level as you. This is because there's a strong tendency to

default to the easiest mode of communication. If their English is better than your Japanese, then it's easy to slip into English when you're finding it hard to express yourself in Japanese, and vice versa. In that sense, language exchange can resemble arm wrestling, so it's best to find an evenly-matched sparring partner!

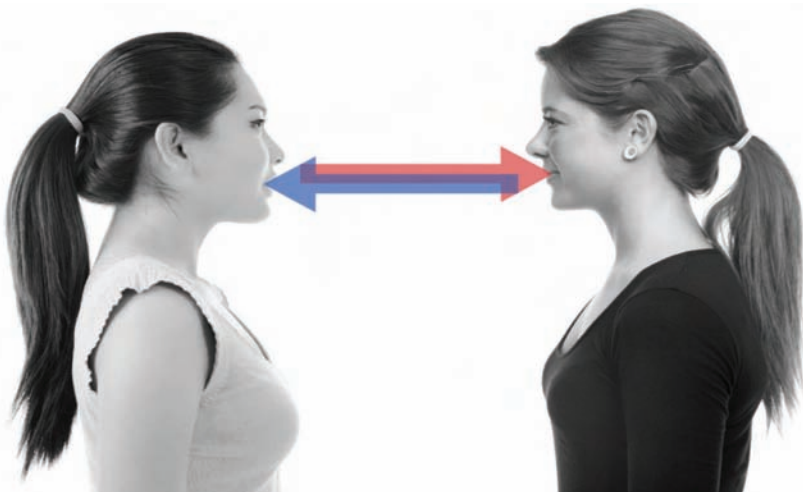
Another important quality to look for in potential exchange partners is the ability to speak clearly in Japanese. If they tend to mumble or speak quickly or have a strong regional dialect (be wary of people from Aomori or southern Kyushu, unless you live there), then you might find yourself struggling to understand what they're saying, especially if you're just starting out. Japanese people who have lived overseas or have foreign friends are generally the best, as they've often developed the ability to adjust their speaking level to the comprehension ability of the person they're conversing with.

Other qualities to consider when looking for a partner are a knowledge of Japanese grammar, mutual interests, and lots of patience. If you find a partner with experience teaching Japanese, you've struck gold.

How to get the most from language exchange

I find it's best to split each session into two halves of equal length: one in English and the other in Japanese. In theory, if both partners spoke in their target languages, you could spend the entire session speaking Japanese (and listening in English). But I find this very difficult in practice because my brain has to constantly switch between the two languages and it's hard to suppress the natural tendency to respond in the language that I'm addressed in.

As much as possible, both people should converse entirely in the language assigned to the half—even slipping in the occasional word in the other language should be studiously avoided. If you're having trouble communicating your thoughts, try expressing them in a different way. If you don't



A good language exchange partner is worth their weight in gold—when you've found one, be sure never to let them go!

know or have forgotten a key word, try using an alternative word or describing the concept. Be imaginative. A Japanese teacher once told me that a student who had forgotten the word for *omikoshi* (portable shrine) described it as a *keitai jinja* (a temple that you can carry around like a mobile phone)! Expressing challenging concepts will improve your communication ability in the same way that pushing yourself physically builds your muscles.

The first language exchange is always the easiest as it mainly consists of self-introductions and asking straightforward questions. For subsequent exchanges, it can be helpful to pick a topic beforehand. This will give you a chance to review useful vocabulary and provides a starting point for the conversation; it doesn't matter if the conversation subsequently strays from the topic.

One useful technique that I picked up from my days as an English teacher is to give correction without interrupting the

flow of conversation. At the start, agree to jot down a few mistakes you each make during your conversation. Then, in the last few minutes of the session, discuss what was said, what was wrong with it, and what you should have said. That way, you can improve both accuracy and fluency.

Above all, have fun! There's nothing quite so stimulating as breaking free from the confines of the classroom and communicating directly with a native speaker. And in the process, you can learn many things about Japanese culture that you'll never find in a textbook. **JH**

Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company. Originally from Wales, UK, he moved to Australia in 1988. He helps maintain several Japanese-related websites, including Reaching Japanese for Christ: www.rjcnetwork.org

Good Writing

Good Structure is Vital

To help the reader follow your reasoning, it is critical to structure your writing well

Sometimes when I first read an article submitted to me as editor for Japan Harvest, I find it confusing. This can be because the subject matter is difficult or the writer hasn't started well, but often it is because there are structural problems.

