



# *The Future of Missions in Japan*

## To Create Products Of Excellent Quality...

Miyoshi Oil & Fat was founded in 1921 as a manufacturer of soap for the textile industry.

In 1941, the Foods and Oils Division was established and Miyoshi began producing Margarine, followed by shortening, lard and other products. Today, Miyoshi produces more edible processed oils and fats than any other manufacturers in Japan.

While diversifying the applications of oils & fats, Miyoshi has remained true to the goal it set itself eight decades ago: **to create products of excellent quality.**



### Main Products

- Margarine
- Lard
- Whipping Cream
- Frozen Dough
- Shortening
- Powdered Oil & Fat
- Fillings

### MIYOSHI OIL & FAT CO.,LTD.

66-1, 4-CHOME, HORIKIRI, KATSUSHIKA-KU, TOKYO 〒124-8510

BRANCHES : OSAKA, NAGOYA, FUKUOKA

FACTORIES : TOKYO, KOBE, CHIBA



## The taste is loved in the world.



**YAMAZAKI-NABISCO CO., LTD.**  
 SHINJUKU NOMURA BUILDING 40F 1-26-2,  
 NISHISHINJUKU, SHINJUKU-KU TOKYO, JAPAN

## Spring 2016

### Forward

- 4 Happenings
- 4 Contributors
- 5 From the editor
- 6 In the news

### Member Missions

- 8 ReachGlobal
- 9 ELFCN
- 10 Mission to the World

### Feature Articles

- 12 **New wineskins - leaving our comfort zones**  
*by Bill Swan*
- 14 **Expectations and realities**  
*by Andrew Glosson*
- 16 **Opportunities through video**  
*by Armin Messer with Heike Messer*
- 18 **Successful church planting**  
*by Mark Benton*
- 21 **Emerging trends: potential and pitfalls**  
*by Dawn Birkner*
- 24 **Invest in the younger generations**  
*by Michael Hoehn*
- 26 **Reflections on cross-cultural ministry in Japan**  
*by Dale Viljoen*

### General Article

- 28 **Women In Ministry:**  
*Retreats in Kanto and Kansai*  
*by Edie Town and Robin Shaw*

### Regulars

- 30 **New voices**  
*Being prepared to say yes, and no*  
*by Levi Booth*
- 31 **Language and culture**  
*Written language exchange*  
*by Simon Pleasants*
- 32 **Focus on prayer**  
*Hypocrites and Gentiles*  
*by Ken Reddington*
- 33 **Good writing**  
*Avoid confusion with commas*  
*by Wendy Marshall*
- 34 **Member care**  
*Reasons why they leave*  
*by Eileen Nielsen*
- 35 **Modern tech**  
*Creating a good first impression with your website*  
*by Jared Jones*
- 36 **Off the bookshelf**  
*by Don Schaeffer*
- 38 **Pursuit of excellence**  
*Focus everyone on the purpose*  
*by Michael Essenburg*





## September

### 6th Japan Congress on Evangelism

September 27-30, 2016  
Kobe Convention Center



## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus

Tuesday, October 18, 2016  
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome



## November

### Church Planting Next Step Seminar

Thursday, November 2-4, 2016  
Chiba (specific location TBD)



## January

### Winter Day of Prayer

Wednesday, Jan 18, 2017  
SEND Center, Higashi Tokorozawa

### 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 live in Tokyo. Eileen is the Member Care Facilitator for TEAM and has a private counseling ministry. If interested in meeting for 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*



Volume 67 No. 2  
Spring 2016

© 2016 Please do not copy any article, photo, poem, or report unless permission is granted.  
Contact Managing Editor.

#### Japan Harvest Staff

**JEMA President:** Nathan Snow  
**Executive Editor:** Gary Bauman (gbauman@jema.org)  
**Managing Editor:** Wendy Marshall (wmarshall@jema.org)  
**Advertising Director:** Atsuko Tateishi  
**Art Director:** Greg Corey  
**Layout Designer/Production Editor:** Karen Ellrick  
**Design Assistant:** Meg Willis  
**Associate Editors:** Rachel Hughes, Simon Pleasants  
**Editorial Assistant:** Jennifer Bello  
**Fact Checker:** Georgia Anderson  
**Proofreader:** Ken Reddington

#### Printer

New Life Ministries

#### JEMA Executive Committee

**President:** Nathan Snow  
**Vice President:** Dale Little  
**Secretary:** David Scott  
**Treasurer:** Carol Love  
**Members-at-Large:** Gary Bauman, Andy Game, Paul Ewing  
**JEMA Office Secretaries:** Yuka Oguro, Atsuko Tateishi, Ai Nightingale

#### Submissions

The editors welcome unsolicited articles.  
Writer's guidelines are available at:  
<http://www.jema.org/jh-writers-guidelines.html>

#### Submission Deadlines

Spring issue: January 31  
Summer issue: April 30  
Autumn issue: July 30  
Winter issue: September 30

JEMA Order Form: Page 39  
Price overseas is \$30.00 (USD) per year.  
Price in Japan is ¥2,800 per year.  
Single copy is ¥750.

Postal Transfer: JEMA-Japan Harvest, Tokyo  
00130-4-180466

#### Moving?

Contact the JEMA office so we can update our files!  
JEMA  
2-1 Kanda Surugadai,  
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062

Tel: 03-3295-1949  
Fax: 03-3295-1354  
Email: jema-info@jema.org  
Web site: <http://www.jema.org>

**Japan Harvest** is the official publication of the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association (JEMA). It is published quarterly. Individual articles or advertisements express the viewpoints of the contributor and not necessarily those of JEMA.

# The future of missions in Japan

*The future is something we yearn to know, yet are fearful of in the same breath.  
This issue of Japan Harvest challenges, even inspires us to look forward.*

I've long been a big fan of history. Recent issues of Japan Harvest have included quite a bit of history. In the Spring issue two years ago, we looked back at those who had gone before us in reaching Japan. It was inspirational to hear stories of how God had worked through his labourers in the past. Additionally, since the Summer issue of 2014, we've been publishing profiles of our member missions, most of which include details about the history of each mission in Japan, as well as its current work and plans for the future.

Since we've spent time looking back, it's time we looked to the future in this issue. When I put out a call for articles to JEMA members, I wondered what we'd receive for such a topic as "The Future of Mission in Japan". As usual, God surprised me. We've received articles from authors with a combined total of more than 150 years of service in Japan. They've written from their experience as well as looked at recent trends and things that they've seen succeed.

Some of the themes include small groups, a welcoming culture, and cooperation across different groups. I'm hopeful you'll find something in these pages that will inspire you in the work God has given you to do.

During our recent home assignment in Australia, we were periodically asked: "Why hasn't the church thrived in Japan? What's the main obstacle?" It's a hard question that everyone in ministry here ponders. I don't think a single answer exists. However, the writers in this issue address the future of mission in Japan with enthusiasm and give us much to think about.

Corrie ten Boom likened our lives to a tapestry: in this life, we can only see the messy underside, but when we get to heaven we'll see what a beautiful design God created.<sup>1</sup> The metaphor is apt. As we live our lives working to reach Japanese people for Christ, what we see day-by-day often looks messy and can easily be discouraging. We see insurmountable difficulties, blank faces, and diminishing numbers. Some days all we can see is the rain pouring down outside; other days the sun breaks through and we see a glimmer of interest here, a ray of hope there. But we'll have to wait till heaven to see the stunning design that God is creating through our service to him here.

My hope and prayer is that Japan Harvest will help you see God at work in Japan so that even when it's raining torrentially in your locality, you will catch a glimpse of God's handiwork in other areas and be encouraged and even inspired in your own work.

Yours in Christ's service,  
Wendy  
Managing Editor



*We'll have to wait  
till heaven to see the  
stunning design that God  
is creating through our  
service to him here.*



1. "Tapestry poem," Goodreads, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/741391-life-is-but-a-weaving-the-tapestry-poem-my-life>.

Photo: [http://pradellintapestries.blogspot.jp/2010\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://pradellintapestries.blogspot.jp/2010_11_01_archive.html)



## The man who saved 6,000 Jews

*Christian Shimbun, January 3, 2016  
Translated by Grace Koshino*

Last year, a DVD titled *Three Christians Who Lived During the Turbulent Times of the 20th Century* was released by the Christian publishing company Word of Life Press to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Yoshimasa Moribe, former chief editor of Christian Shimbun, was given the opportunity to write the commentary and be the editorial supervisor for this DVD. He writes: “Early on, we decided that the first person to be featured on it would be Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese diplomat who saved the lives of 6,000 Jewish refugees by issuing them transit visas. We desired that his story of love and hope would challenge those who live in these troubled days.”



### Early life

Sugihara was born on January 1, 1900 in Yaotsu, Gifu. His father wanted him to become a doctor, but instead he entered Waseda University and majored in English. He received no financial support from his parents and spent most of his time working at a part-time job to earn a living.

Moribe said, “While researching for the DVD, we uncovered previously unknown facts about Sugihara’s life at Waseda and how that became the starting point of his faith. I came across these facts while reading the booklet published for the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Christian organization called Waseda Hōshien.” According to the booklet, this organization had a fellowship group called

Shinkō Kyōkai, and Sugihara’s signature was found in the registry list of 1919. The Shinkō Kyōkai had very strict regulations for becoming a member.

Nowadays, many Japanese universities have a KGK group [a Christian student group]. Usually, if you take an interest in Christianity or want to study the Bible, it is relatively easy to join the group. However, with Shinkō Kyōkai, one had to take a vow to believe in the Trinity. Sugihara took this vow and made the decision to follow Christ for his whole life.

### Diplomatic career

Sugihara only studied at Waseda for a year. He was later recruited by the Japanese Foreign Ministry and assigned to Harbin, China, where he studied English, German, and Russian without having to pay tuition fees. He then moved on to serve in the Manchurian Foreign Office as a diplomat. While in Manchuria, he was baptized in a

Russian Orthodox church. He later returned to Japan as he was opposed to the Kwantung Army, which was trying to rule China by force. He then served as a vice-consul of the Japanese Consulate in Lithuania. It is said that one of the reasons he was placed

there was to gather information about the neighboring countries of Germany and Russia. It was there that he met Jewish refugees who had escaped from Poland and who he later saved by issuing transit visas, even though it meant going against the orders of the Japanese government.

### Christian faith in action

Before deciding to issue the visas, he told his family “I believe in God, so I cannot go against him. I have decided to issue visas for the Jewish people.” Here we see how his encounter with Christ at Waseda taught him how to live a life of helping others, even at the risk of his own life, and how it shaped him to be a loving and sincere man.

In the DVD, we see his granddaughter Madoka talking about Sugihara in his latter days. “On his deathbed, grandfather asked us to call for the priest. I felt that he was a true Christian then.” In the Russian Orthodox church, there is a ceremony for confessing one’s sins before dying.

Despite being one of the humanitarian heroes of the 20th century, Sugihara didn’t boast of his actions. Instead, one can imagine that Sugihara must have borne the sorrow of the Jews for whom he was unable to issue visas and who were consequently sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp where they died. He was willing to stand before God as a sinner—in this we see Sugihara’s sincerity. ■

---

**Sugihara... made the decision to follow Christ for his whole life.**

---



“Sugihara Chiune” movie poster

# uest 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!"

## Popular drama heroine embraced Christianity

Christian Shimbun, January 3 & 10, 2016  
Author: Yuko Nakao Translator: Mie Takatsuji

In the Meiji Era, when women were still treated as if they were men's belongings, one woman worked hard to establish a bank and a life-insurance company, develop coal mines, and empower women. She was Asako Hirooka, the heroine of the drama series on NHK earlier this year, *Asa ga Kita* (Morning has dawned).

Born in 1849 to the well-off Koishikawa Mitsui family in Kyoto (which later went on to establish the famous Mitsui *zaibatsu* or conglomerate). Despite being treated like a princess, Hirooka was a tomboy. But she also loved studying and reading, so much so that her parents banned her from reading.

In her autobiography, *One Week One Life*, she relates how disappointed she felt when informed that women did not need education. However, Hirooka refused to accept this. She was determined to find some way to study. She was convinced that, so long as both genders were given equal opportunity to study, there would not be any difference in learning ability.

When she was 17, Hirooka married Shingorō Kashimaya, the second son of a wealthy merchant in Osaka. Fortunately for Hirooka, her husband Kashimaya was easygoing—as a result Hirooka was free to do all that she did.

### Stepping into coal mines

When Hirooka married into the Kashimaya family, the family seemed rather *laissez-faire*, leaving all the business matters to the hired hands. Hirooka was determined to accept responsibility for the destiny of the entire

family. She worked long into the evenings to equip herself, mastering accounting, finance, and commerce on her own.

Just as Hirooka had feared, Kashimaya's business suffered during the turbulent times of the Meiji Restoration. Because of her hard work, Kashimaya managed to set up the Kashima Bank and Daidō Life Insurance Company, which grew to become the core of Kashimaya's business.

Hirooka also became active in the coal-mining industry. She traveled to the Uruno Coal Mine in Fukuoka and supervised mining operations. Her efforts paid off—the Uruno coal mine saw a large increase in its output after 1897 and became highly profitable.

### Establishing Japan Women's University

While excelling in business, Hirooka also felt pity for her fellow Japanese women who were living in bondage. Hirooka was born out of wedlock in the Mitsui family and questioned her own circumstances as a woman, where her spouse decided things for her regardless of her desires. She became convinced that women also have the right to live as human beings. At this time, she met Jinzō Naruse, who believed in the need for education for women and wanted to establish a women's university.

Hirooka jumped at the opportunity to become one of the university's founders. She donated a huge sum of money and worked with Naruse. She traveled around Japan seeking support from powerful businessmen and politicians. In 1901, Japan Women's University was established



"Asako to tabi suru (traveling with Asako)" - a book on her life. (published by Forest Books for ¥1,296)

as the first higher-education institution for women in Japan.

Hide Inoue, the fourth principal of the university and the woman who accompanied Hirooka to the Uruno coal mine, said, "In her, I saw a woman who was not afraid of anything. It was enjoyable seeing her negotiating with strong men, even ordering them about and scolding them. I totally

admired her. At a time when no one was arguing for gender equality, I saw a woman who was as strong as a man . . . I was deeply impacted by her." Hirooka hardly ever said, "You cannot do this," or "Stop doing that." Instead, she was always encouraging, saying things like, "Let's do it," and "Go for it."

In 1904, Hirooka retired from the family business. She then worked actively to promote women's status in society by busying herself with Japan Women's University, the Patriotic Women's Committee, and the Japan YWCA Central Committee, as well as setting up the Osaka YWCA.

### Awakened to faith while fighting cancer

When she was 60, Hirooka had surgery to remove breast cancer. Through this experience, she became aware of God's existence. Naruse, who was a Christian, introduced her to the pastor of Osaka Christian Church, Tsuneteru Miyakawa. Hirooka studied the Bible under Pastor Miyakawa and was baptized that Christmas.

Until she was called to heaven at 71, she devoted herself to writing and never stopped spurring on her readers. In this way, she contributed to nurturing the next generation of women. ■



ReachGlobal is the mission arm of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), which was founded in 1884 and arrived in Japan in 1949. Over these past 66 years we have helped establish the Evangelical Free Church of Japan and planted numerous churches throughout the country.

Today ReachGlobal has 16 full- or part-time staff working in Onagawa, Sapporo, Sendai, and Tokyo. Below are brief updates on each location.

## Onagawa

ReachGlobal went into Onagawa first as learners as we prayer-walked asking God to show us how to love the locals. Onagawa had 80% of the town and 10% of the population washed away by the tsunami in 2011. After the disaster 70% of the residents were living in temporary housing.

Megumi Project is a social enterprise project offering young mothers of Onagawa a place of employment to create new products from used kimonos. Each lady receives training on how to sew. Every morning starts with a sharing time from biblical themes and praying for each other. See the Megumi Project web site: [megumiproject.com](http://megumiproject.com) and the article in the Winter 2016 issue of Japan Harvest.

ReachGlobal was invited by city officials to open a community space called Kizuna Friends in the newly-built promenade in front of the new train station in Onagawa. As this town moves toward rebuilding we have the privilege of being part of the community.

## Sapporo: COEN Life

In Sapporo, we purpose to multiply communities with a passion for Christ and compassion for people.

Our Lead Team of five is made up of three EFCA ReachGlobal missionaries and two paid local believers. We use three platforms to accomplish our purpose—a café (Café COEN), an English school

(COEN English), and the church (COEN Bible Community). We connect with unpaid staff, customers, English students, and Bible-community friends, introducing them to Christ when they are ready.

The Bible community worships on Sundays and we have Bible studies during the week. Approximately 20% of the 120+ people we now see weekly are choosing to spend time in God's Word.

We use a business model operating a café and English school because they:

- align with the gifts of those called to this ministry,
- meet people's needs,
- provide open doors to build relationships, and
- give opportunities to show our faith.

For further information visit [COENLife.com](http://COENLife.com). For the café and English school sites, visit [CafeCOEN.com](http://CafeCOEN.com).

## Sendai

At the Sendai Izumi Evangelical Church our mission is to proclaim the Good News to the city of Sendai and northward into the growing town of Tomiya which will become a city in 2016. We are committed to multiplication through discipleship of believers (2 Tim. 2:2), and to serve the community through outreach English classes and community center outreach. We also took part in earthquake relief and tsunami victim ministry.

It has been a joy to see how seekers have come to believe in Jesus through seeker Bible studies. It is an even greater joy to watch them grow in their faith, to serve God, and to share the gospel with their family and friends.

## Tokyo

Our long-term vision in Tokyo is to see God raise up numerous ministry teams that multiply healthy, transformational churches in Central Tokyo. The first step in our vision is to plant a church in the Waseda area of Tokyo that makes disciples for Christ and partners with other Christians to transform the community. We are also in the planning stages of a coffee house initiative. The coffee house will be a self-sustaining business to establish a Christian presence in the community and an open door for building relationships. **JH**





The ELFCN mission's strategy is to evangelize the least reached people groups in the world and has missionaries in the Middle East, Mali, and Japan. The first missionaries came to Japan in 1950 and started their work in Mie Prefecture. During the next few years, through home meetings and many Bible studies, churches emerged. In 1961 in cooperation with The Norwegian Mission Society, that was and still is working in the Kansai area, the churches were united into a denomination with Japanese leadership called Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC). It became a denomination working in both cities and rural areas where not many churches existed.