Good structure is important, even in a short piece of writing. You need to lead your readers through your article smoothly, without jerking them from topic to topic. Information should be given to your readers as they need it. One sign of bad structure is lots of brackets, dashes, and asides that should have been presented earlier.

Throughout an article, use transition words like "in addition", "besides", "however", "despite", and "though". These link your sentences and paragraphs together and give your work structure.

There are different types of structure you can use. Chronological is the most common and easiest. Depending on your topic, step-by-step is another way to give logical progression to your work. Newspapers use an inverted pyramid approach, where they give the most important information at the top but often don't have a satisfying conclusion. You can write from general to specific, or you can frame your work with anecdotes at the beginning and end. Comparison, pros and cons, or cause and effect also can be used to structure an article.

Before starting to write an article, ask yourself these questions about structure:

- What type of structure fits my topic?
- What is my main idea?
- Are there sub-ideas that flow logically from the main idea?
- How are the ideas connected?
- What conclusion do I want to lead my readers to?

Some questions to ask yourself after you've written something include:

- Does it have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Are the ideas and actions connected to each other?
- Is there a logical progression from beginning to end?
- Does it feel finished?
- Does it feel jerky?

Here is a piece of advice that may inspire you: consider rewarding your reader in the middle of your piece of writing. Place "gold coins" along the way. Anything that rewards the reader is a gold coin: a small anecdote, a startling fact, or a telling quote. After all, "The easiest thing for a reader to do," argued famed editor Barney Kilgore, "is to quit reading."¹

Thoughtful writers look after their readers by minding the structure of their writing. **JH**

Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's learnt most of what she knows about writing from her international critique group, Truth Talk. She's Australian and works with OMF International.

1. Roy Peter Clark, *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* (New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 156.

Enhancing Your Natural Tranquilizers

Eliminating things that destroy our natural tranquilizers helps to preserve physical and emotional well-being

When ministry and personal demands seem never-ending, many of us dream of sitting on a beach and enjoying a bit of down time. It should come as no surprise that this activity, along with many others, enhances our natural tranquilizers—chemicals in our brain that help us stay balanced physically and emotionally. In his book *The Anxiety Cure*,¹ Archibald Hart discusses what eats away at these tranquilizers and how to enhance them.

The following things reduce our natural tranquilizers:

1. Not surprisingly, stress tops the list.

Stress can mean different things to different people, but any activity that keeps the adrenaline flowing resulting in high stimulation is considered stressful. A common form of stress is busyness; a missionary friend recently admitted that her busyness seems endless.

2. Pleasure-seeking activities, over-arousal, and excitement produce large amounts of stress hormones. Even seemingly positive activities, such as video gaming, snowboarding, roller coasters riding, slowly wear away your natural tranquilizers. This makes it difficult to calm down when you need to, like when you should be sleeping. “Pleasure, like a mountain top, is only pleasurable when surrounded by valleys of tranquility, calmness, and peace,” says Hart.

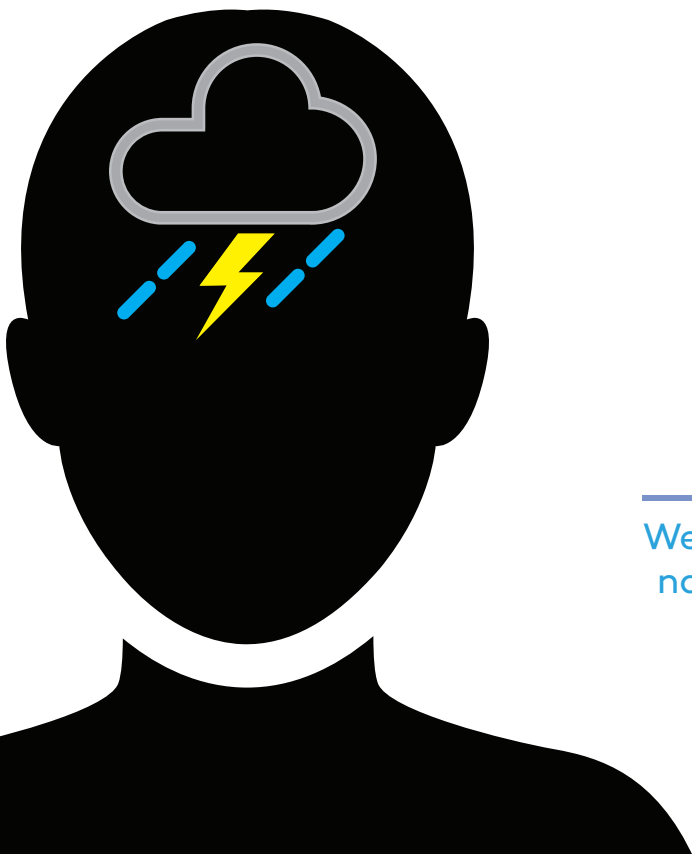
3. Conflict. A friend recently confessed that there is so much conflict in his ministry, that he spends much of his time putting out fires making him feel exhausted most of the time. Conflict triggers the fight-or-flight mechanism, which generates adrenaline and causes the body to be on high alert. This erodes your peace, making you feel miserable and anxious. It’s important to find a solution or at least avoid conflict as much as possible.