### One era ends, another begins

In 2014 the cooperation with KELC was brought to a close and the mission agency of ELFCN prepared to move us (the five missionaries in our mission) to a new location. After praying, networking, and surveying, we moved to the east part of Nagoya to do evangelism.

As we have maintained a strong focus on evangelism and mentoring, we have also stressed good relationships with local churches. At the same time, we have been working to clarify our calling as a mission here in Nagoya. We believe there is a need for many different approaches, but we think our calling is in one niche: the house church.

### House churches

Coming to Nagoya, we saw some churches which were growing, but others looked like they weren't. After living here just a few weeks, we realized that there were also healthy and growing house churches. What we used to believe was that Japanese people do not usually open up their homes. But we see Japanese people running their house churches from their homes. They are growing and branching out, even



without connections to foreign missionaries. House churches can be done in Japan. And there are no startup costs. We find that "house church" is just a term; the location is not so important. Cafés or open spaces work well too.

We are exploring, and starting to use a house church evangelization method which is known worldwide: Training for Trainers (T4T). We are also connecting with missionaries doing the same in other parts of Japan. There is a unique Japanese method of doing house churches, *Ten Gai Nai*,<sup>1</sup> that we are also using. Both are great tools to quickly tell the Good News and connect people to Jesus and other believers.

We believe that God wants us to start healthy networks of house churches, which we call Life Church Network. That is why we are also looking for partners, both mission agencies and independent missionaries. We want contact with Christian businessmen and women who desire to bring good change to their workplaces.

A house church usually starts with a group consisting of three to seven people who meet regularly. As they incorporate basic church activities of teaching, worship, fellowship, giving, etc., they will become a church. They also try to send out one or two from their group to start another group.

### Life Church Network's...

**Vision:** Loving God, connecting people with Jesus, living life like Jesus.

**Mission:** To reach and influence Japan, by building a network of Bible-based house churches that will change life and communities.

**Goal:** Four generations of house churches in Japan by 2020.

### Core Values ("EPIC"):

- Empowering believers to fully use their spiritual gifts.
- Planting simple, healthy churches which reproduce.
- Interaction with honest, intimate fellowship, both with God and with other believers.
- Creative flexibility in sharing and living the Gospel. **JH**

1. From Mitsuo Fukuda's book, *Upward Outward Inward*, (UK: Wide Margin, 2010).



The ELFCN missionaries: Marianne Jacobsen, Nathan and Inge Mikaelson, Ruth and Knut Ola Topland with children Karen, Marie and Julia

JPM/MTW Japan Vision:  
A Biblical Church Planting  
Movement that is  
healthy, reproducing, and  
increasingly indigenous



Mission to the World

*Planting churches. Transforming communities.*

## History

The Presbyterian Church in America's (PCA) Mission to the World (MTW) is our current agency, but our roots go back to Bible-believing Presbyterian missionaries in 1948. They began Japan Presbyterian Mission (JPM) and Tokyo Christian Theological Seminary (TCTS). Several graduates started churches that later became the Presbyterian Church in Japan. TCTS later joined Tokyo Christian College to form Tokyo Christian University.

## The Presbyterian Church in Japan

Church plants in the 1950s grew into a solid, indigenous church of 2,500 worshipers in 64 churches. JPM continues close partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Japan (PCJ), but we are not "under" the PCJ. Japanese Christians have loaned JPM about US\$800,000 in church bonds since 2001 to help us purchase four ministry buildings in Nagoya and Chiba, reflecting the close trust relationship that continues.

## Increased from 15 to 60 career missionaries since 1996

Our USA "Japan Partnership" borrowed the theme "Pray for the 70!" from OMF's history. (Hudson Taylor borrowed it from Luke.) God is answering these prayers. More than 50 of our 60 missionaries had a Japan short-term mission connection. Since 1996 over 1,000 short-term team members, gap-year interns, and other short termers have come, including hundreds to serve in the tsunami relief effort. Many have now become career missionaries or are in the process. A healthy PCA stateside church base, and partnerships with Australian and Korean evangelical Presbyterians also helps us grow. Pushing the compelling need of lost Japan and inviting all candidates to serve on church planting teams seems to help mobilize this generation.

## Church planting priority over revitalization

It is clear that JPM has helped Kingdom advancement most by starting new churches. We give some resources to church revitalization and we pray. But new birth is less difficult than resurrection. New churches generally grow faster, have more baptisms, younger people, and mobilize more leaders for the future.

## Missionaries also doing church planting

Some modern "experts" are against this. But Japan is the world's second largest unreached people group. We need aggressive church planting by God-called workers regardless of their passport country. We long for more Japanese church planters, of course. Our missionaries often work under Japanese pastors. But we gladly have those of our missionaries gifted as church planters do church planting. The Great Commission trumps recent extra-Biblical mission philosophy. Healthy new churches birth new Japanese workers.

## Tokyo city center church planting

Since 2009 we began putting significant resources into this in partnership with Redeemer PCA of New York City (see Tim Keller's video at [www.mtwjapan.com](http://www.mtwjapan.com)). Grace City Church Tokyo already averages about 160 worshipers. The worship venue near Tokyo station costs ¥180,000 for five hours each Sunday. God is blessing the investment with much fruit. Our Community Arts Tokyo ministry was also born from this work. Two more churches began worship in 2015. Roppongi International Presbyterian Church is next, Lord willing.

## Christian schools for Japanese and missionary children

JPM started the International Christian Academy Nagoya (school) in Nagoya and Covenant Community School International in Chiba to deepen our ministries in these cities.

## Christ Bible Seminary(CBS)/Institute Nagoya

Japan desperately needs more Japanese church leaders. We started CBS recently to provide seminary training for the Nagoya region. God provided a large four-story building near Nagoya JR station. CBS sponsored "Love Japan" with John Piper in 2014. We pray that God will use CBS to raise a host of godly, well-trained laborers for all of Japan.

## Gospel-centeredness our most important value

The gospel is our greatest need for ourselves and for our ministries. We confess with John Newton (and the Apostle Paul) that we know two things: I am a great sinner, and Jesus is a great Savior for sinners.

We pray for Holy Spirit power as we attempt great things for God, and continue to expect great things from God for the lost in Japan. **JH**

# 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?

## TOKYO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SPONSORS

### ACTS-ES



The Global Meeting Place for Christian University Students

- A Bachelor of Arts degree, fully accredited by the National Government of Japan.
- Liberal Arts based.
- Instruction in English. Japanese as a second language.
- Amazingly low cost in comparison with fully accredited evangelical colleges and universities in the United States or with other private universities in Japan.

TOKYO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, ACTS-ES ADMISSION OFFICE

3-301-5 Uchino, Inzai City, Chiba 270-1347, Japan  
E-mail: [acts@tci.ac.jp](mailto:acts@tci.ac.jp) Website: [www.tci.ac.jp](http://www.tci.ac.jp)



# New wineskins

## Leaving our comfort zones

When Jesus speaks of new wine and new wineskins he introduces a spiritual life lived as a citizen of the invisible kingdom of God. How do we introduce such an amazing life and citizenship to our Japanese friends? Please join us on our journey.

By Bill Swan

Have you ever been in over your head? That's been my life story since coming to Japan 40 years ago. Do you find yourself working, thinking, and enduring much more than you ever intended? If so, join the club. For me, Japan has forced me to grow and develop more than I'd imagined. The formless, invisible realm of God's kingdom and the call to pour new wine into new wineskins has forced me to leave my comfort zone.

In 1982, five years into our missionary careers, my wife Jane and I moved north to Sendai. At that time, we received permission from our mission director to pursue "new wineskins." Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to new wine that needs new wineskins. In other words, the Spirit (new wine) supersedes traditional forms and practices (old wineskins). This teaching freed us to jettison old forms and seek a new work of God. It gave us the courage to take risks of faith.

Jesus taught that he himself will build the church (Matt. 16:18). This assurance released us from the burden of trying to do church planting in our own strength and allowed us to focus on spreading the message of the gospel and making disciples. In his agricultural parables, Jesus also taught that the kingdom would eventually far outstrip organizational growth. This caused us to expect much fruit—perhaps even a gospel movement in Japan. We knew this would take time and require faithfulness and application of his kingdom ways. It changed our focus from programs, methods, and buildings to relationships and the work of the Spirit in people.

Over the years, the following four principles have become clear. I believe they are essential as we consider the future of mission in Japan.

### Four principles for pioneering a gospel movement in Japan

1. Put aside concepts of church that have come down to us through Western Christianity and are full of non-essential traditions.



2. Focus on the clear commands of the Great Commission: make disciples, proclaim the good news, and be witnesses to the nations.
3. Aim for a Japanese understanding of Jesus and the scriptures, particularly among the unchurched of Japan. This requires us missionaries to become the learners, while our Japanese friends take ownership of spreading the message.
4. Don't worry about church planting; Christ promises to build his church. In New Testament times, this happened primarily in the extended household and family—that is, among natural, pre-existing relationships.

### A case study

What follows is a case study of how we learned and sought to practice these principles.

"Would you guys be willing to teach me the Bible?" This was my invitation to about a dozen freshmen just entering a university near our home. They were all buddies, and I was the outsider, but the Lord placed them in our laps.

We invited them to a pizza party in our home. Toward the end of the party, I shakily stood up and in halting Japanese said: "During your four years in university you will have an opportunity to think about life, what's important, and what values to follow. I try to follow a person called Jesus, and he told us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Could I ask you, as Japanese men, to teach me how you understand Jesus and his teachings?"



## Leaving our comfort zone

These young men began to invade our living room once or twice a week. They became part of our family, bringing their guitars, playing Lego with our children, and eating Jane's delicious desserts. They would come at 7 pm and sometimes leave as late as midnight.

I gave up on any plan or agenda for these times together. I was not in control. Each time was unscripted and special. Toward the end of most evenings, I would get up the courage to suggest that we read Mark as a text for discussion about Jesus and loving our neighbors. Why was this so difficult? Maybe because they were the leaders and I was the learner. I had to learn to go with the flow. Relationships with these young men were more important than following a plan for the evening. At any rate, it was hard. I often said to Jane, "I hope nobody comes tonight!" But at the end of most evenings I was so happy I couldn't go to sleep!

## The Lord gave us A-san

From the beginning, the Lord gave us A-san. He was a Cornelius-type from a "noble" family. His uncle was a principled politician and had chosen A-san to follow in his footsteps. A-san became our primary teacher and ally, helping us in countless ways.

He was an insider urging his friends to stick with us. I also began meeting with him personally each week. After all these years, we are still deeply connected with him and his whole family.

How did we proceed through Mark? We had no Bible reading or study guides. We would simply read the passage together and then I would ask them the same questions each time. "What do you see?" "How are the people reacting to Jesus?" "Who likes him, who hates him, and why?" "What is he teaching his disciples and how are they doing?" And of course: "Who do you think Jesus is?"

As time passed, I added another question, "Do you think you could also be a disciple? What would that be like in your life?" Behind the scenes, I prayed fervently, "Lord teach them! Would you be their teacher and teach them more than I could imagine?" I clung to the promise, "All your children will be taught by the Lord" (Isaiah 54:13, NIV).

At first, my language ability was such that I could ask questions but not understand their answers. I solved this by shifting their attention from me to each other. "What do you think of what K-san just said?" This helped the dialogue to bounce around among them. As time went on, I could follow the conversations, and then later I was able to understand and enter into the jokes too. We had lots of fun as we bonded together.

## New wineskins

During those four years some dropped out and some were added, but of those who remained, all came to Christ. The question arose in my mind, "What about church? Should they join or become a recognizable, conventional church?" I fretted over that. Over the years, I met and teamed up with other missionaries working in difficult areas of the world, especially among Muslims and Hindus. All of us faced this issue. How do we lead peoples of the world's major religions to Christ and what do we do about church? How do we do this without turning them into Westerners so that they live as aliens in their own countries and cultures?

We studied the Scriptures to learn what church might look like in these situations. We concluded that even though these believers did not appear to be a church to Westerners, they actually were the Church. They did not have to forsake their national identities. That's when I understood Christ's words, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

## A-san entered the corporate world

A-san eventually graduated and joined a well-known company in Sendai. He continued to follow Christ but did not act or smell like a conventional Christian. He fitted well into company life and, because of his focus on love, he excelled. This attracted the attention of others, particularly his boss. The community of faith began spreading in his company and also in his family. We saw that Christ's church is so powerful that it is able to invade existing societies or social patterns. We continue to see the church expand in the city of Sendai through natural relationships and networks with a special focus on families.

## Conclusion

I hope these thoughts will free us from old forms and traditions as we look to the future of mission in Japan and that we will join together seeking more thoroughly scriptural approaches to mission. Let's take the freedom the gospel demands to seek new wineskins for the new wine of the kingdom.

Do you have a story about new wineskins? Do you have comments or questions about our experience? You can contact me at [bjswan32@gmail.com](mailto:bjswan32@gmail.com). **JH**

*Bill Swan and his wife Jane (US) have been long-term missionaries in Japan with The Navigators since 1977. They've done city-wide ministry in Sendai since 1982. They have been longtime mission consultants in Russia and USA. They have four children and seven grandchildren.*

Photo: [http://www.marjoman.es/intranet/pics/contenido/277f9315bd499c37744dabcead61674a\\_010120.jpg](http://www.marjoman.es/intranet/pics/contenido/277f9315bd499c37744dabcead61674a_010120.jpg)

*I gave up on any plan or agenda for these times together. I was not in control. Each time was unscripted and special.*

# Expectations and realities

*One man's journey from mistaken first impressions to disillusionment to hope for the future of the church in Japan*

By Andrew Glosson

I grew up in the Bible belt of North Carolina with a traditional church background and moved to Missouri for Bible college. Like many in my class, I had become disgruntled with the American church. Church as a building, works-based righteousness, and event-driven mission were just a few problems I thought I could start solving after graduating. At least that was my intention, until I became friends with a Japanese Christian. As our friendship grew, he encouraged me to visit Japan with him and do a short-term mission trip to his home church.

That trip was my first time I'd experienced a church outside of America, and I was amazed at what I saw. In my ignorance of the language and culture, I naively accepted all that I experienced. To my 20-year-old mind, the church seemed to be doing things right, unlike churches in America. There were early-morning prayer meetings, powerful outreach events, and a thriving homeless ministry that welcomed people to live on the church grounds in exchange for labor around the property. The church was multicultural with many Brazilians and Filipinos worshipping with Japanese. It seemed to be a perfect community and I wanted to experience more.

So the following year I returned to Japan on a school-sanctioned trip during which we visited several local churches in Honshu. As we visited the churches, I was shocked to find that they had very few members and many members were elderly. Some churches didn't even have pastors. You could imagine how dumbfounded I felt when I learned that these were typical churches in Japan.

I decided I needed to learn more, so I headed back to Japan a third time. My aim was to spend the summer in Kashiwazaki, Niigata, fulfilling my

internship requirements for college and hoping to learn more about the condition of the church in Japan while trying to reconcile the differences between my first and second trips. After only three weeks, my home was shaken to the ground as the little town of Kashiwazaki was turned upside down by the Niigata Chuetsu earthquake of 2004. I spent the rest of summer serving alongside various disaster-relief projects around the city. Eventually I connected with CRASH Japan through which I was offered a job as a teacher at Grace Christian International School in Ome, western Tokyo.

At the end of the summer, I returned home to finish my last semester of college and prepare for my big move back to Japan. Throughout this transition, I thought a lot about my previous experiences. The earthquake exposed a hopelessness in many people, which resonated with a similar hopelessness I had felt in my own heart as a child. It was Christ who rescued me out of the darkness and gave me hope, and it was Christ alone who could fill them with hope too. That consideration became the deciding factor for me in becoming a full-time missionary in Japan.

Yet, on a deeper level, I couldn't shake my desire to understand what was going on in the church in Japan. Why was the church in my first trip so different from the churches I visited in the second trip? I got my answer in the summer of 2008. As I travelled to Tokyo, I decided to call on my friend and experience some nostalgia from my first trip to Japan. I spent a couple of weeks with him and was still as impressed with his church as I first was. However, this time I had a better grasp of the language and culture of Japan. I began to see some flaws in my rose-tinted view of this church. As I looked deeper, I started to notice things that I had not picked up on during my first trip. Further conversations with a few missionaries and church leaders I had come to know eventually helped me determine the reason for the big difference between it and other churches. That church mainly had its roots in the prosperity gospel movement.





## “I began to see some flaws in my rose-tinted view of this church.”

That realization left me broken. I was troubled to see that the state of the church in Japan was pretty bleak. Churches were unhealthy. Many were dying, while others were yielding to false doctrine. As I thought about this, the idols of control and approval began to swell in my heart, and the arrogance I had had as a young Bible college student came flooding back. In my arrogance, I had begun to plot how I would approach the problems of the church in Japan and begin a new church that would become a model for future churches.

I became even more broken a few years later in the wake of the 2011 tsunami. I had been given the opportunity to lead a CRASH scout team to the north to survey the situation. That experience made me realize that I didn't know how to lead. In the following months, the church-planting team I had put together dissolved, and my wife and I found ourselves alone.

Through prayer, we decided to return to the States, where I began walking through a season of repentance. We found a home in Karis Church in Missouri. I began an internship at Karis and over the years God's grace started to transform me from a prideful one-man show to a humble, teachable team player. As we served at Karis, we learned what a healthy church looks like and how to be healthy church members. Karis also began to invest in our calling to Japan and through our partnership with the church-planting network called Acts 29 we made

several trips to Japan and explored what it might look like for us to return to Japan.

These trips enabled me to catch a glimpse of the future of the church in Japan and it's one I'm excited about. In a way, the tsunami seems to have been a wake-up call to many of the dying churches in Japan. In other ways, it's helped to raise awareness of the need for a new work to begin in Japan. This past spring, I was privileged to glimpse this at a meeting of about a dozen church planters seeking to network together to reach Tokyo with the gospel. We are preparing to return to Japan this year, and I now have great hope for the future of the church in Japan.

As we labor together for the sake of the gospel in this next season of the church in Japan, let us not forget for whom we are laboring. “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10, ESV).