4. Under-assertiveness destroys our peace since the tendency to “grin and bear it” produces internal hostility and frustration.

Christians particularly struggle with assertiveness because they fear it is either selfish or aggressive. One client admitted that she didn’t even know how to say anything that might appear negative. As a consequence, she often felt that people ignored her or took advantage of her. According to Hart, a good rule of thumb is that if assertiveness brings healing rather than offense, you are being “correctly” assertive.

5. Insufficient sleep—a chronic problem in Japan—causes stress levels to rise. Sleep is one of the most important ways we can fight the damaging effects of stress and enhance our natural tranquilizers.

6. Most people who are successful in ministry tend to have type-A personalities. Type-A behaviors include always being in a hurry, having a deep sense of justice, becoming hostile quickly, and maintaining a sense of control. All these behaviors cause us to be in fight-or-flight mode, which destroys our natural tranquilizers. By giving in to your type-A behavior, you are setting yourself up for high levels of stress and premature cardiovascular disease.

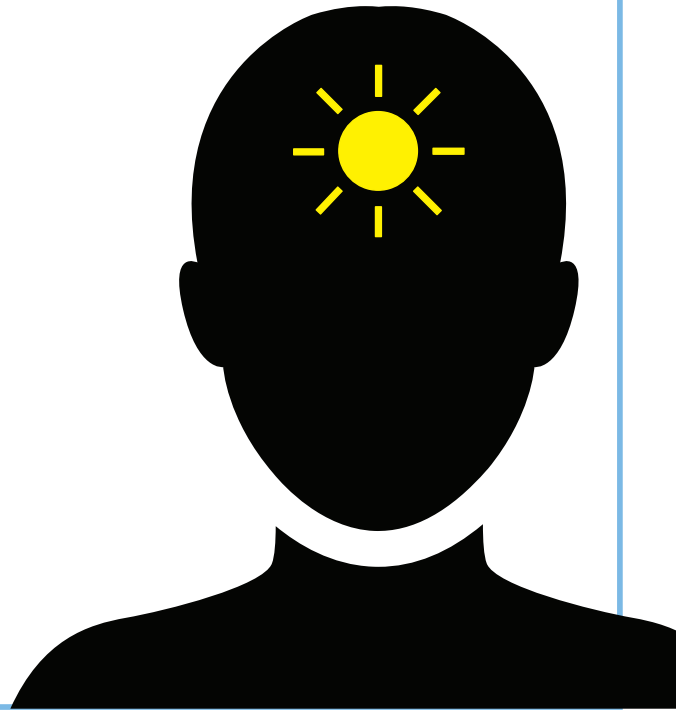


We need to incorporate the building of natural tranquilizers into our lifestyle if we want to avoid the over-the-counter type of tranquilizers.

Hart says that we need to incorporate the building up of natural tranquilizers into our lifestyle if we want to avoid the over-the-counter type of tranquilizers. Resting is actually one of the best prescriptions for good health, because it helps to build up these natural tranquilizers. It should be no surprise that about 2,000 years ago, Jesus offered the ultimate prescription: the rest that he alone can give. "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest" (Matthew 11:28, MSG). **JH**

Eileen Nielsen and her husband, Jim, are church planters who have been working in Tohoku doing survivor care. Eileen has a masters in counseling and is available for Skype counseling. Contact her at eileenpnielsen@gmail.com.