*Andrew and his wife Megumi are members of Karis Church, an Acts 29 network church in Columbia, Missouri. They are preparing to work alongside church-planter Yoshito Noguchi in Fuchu, Tokyo.*

Image composite by Karen Ellrick from public domain sources

# Opportunities through video

*Leveraging video messages and online church resources to start and expand churches*

By Armin Messer with Heike Messer

Imagine that...

...you could start a church with excellent Japanese sermons in your worship services.

...your church could impact young people with powerful messages that speak into their context, are fun and are delivered in a modern, trendy way.

...you could offer a well-prepared kids' programme for different age groups right from the start.

...you could point people who can't get to church on Sundays to online churches, with worship, a message, and live chat for questions, comments and prayer.

...you could offer meetings that connect with people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

A dream like this seems impossible for a church plant or a church with meagre financial resources, but new technology has made it possible. Around the world, churches are sharing and using video messages and Internet resources, allowing them to do things way beyond their own capacities.

In 2013, a small team of OMF missionaries started a new church plant, Connect International Community,<sup>1</sup> in Tsuzuki Ward of Yokohama. To concentrate our efforts on evangelism and to have a native Japanese communicator early on, we chose to use video messages from New Hope Yokohama, who share their resources with us.

Below, I have shared some lessons we have learnt over the last two years and also some ideas on how a movement could be sparked in Japan.

## *1. Video messages can be a powerful tool for communicating biblical truth*

While a video message is not as personal or locally relevant as a real-life speaker, it has some advantages. The biggest one is that even a small church can have a message from an excellent communicator. Another advantage is that it is less confrontational. Preaching to small audiences can be challenging in Japan: listeners often don't like eye contact and clearly addressing ethical issues can make listeners feel like they are being singled out. Using a recorded message is less confrontational and can make it easier to discuss the message afterwards as no feelings will have been hurt.

## *2. The pastor's or missionary's role changes with video messages*

Most missionaries and Japanese pastors spend a significant part of their weeks on sermon preparation. By using a video message, this time can be used for evangelism, discipleship, and leadership training. But even though the role changes, the leader (whether full-time, part-time, or lay-leader) is still crucial to the church's growth. The traditional church planter is often seen as a *sensei* (teacher). With video messages,

his/her role changes to be a facilitator and trainer who initiates evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, and networking with others. This requires humility, no question.

## *3. It's vital to create a welcoming atmosphere*

Just using a whole video worship service from another church won't give you any meaningful identity as a local church community. In our case, we embed a video message in our worship experience. Our "connect experience" starts off with a coffee and tea time, where people can talk and interact with one another before the programme. There is also usually a craft table and some games to make visitors and their children feel relaxed and comfortable. Other elements we include are modern worship songs, prayer, and a short time to connect with people. We often facilitate a group discussion about the message and refer to recent occurrences and upcoming events.

## *4. Video messages have a huge potential to plant churches using limited resources*

Most churches don't plant daughter churches because the cost is just too high: a pastor, a building, and a core group. In our case, we rent public rooms in community centres for less than 2,000 yen on a Sunday. By using video messages and being willing to be flexible about meeting places, we think that any group of committed believers could start a church.

## *5. The need to work towards multiplication not just addition*

Even though this model has great potential for starting churches that meet in different locations, days, and times and that target various pockets of society, it isn't an instant recipe for growth. Building a church and discipling believers takes more than just showing video messages.

In our case, we are intentional about evangelism. Besides the seeker-oriented Sunday worship service, we are using the social network meetup.com<sup>2</sup> as a platform to build new relationships. We offer a weekly conversation café, monthly special evangelistic events and schedule regular outreaches on the street to connect with new people.

Listening to a good sermon is powerful, but there is also a need to experience the Word ourselves, so in our small groups we use the inductive Bible study approach. At a later stage, we see leadership training playing a crucial role in starting new communities.

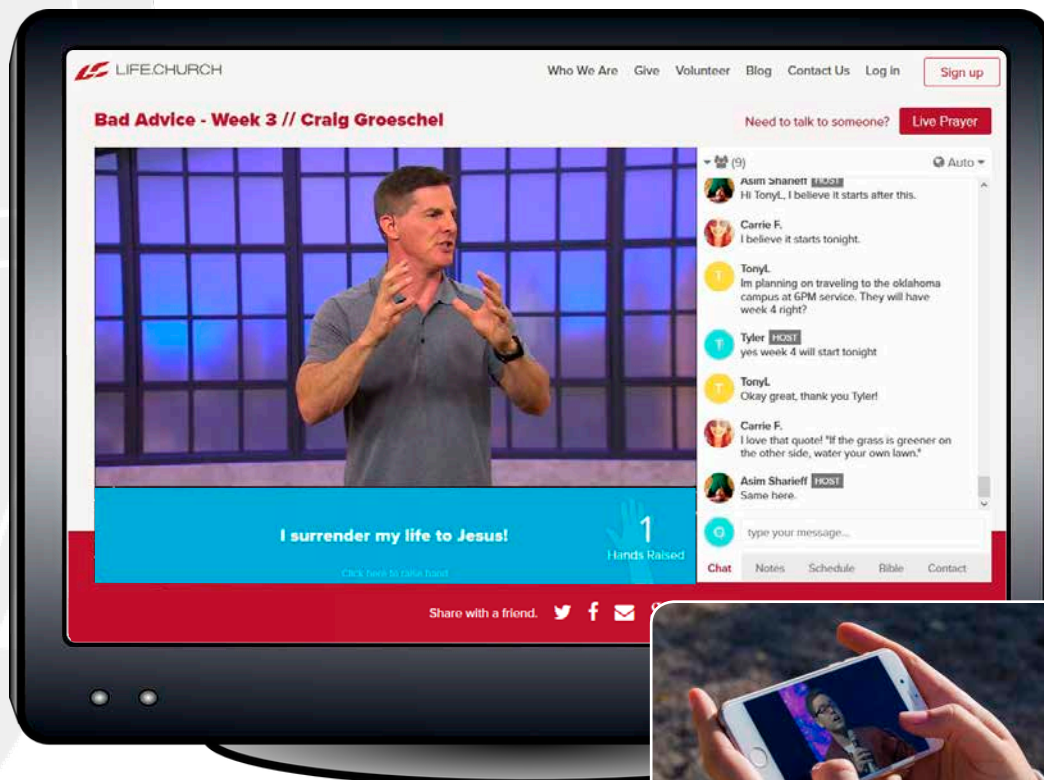
After two years, we are still experimenting with this approach. We haven't seen rapid growth, but the experience has convinced us that there is a lot of potential for the future of mission work in Japan.



How could a movement be sparked in Japan using modern technology for church planting?

### 1. By more churches producing and uploading good-quality message videos

At the moment, there are still very few video messages available online that have a good audio recording, close-up shots of the pastor, and a high-resolution video file. Even more difficult to find are messages with content that is neutral enough to be used in another context and is also relevant for non-Christians. Some media ministries in Japan are providing professionally filmed worship services, but some of them are difficult to access and download via the web.



*Life.Church's "church online platform" on a big screen and on the go*

### 2. By training and empowering church-planting leaders

If lay people or part-time pastors were trained and empowered by their churches, they could start worship in their homes, their work environments, or in local community centres. Those churches could hold multiple services not only on Sunday but also during the week to reach out to different groups in society. Teaching believers a new pattern of church could also help hundreds of small churches in rural Japan that can't afford to call a pastor.

### 3. By churches starting new campuses, networks, and online worship experiences

One way of starting an additional location is to create a similar worship experience somewhere else, using your own recording of a live worship service. So that, like Starbucks, wherever you go, you can expect the same experience.

Another way is to start networks where other churches would use the messages of a church, but still have their own unique flavour and might vary quite a bit in the way they are doing church. Churches could also be as innovative as starting interactive online worship services reaching out to the Internet users in Japan (over 85% of the total population). The platform to do that is free!<sup>3</sup>

Imagine how many more churches could be started if some of the bigger, growing churches in Japan invested in these approaches.

### A resource platform is being created on the web

One church in the US that is already doing this in a marvelous way is Life.Church.<sup>4</sup> From this church comes the

YouVersion Bible App<sup>5</sup> and Bible App for Kids.<sup>6</sup> They host a resource platform called Open, where they share all their resources for free.<sup>7</sup>

At these links, you can find free resources for kids, youth, students, small groups, worship, leadership development, and, of course, all of their message series. They have started more than 20 campuses over the years and currently more than 100 network churches partner with them.

Imagine if Japanese churches, various mission organisations, and parachurch ministries started working together to create a similar resource platform for Japan. I believe that if we served together and shared our God-given gifts for the advancement of the gospel in Japan, we could make an incredible impact on the whole country.