1. Archibald Hart, *The Anxiety Cure* (HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2001).



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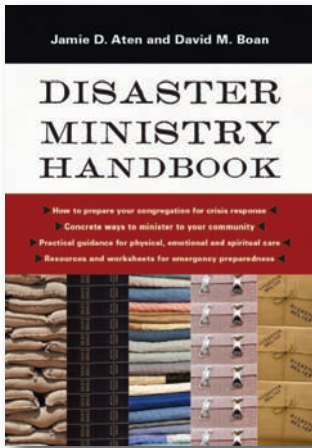
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"Women in Ministry seeks to Equip, Empower, and Encourage women to use the gifts and abilities God has entrusted to them in order to bless others and honor God.□"

Disaster Ministry Handbook

Jamie D. Aten and David M. Boan (InterVarsity Press, 208pp)

Reviewed by Don Schaeffer



Here is a book that will help every church and mission be ready to respond when disaster strikes. In this practical handbook, Aten and Boan, co-directors of Wheaton College's Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI), "help churches learn how to plan, launch and sustain disaster ministries" (p. 12). Aten moved to Mississippi with his family just six days before Hurricane Katrina

hit the Gulf Coast. Both he and Boan have helped churches around the world impacted by disasters and crises. Kenichi Shinagawa, general secretary of the Japan Evangelical Association has worked closely with Aten and Boan since 2011. In Shinagawa's endorsement of the book, he writes that there were many times that he wished he had had a book like this to help with disaster ministry.

Part 1

Aten and Boan outline the foundations of disaster ministry. In chapter one they show the strengths of the local church in disaster contexts. Chapter two, "Disaster Basics," helps churches become aware of different kinds of disasters and tailor their ministry towards the challenges they may encounter. Chapter three, "Disasters, Justice and the Church," encourages churches to think about how they can help the most vulnerable.

Part 2

Aten and Boan guide churches through the process of disaster ministry. They show how to conduct an initial assessment, plan, and respond effectively during the immediate aftermath of the crisis and in the long-term recovery period that follows. They caution readers that plans can be dangerous as "plans can create the impression of being prepared when in fact you are not prepared. Being prepared is about people knowing what they need to do and having the training and support in order to do it" (p. 66). Chapter eight, "Providing Basic Disaster Spiritual and Emotional Care," presents a wide range of helping strategies. They focus on giving supportive care while avoiding the pitfalls of giving well-intentioned but unhelpful advice.

Part 3

This includes three case studies in Disaster Ministry, including one from Japan after the 3.11 disaster. The conclusion offers wise advice about the best way to get started and sustain a disaster ministry. Each chapter in this section ends with discussion questions which are ideal for group study.

Part 4

This has step-by-step directions, reproducible resources, and exercises to help churches become safer and better prepared for a disaster. They encourage churches to start small and with the sections that most fit their needs, size, mission, and vision.

Part 5

This includes eight "Disaster Spiritual and Emotional Care Tip Sheets," six of which are available in Japanese at the HDI website: <http://www.wheaton.edu/HDI/Resources>

A book that will help every church and mission be ready to respond when disaster strikes.

Aten and Boan are to be commended for producing a very practical handbook that will equip churches and missions so they are ready to serve as the hands and feet of Christ in every situation.

I hope that this book will be translated into Japanese and into many other languages. It is a wonderful gift to the church and would be a great book for churches and missions to work through.

(I am grateful for InterVarsity Press for a pre-publication manuscript of the book so it could be reviewed for this issue. Release date: March 12, 2016.) **JH**

Don Schaeffer and his wife Hazel serve with the Christian & Missionary Alliance and came to Japan in 1984. They have planted churches in Saitama Ken and served in mission leadership.

Reviewer rates it 5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★



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Department of Education (DepEd)
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Dynamic Teen Company (DTC)
Pushcart Classroom Initiator
With its 10,000 member-strong group, DTC is mobilizing its roster of community volunteers to teach at the different activity centers across Metro Manila.



New Life Ministries (NLM)
Bible-Printing Organization
NLM is providing Japanese manga booklets and study guides that will equip DTC and its volunteers with the right tools to effectively conduct and facilitate Values Education classes.