Please share your ideas and experiences with us via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/multisitechurchjapan> or email: [multisitechurchjapan@groups.facebook.com](mailto:multisitechurchjapan@groups.facebook.com) JH

*Armin and Heike Messer (Germany) have served with OMF since 2002. After ministering in rural Aomori, they moved to Yokohama in 2012. They currently lead the Connect church planting team and the OMF Kanto Sector.*

1. connect-japan.com
2. meetup.com Meetup.com is a social network app that allows people to form a group of like-minded people who can then meet in person through events organised by the group organiser or event host.
3. churchonlineplatform.com
4. life.church
5. youversion.com
6. bibleappforkids.com
7. open.church



# Successful church planting

*A welcoming culture, a bilingual environment, and effective small groups work together to foster church growth*

By Mark Benton

Japan desperately needs churches—lots of them. Statistics show that the vast majority of Japanese have never attended a church and have no idea of who Jesus Christ is. Even though this nation has had extensive missionary efforts and Christianity has become established, it remains largely unreached. Although there are many good ways to pursue evangelism, I believe that local churches are the best venue for evangelism and for impacting communities. However, most churches in Japan are stagnant or declining, and historically church planting in Japan has been very difficult.

Over the past 25 years, I've been fortunate to be involved in three church plants in Japan. I have to admit, though, that the first one failed, as I didn't have a clear idea of what to do. After that, I joined a church that had been started a few years earlier and learned a lot about Japanese people and church. I then helped that church triple in size over the next eight years to about 170 attendees on Sunday. That church sent my family as part of a team of 15 to start a new work. After 11 years, this local church now has two Sunday services, with about 200 people in total attendance.

I've thought a lot about church planting in Japan—what works and what doesn't (with plenty of experience in the latter!). Below, I share three characteristics of the successful local churches I've been involved with. I believe these characteristics are

reproducible; we've incorporated them in our most recent work and seen great fruit.

## 1. A welcoming culture

Most people feel welcome at their own church. Of course, that's usually because their friends are there and they are comfortable with the environment. However, very few ask whether their church is welcoming to someone who has never been there before or—especially important for Japan—someone who has never been to any kind of church before.

A welcoming environment has been crucial to our growth. Our ministry leaders and volunteers talk about it constantly, as do our regular members. We have tried to look at every facet of a newcomer's experience to determine what can make their visit comfortable and, most importantly, what will make them want to return next week. The goal is not a seeker-driven service, but rather a time of Christian

worship, teaching, and fellowship that is sensitive to a Japanese person who has never been there before.

One of the main felt needs of Japanese people is loneliness. In countless conversations with friends and others, I hear the same stories of rejection by family, oppressive work environments, or alienation from people who were once close. Often, my friends feel

loved only when they perform as expected, but they are hungry to be accepted for who they are.

In Western cultures, one evangelistic method is to appeal to the seeker to abandon their old life of sin, come out from among sinners and be separate. While that is certainly a biblical concept, the other side of the coin is much more effective with Japanese people, who usually don't have a strong sense of personal sin. They want to be accepted and find friends, so a message that says "Come and join us, be a part of this interesting group" is very powerful for them to hear. When a Japanese person comes to church for the first time, they probably won't remember the message or be impressed with the music. But, they will know whether they felt accepted and will come back next week if they feel that they can belong.

**We never ask first-time visitors to raise their hand to be acknowledged.**





majority of international churches in Japan are bilingual, with English as the primary language. On the other hand, there is a category of bilingual church in Japan showing good success, but their primary target is Japanese people.

At our church, we don't pass out welcome cards to gather information or give gifts to first-time visitors, and we never ask them to raise their hand to be acknowledged. Rather, the leaders and welcome team members are always looking for new people. When they enter the building, they are greeted and helped to find a seat. If there is time before the service and certainly after, the first-timer is engaged in friendly conversation. When we learn something that indicates their social status, we introduce them to someone in a similar situation: a single person gets introduced to a single member, a mother to a mother (and we explain our children ministries), etc. The point is to help a newcomer or casual attender connect to other people in the body of Christ. If they can meet a few people who are similar to them and who will reach out to them during the week through social media, they will come back the next week because they've found a place to belong.

## 2. A bilingual environment

There are international churches in Japan and throughout the world. Most seem to have been started to meet the needs of expatriates and do a good job of that. Because of their target, the vast

A bilingual church in Japan has several advantages. For us, an important one is a sense of excitement when foreigners are present. I'm not going to try to convince you that this is a biblical point; rather it's a cultural one. In Japan, there is a desire to internationalize. Those of us who have lived here a while have probably scoffed at some of the internationalism efforts we've seen over the years, and rightfully so. However, in a church setting, having a certain percentage of foreigners in the mix adds a sense of happening. Am I talking about a marketing tactic? Well, not only marketing, but I have seen that a bilingual church is attractive to Japanese young and old, and I'm very interested in attracting Japanese people to join our church and ultimately hear the gospel.

We call ourselves a Japanese-first bilingual church. Our goal is to reach Japanese people, but foreigners are welcome and encouraged to participate at all levels of ministry, including preaching (depending on commitment level and qualification, of course). To encourage foreigners to come, everything is





bilingual, but Japanese precedes English. Preaching is done with an interpreter standing beside the preacher. That provides a ministry opportunity for bilingual people in the church and an excellent training opportunity for young Japanese ministers. In fact, our lead pastor, a dynamic preacher and Bible teacher, learned how to speak in public by interpreting for other English speakers early in his career.

Our target is Japanese people, but we welcome foreigners, and they bring their Japanese students, friends, spouses, and children. We attract foreign Christians who have a burden for Japan and want to share their talents and energy to reach our nation. The result is that foreigners make up about 20% of our church, and the atmosphere each Sunday is lively and modern. If you're thinking about church planting, please attend a few bilingual churches in Japan and see how they are effectively reaching Japanese people.

### 3. Effective small groups

In the book of Acts, a key part of the early church was consistent gathering for prayer, study, and fellowship. In urban Japan, people are busy and live far from each other. It is extremely difficult to have mid-week meetings where more than a handful can attend. Thus, small groups are essential.

We tried several different styles and have finally found one that works well. Small groups are limited in terms of numbers (four or five works best) and duration (one year) and they meet twice a month. When a group is formed, no new members are added without everyone in the group agreeing to it. This gives the group a chance to gain an intimate atmosphere, as the members become comfortable and



secure with each other. However, to prevent cliques from forming, groups break up after a year and new ones are formed. Each meeting must include Bible study, sharing about one's personal life, and prayer together—if one of these aspects is missing, it's not a small group but something else.

Unlike other small-group programs, we don't use ours to reach newcomers or add to the church. Rather, they are considered to be a key part of discipleship. When the focus of the meeting is the Bible, then personal sharing tends to be about how the Scripture has affected one's life, rather than just talking about the same problems over and over. Nevertheless, personal sharing and praying for one another are also vital and provide an opportunity for the members of the Body of Christ to care for each other. The main role of the leader is to make sure that the meeting happens consistently and to stay in touch with each member. Leaders also meet regularly with the pastor to discuss the current situation and how best to lead their small group. Approximately 70% of our adult attendees are part of a small group. We've been using this pattern for the past seven years with good success.

These three components—welcoming culture, bilingual environment, and effective small groups—are easily reproducible in a variety of contexts in Japan. I have found that they help to form dynamic, growing churches whose main problem becomes lack of space. I hope to encourage other missionaries to get involved in church planting and see that the harvest is truly ripe. **JH**

*Mark Benton led a team of four missionary families from the US to the Kansai region in 1991. Since then he has been involved in church planting and pastoring and is a member of the Foursquare Church.*

All photos from the Crossroad Nishinomiya Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/269165933108189>





# Emerging trends: potential and pitfalls

*Tailoring ministry to the changing  
landscape of mission in both  
rural and urban Japan.*

By Dawn Birkner

Many trends in mission are currently emerging in Japan. While some seem quite promising, there are also potential concerns. To maximize the potential of these trends, it's important to avoid extremes and seek unity in diversity (as opposed to in uniformity or conformity). Below, I consider some of these trends together with their associated opportunities and dangers, with a special focus on the different situations pertaining to rural and urban Japan.

## **Trend toward interdenominationalism**

To a degree unimaginable a decade ago, there is now much greater cooperation between churches of different denominations. During relief work in Tohoku, similar denominations came to cooperate closely. Walls partially came down even between dissimilar denominations, resulting in increased communication, prayer, interaction, acknowledgement, and cross-pollination. There's never been a better time to pursue lasting interdenominational cooperation. In this article I consider the various ways such interdenominationalism finds expression.

Most prefectural capitals and other larger cities have long had interdenominational citywide gatherings for pastors and missionaries to pray and enjoy fellowship, but there have been few such gatherings at the prefectural level. Recently, however, many regions have seen multiple efforts to start prefectural or multi-prefectural interdenominational meetings for mutual encouragement among Christian relief workers, missionaries, pastors, church planters, and those in rural ministry. In regions still lacking such cooperation, it may be an opportune time to expand gatherings in prefectural capitals to become prefectural wide so that they include rural pastors and church planters. The mutual awareness, prayer, and interaction generated by interdenominational ministerial gatherings can lead to more interdenominational partnerships between urban and rural churches and for expanded urban church collaboration, such as joint citywide outreaches and social services, better disaster preparedness, and more radio ministries. Such gatherings could also increase consultation between denominations considering planting new churches, enabling them to focus efforts on needy areas and avoid duplication.

Interdenominationalism may also help rural church plants obtain more assistance from nearby backup churches—churches within two hours of a church plant that offer occasional assistance. Backup churches have no authority over, responsibility for, or obligation to the church plant; rather, they serve under the leadership of the church planter when they assist. While churches have long assisted church plants in this way, the potential is even higher post-3.11 due to increased interaction between churches of varied denominations. Backup churches can assist church plants of different de-

nominations if they defer to the church planter in areas of differences. Because assistance is directly arranged between the church plant and the backup church (rather than at the denominational headquarter level), only mutual willingness is needed. Extra assistance from multiple backup churches (which can belong to various denominations) could empower a church planter to expand from one town to a cluster of unchurched towns. This could make a real difference in reaching rural Japan given the shortage of rural church planters for the 1,800 towns still without their first church.

There's also a trend toward interdenominational networks. By their nature, such networks (if they maintain their true essence) do not directly control or support anything; rather, they provide forums that enhance interaction among those who do. Like the Internet, a network provides a "space" for independent entities with shared interests to connect and interact. Thus, the primary role of a mission's network is to create opportunities among those engaged in mission for prayer and encouragement, as well as sharing information, ideas, future plans, and challenges. Networks also enable those with ministry opportunities or other needs and those willing to offer help with a means to initially encounter one another.

Horizontal networks are empowering in nature and have much potential. But care is needed to ensure that they don't morph into collectives, umbrella organizations, paternalistic groups, or all-inclusive prefectural mission teams under one leader (a hierarchy). Principles to help a mission network stay on track include:

- staying true to a network's essence
- remaining horizontal (neither the network, network facilitator, nor





any participating entity should have authority over or responsibility for other participating entities, which are each equal and independent of one another and of the network)

- valuing unity in diversity rather than in conformity and uniformity respecting and working through (not supplanting) local churches and church plants
- not mediating or intervening in relationships among participants or those introduced to each other via the network
- being a bridge to, not a gatekeeper of, outside resources
- having no staff or finances (or virtually none)
- conducting joint projects only when all concerned agree

There is also much potential if interdenominational cooperation increases even more. For example, consider the potential if, in rural areas, denomination headquarters recognized ordination by other denominations. Nondenominational churches are well suited for rural areas because multiple church plants of different denominations in small rural towns (population below 20,000) are generally counterproductive since they can give an impression of disunity and create confusion. Furthermore, multiple churches in small communities can undermine a starting core (in the same way that a fire dies after scattering the coals). In addition, the few believers already in a town and those who move in will generally belong to various denominations, and yet they need each other's gifts and strengths. Even long-established denominational churches in rural areas struggle to support a pastor or replace a retiring one. One solution may be bivocational or lay pastors. Another might be for a few rural churches of different denominations in adjacent towns to hire part-time the same 'circuit-riding' pastor. Given the shortage of pastors and the need for 1,500 more rural churches, having one pastor of any denomination serving multiple established rural churches makes sense. But this would be possible only if, in rural areas, denominations

agree to recognize ordination by other denominations.

### Trend toward holistic ministry

The trend toward more holistic ministries could correct an imbalance in recent decades resulting from an emphasis on proclamation without a corresponding emphasis on community involvement and service. The trend toward holistic ministry is especially apparent in Tohoku, where some wonderful partnerships have developed with town councils, and where Christians—once a largely unknown entity—are now widely viewed as a positive influence.

It's not the first time Christians have been viewed positively in Japan—between the Meiji period and the early post-war period, the church substantially influenced society by addressing social needs. Christians were involved in education, disaster relief after the earthquakes in 1923 and 1933, and addressing laborer's and women's rights. Although these efforts produced spiritual fruit, they did not produce lasting widespread openness to Christ. Openness to relationships with Christians and to their service to the community does not necessarily result in widespread interest in Christ himself. Perhaps there was an overemphasis on social services and proclamation suffered, or perhaps the maximum fruit possible was achieved. Whatever the case, the church's influence waned over time once secular society could meet social needs.

Similarly, the substantial social influence and trust relationships that Christians enjoy along Tohoku's coastline will decline. There is some increased fruit, but probably not a major or lasting breakthrough. Further, that influence extends only a few kilometers from the coast, not to all of Tohoku. Since 3.11, many Christians have urged greater social involvement, which is positive if combined with relational proclamation. However, even among evangelicals, increasing numbers of Christians are hesitant to directly proclaim the gospel.



The church in Japan is at a crossroads. It remains to be seen whether truly holistic Christianity with the right balance of Christian lifestyle, community service, and relational proclamation will emerge or whether a social gospel will replace gospel proclamation. Relief work has brought increased social acceptance of the church, but this can tempt us to not risk the long-yearned-for acceptance by sharing the Word. The myth that we can engage the community in a way that we will always be warmly received could lead to compromise with idolatry, to silence instead of proclamation, and to offering free bread instead of the Bread of Life. Balance is needed to minimize avoidable alienation and be holistic without idolizing community affirmation.

At certain stages in the history of Japan and currently in Tohoku, the church has met a disproportionately high proportion of social need. Will the church throughout Japan now engage the needs of aging Japan and shrinking rural communities? While it can't serve every community on the same scale as the 3.11 relief work (when Japanese and overseas resources were focused on just a few prefectures), some holistic ministry is possible. Examples include:

- Operating or volunteering at nursing homes, home health care, and day service. These are also potential tent-making opportunities for Japanese and foreigners in rural areas.



- Offering professional and lay counseling and services for families, elderly, and those suffering from anxiety, depression, loneliness, and other mental-health problems.
- Creating jobs. Rural Japan's shrinking population represents an opportunity for Christian businesses to create a job base in and greatly impact unchurched rural towns.

Many of the above represent business as mission (B.A.M.) opportunities for Christian business people. Let's B.A.M. in rural Japan!

### Trend toward increased outreach by Japanese

A growing, though small, subset feels that foreign missionaries should be under Japanese leadership or even that foreign missionaries are no longer needed. This was also a trend late in the pre-World War Two era when similar social circumstances prevailed. This trend is also common when the Christian population of a group reaches about 2% "reached", as is the case in the megacities of Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka as well as in most of Kanagawa prefecture and Okinawa. From that point, foreign missionaries (except those with special roles) are gradually phased out. Interactions between foreign and home (indigenous) missions can be challenging during the transition from unreached to reached, just like young adults and their parents often relate awkwardly for a season.

However, Japan's megacities, cities, and rural areas are at three distinct missiological stages. Megacities such as Tokyo and Yokohama are engaged, moderately churched, and nearly "reached". They are beginning to enter a phase where the baton will be passed from overseas missionaries to Japanese leadership, and church planting will be done more and more by Japanese (though long-term missionaries already in Japan should be "grandfathered in" and treated just like Japanese church planters).

Most other urban areas are engaged and have churches, but are still unreached (0.5% Christian). Foreign church planters are still needed, but so are more Japanese church planters.

Rural Japan (municipalities of <50,000 population based on municipal boundaries prior to the Heisei era merger) is in the pioneer stage, unreached (less than 0.05% Christian), nearly unengaged for three generations, and in need of at least 1,500 single location or 300 multisite pioneer church planters (whether foreign or Japanese). The days of pioneer missions are far from over in rural Japan.

Ways to promote good relations between foreign and home (indigenous) missions include:

- Treat megacities, urban Japan, and rural Japan differently as they are in different missiological stages.
- By careful evaluation of needs, reduce placements of new foreign missionaries in megacities.
- Have the biblical mindset of neither Japanese over foreigner, nor foreigner over Japanese, but all called by God to minister in Japan as one in Christ. Roles must be based on calling and gifting, not on whether one is foreign or Japanese. This mindset will minimize friction between Japanese and foreign Christian workers.

### Trend toward goals to reach Japan more thoroughly

One recent trend is to a movement to propose national goals for church planting in Japan. Such goals should distinguish between urban and rural areas because these areas are in different missiological stages. All urban areas (populations of over 50,000 based on pre-Heisei merger community boundaries) have churches, whereas two-thirds of rural areas (1,800 towns and villages) lack a church. Also, urban areas (where 0.5–2% of the population are believers) have been evangelized by many Christians for a long time, while unchurched rural areas (less than 0.05% of the population are believers) are nearly unengaged in the last 50 years. Furthermore, setting uniform church-planting goals rather than separate ones for urban and rural areas would protract the prolonged neglect of rural areas.

Some examples of potentially suitable goals are:

### Urban goals (churches readily accessible)

- Churches as accessible as post-offices or convenience stores.
- 40,000 new urban churches.

### Rural goals (access to the gospel)

- A first church for all (so that no one needs to leave town to hear the gospel).
- 1,500 rural church plants (one per unchurched pre-merger town with a population of over 3,000) and either 1,500 rural church planters or 300 or more leaders planting clusters of rural churches.

### Urban and rural goals (no one left behind)

- 15/15/15: a church within a 15-minute walk in megacities, a 15-minute bicycle ride in other urban areas, and a 15-minute drive in rural areas.
- A first church plant in a rural area for every church planted in an urban area.
- The whole church reaching the whole of Japan (e.g., urban/rural partnerships)

### Trend towards greater contextualization

Deeper contextualization and a greater focus on outreach to typical Japanese, not just those at the fringes of society, are hot topics. A great way to validate contextualization attempts is to test them on oldest sons in rural Japan. Contextualization is key to reduce unnecessary community alienation, yet care is needed not to water down the gospel or compromise with idolatry.