Your Support Will Help Children At-Risk in Metro Manila

100 → 8000
 Pushcart Classrooms → Children At-Risk

DTC (Dynamic Teen Company)
Efren Peñaflorida is a founding member of Dynamic Teen Company. He is a Filipino educator and social worker. He offers Filipino youth/children at-risk a chance to pursue education through unconventional set-up, like the pushcart classrooms in poverty-stricken areas.

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Our volunteer designers spend hours each issue searching for photos to enhance the articles. Because our budget is small we try to use free photos as much as possible. To help them, we've set up a way for you to donate photos for use in Japan Harvest and other JEMA publications.

HOW? Send an email to japanharvest.photos@gmail.com with your photo/s attached. In the email subject, please include a key word that describes the theme of your photos (for example, "prayer").

Upcoming magazine themes are: Future of Mission in Japan, Reaching the Youth. We would also like photos of missionaries in action, and JEMA related events. Other helpful photos would be daily life in Japan, Japan culture, cityscapes, scenic shots, street shots, people mid-action.

Building Christ-centered Community

This article is part of a four-part series based on the following: An effective ministry leader (1) builds Christ-centered community, (2) focuses everyone on the purpose, (3) ensures everyone understands what's happening and why, and (4) encourages everyone to grow.

People—that's what ministry leaders lead. They don't lead projects, they don't lead processes, and they don't lead organizations. They lead people.

Effective ministry leaders know this. And because they know this, they intentionally build Christ-centered community. While keeping Christ at the center, effective ministry leaders intentionally help individuals transform into a community—into a connected, caring, collaborative group of like-minded people (Eph. 4:16, Matt. 22:39, Heb. 10:24, Romans 12:2, I Peter 2:9).

Why do effective ministry leaders build Christ-centered community? Because they want the body of Christ to function well. Because they know that within Christ-centered community, individual Christians thrive and are empowered to use their God-given gifts for ministry.

“That sounds good,” you think to yourself, “but next Tuesday, I've got that meeting with the new ministry team. I need to know how to build Christ-centered community. What can I do?”

Within Christ-centered community, individual Christians thrive and are empowered to use their God-given gifts for ministry

Good question. Reflect on building Christ-centered community, and then use your reflections with your ministry team. To get started, use these five questions:

1. What helps you center on Christ? Five things I've found helpful are reading God's Word, praying, gathering with colleagues for devotions, talking about how a given ministry activity promotes the cause of Christ, and discussing a book like Paul Miller's *Love Walked among Us: Learning to Love Like Jesus*. How could doing one or more of these five things with your team help you build Christ-centered community?

2. What helps you connect with others? I connect with others when I hear about where they are from, what they like to do, and their testimonies. I connect with others when I see their photos, become friends on Facebook, or have shared experiences (by going hiking, out to eat, or on a ministry retreat). What helps you connect with others? What would help your ministry team connect?

3. What helps you care about others? Hearing others tell stories about challenges they have faced helps me care about them. Praying for others helps me care about them. And serving others (by lending a listening ear, providing advice or practical help) helps me care about them. How could doing things like this with your team help you build Christ-centered community?

4. What helps you collaborate? Four things that help me collaborate are having opportunities to collaborate, understanding the workstyles and strengths of my teammates (see gallupstrengthscenter.com), knowing the group values (for example, focus, flexibility, empowerment, best practice, or growth), and learning about the style of teamwork a given group uses. What helps you collaborate? What would help your ministry team collaborate?

5. What helps develop shared understanding? Extended interaction with others. A facilitator leading a discussion on key questions like “What does Christ-centered community look like?” or “What helps us build Christ-centered community?” Reflecting on the ministry purpose statement and values. How could doing one or more of these things with your team help you build Christ-centered community?

Bottom line? Be an effective ministry leader. Build Christ-centered community.

What about you?

1. What two to three words describe those involved in your ministry?
2. What's satisfying/unsatisfying about building Christ-centered community?
3. How can you help others center on Christ, connect, care, collaborate, and be like-minded?
4. How will you further build Christ-centered community?**JH**

Michael B. Essenburg (Christian Reformed Japan Mission) serves at Okinawa Christian School International. Time permitting, Michael works with missions.

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