The future of mission in Japan will have different outcomes if emerging trends are engaged with balance and unity in diversity or guided by pendulum-like extremes and uniformity. **JH**

Note: For more information on statistics on rural churches, see Dawn Birkner's article "Spotlight on Rural Japan: Part 1" Japan Harvest, Winter 2011, 14–19.

*Dawn Birkner (US) has been planting churches in rural Japan for 15 years. She pastors Kita Sanriku Christ Church (Iwate), leads relief work, coordinates the Rural Japan Church Planting Network, and directs the mission agency Reach Japan Together Association.*

Photos: Sara Wolsey, Kyushu Christian Disaster Relief Center, and <https://www.flickr.com/photos/13910409@N05/3296373976>



# Invest in the younger generations

The key to restoring Japanese society is in families, children, and students.

By Michael Hoehn

“Whenever families don’t function, soon a whole society won’t function any longer.” This bold statement by the Christian and late former President of Germany Richard von Weizsäcker can be easily applied to Japan: whenever Japanese families, children, and students don’t function, soon Japanese society won’t function any longer.

We missionaries too often focus on sophisticated programmes and visions or Christian celebrities and organizations. But we forget Jesus’ focus: children (and young people), the weakest part of society and the future of society.

For a Spirit-driven investment in the future of mission in Japan, let’s focus on restoring Japanese families, children, and students’ lives.

## 1. Restoring Japanese families by sharing the Father’s love with them

Ministering to children is impossible without seriously looking at their families, particularly their parents. An eye-opening lecture in my seminar class at Osaka Kyōiku University touched on a tender spot in Japanese society. According to a survey and their own experiences, most female Japanese students don’t have good relationships with their fathers. And the situation for male students isn’t much different. Many Japanese fathers aren’t at home much while their children grow up. Long working hours, long commutes, and business-related weekends away all contribute to a low view of fathers. The key question is: How can we display the loving heavenly Father in a fatherless society?

That’s the question that visionary missionary John Paul Sprecher and his Father’s Heart team (see sidebar) have been asking as they’ve been ministering in Japan for more than five years. Their mission has extended from Osaka to Nagoya and now Tokyo (as of March 2016). They presented their ministry at the Church Planting Institute’s 2015 National Conference.

### Practical suggestions:

- Go out, address the needs of families, and seek the “person of peace” (Luke 10:6, NASB).
- Participate in community initiatives like Papas’ Club, Japanese sport and similar clubs, or even the local firefighters. Support

by praying, caring (creating awareness via T-shirts, bazaars, etc.), and sharing the gospel.

- Encourage Christian business leaders to become involved in Christian fellowships like FGBMFI Japan (Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International), CBMC Japan (Connecting Business and the Marketplace to Christ), or VIP Clubs.

By displaying the Father’s love to Japanese Christians, we equip them for community impact. Since the image of Japanese fathers is still low, displaying our heavenly Father’s abounding love is an opportunity to fill the “father vacuum” that exists among many children and teenagers. Long-term harvest in Japan begins by revealing the Father’s heart to fatherless families.

## 2. Restoring Japanese children’s lives

Whoever invests love and time in children, invests in Japan’s future. One symptom of the neglect of Japanese children is the alarming increase of “delegating” education to mass media and outdoor education. This educational shortcut is intensified by parents’ overuse of modern technology.

Sachiko\* and Kento\*, teachers at a junior high school in Osaka, were admired as a sympathetic and hospitable couple with two small children—until they divorced. Kento spent too much time on electronic devices and could not communicate with his family very well, especially his children.

Worse is the case of Shiori\*, a creative 14-year-old junior high school student and



Whoever invests love and time in children, invests in Japan’s future.

long-desired child (her mother had previously had several miscarriages). Instead of investing time in their only child, Shiori's parents tried to satisfy her needs with extravagant outfits and allowing nearly unlimited access to mass media and technology. In the end, without receiving the love she needed, Shiori took her own life.

As missionaries, our standard is Jesus' unconditional love towards children (Luke 18:15–17).

Four key principles apply when working with children:

- Live out (practise) education rather than “teach” it.
- Praise and discipline with love.
- Grow a Christ-like personality through daily spiritual life.
- Equip them for taking on responsibility and leadership.

**Practical suggestions:**

- Respond to children's needs regularly and appropriately.
- Spend quality time with children.
- Reach out to non-Christian children and parents in the community.
- Steer children away from screens by enforcing limitations.
- Develop their skills.
- Encourage children to play an active role in the church.

As the weakest part of society, children should be one of our main ministry focuses.

**3. Restoring Japanese students' lives**

University students are the most open-minded group in Japanese society, as they encounter new studies, new envi-

**Father's Heart Japan**

A husband and a father of five children, John Paul Sprecher has been a missionary in the Asia-Pacific region for the last 12 years. God has given him a burden for Asia's children, families and leaders to encounter God the Father's love and leadership. In response, John Paul founded the ministry Father's Heart Japan ([iloveyouson.org](http://iloveyouson.org)), which seeks to serve and empower parents and leaders in relationship with their children through family and church conferences, small groups and youth events. It also seeks to support parents, teachers, and church congregations to implant godly values and God's foundational truths in children's hearts. Monthly Skype conferences for listening to the Lord and to each other are the core of Father's Heart Japan. Please use the contact form on the website ([iloveyouson.org/be-inspired](http://iloveyouson.org/be-inspired)), if you are interested in connecting with us at Father's Heart Japan.

**Recommended resources:**

- » Heidi Baker with Shara Pradhan, *Compelled by Love: How to Change the World Through the Simple Power of Love In Action* (Charisma House, 2008).
- » Danny Silk, *Loving Our Kids On Purpose Revised Edition: Making a Heart to Heart Connection* (Destiny Image, 2013).
- » Wess Stafford with Dean Merrill, *Just a Minute: In the Heart of a Child, One Moment... Can Last Forever* (Moody Publishers, 2014).
- » Wess Stafford with Dean Merrill, *Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of these Matters Most* (Waterbook Press, 2007).
- » DVD: *Compelled by Love: Without Him we are Finished* (Iris Global Films, 2014).

ronments, new relationships, and new freedom. Why can't they also have a life-changing experience with Christ?

Like a former student of mine who now works with the Japanese government, many university students will become future leaders in Japan.

**Practical suggestions:**

- Personal or small-group prayer, prayer walking, and evangelism.
- Co-operation with one of the major student ministries like JCCC, KGK, YWAM, The Navigators, JCFN, Jesus Life House, or J-House.
- Invite them to Christian homes.
- Invite them to student-friendly churches.
- Network and exchange among all these groups.

Mission at universities reaches far beyond students: multipliers like Christian teaching colleagues and university staff (there are many seekers among them) may also be target groups in university outreach.

The long-term mission goals are core groups which will pray and reach out not only for evangelising, but also to make disciples who will produce more disciples.

Whenever we succeed in bringing a foretaste of heaven to the children and young generation of Japan, we can be sure that the Lord of the harvest will extend his kingdom in Japan, today and in the future. Let us be empowered by him for this kingdom service and, in doing so, return all the glory to him. **JH**

*Michael Hoehn arrived from Germany in 1993. He is married and has two children. He's involved in many ministries, including Father's Heart Japan (as Kansai coordinator), T4T Church Planting and the Osaka B1 House Church Movement. Contact: [amazing-grace-japan@road.ocn.ne.jp](mailto:amazing-grace-japan@road.ocn.ne.jp)*

\*Names have been changed.

Photo: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/94833286@N00/1573456981>



# Reflections

## on cross-cultural ministry in Japan

Long experience reveals shorter paths to healthy ministry

By Dale Viljoen

Initially, cross-cultural workers came to Japan as Christian leaders, but now many work in some kind of cooperation with established Japanese churches. While various statistics show that between 0.5% and 2% of the population (127 million) is Christian, I estimate that still only 0.3% are currently in active fellowship.<sup>1-5</sup>

However, I believe that God is working in Japan in a new way. Although thousands are not turning to Christ each month, Japanese are believing much sooner after hearing about the love of Jesus. How can cross-cultural workers continue to serve, encourage, and be salt and light to this precious but not-yet-perfect church?

Below are my thoughts on the state of God's church and cross-cultural ministry in Japan. I realise that similarities exist with other cultures and would welcome comments and dialogue.

### Possible areas for growth and change

#### Grace

While evangelicals emphasise grace, the reality is that many churches have unwritten rules that people need to follow to be "good Christians." This results in believers feeling that they are not able to live up to the standards of the church and not able to admit to other Christians that they fail, causing many baptised believers to leave the church. It has been estimated that the average length of church life for Japanese Christians after baptism is only 2.8 years.<sup>6</sup> May we be free to "confess our sins to each other and pray for each other" (Jam. 5:16, NLT), in an atmosphere of transparency and acceptance, modelling God's unconditional grace.

#### Jesus first

For many years, I spent a lot of time initially going through Genesis so that Japanese could see who the true, creator God is. I now wonder if we should present Jesus earlier as Saviour (John 12:32) and show him as the one who "radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God" and "sustains everything by the mighty power of his command" (Heb. 1:3), and thus work from Jesus to present the Trinity.

#### Contextualization

There continues to be a need for a Japanese theology that is not based on German and American models.

For example, while many evangelical pastors and cross-cultural workers know about Kanzō Uchimura and Toyohiko Kagawa, not many are interested to delve into the thought and theology of Kazō Kitamori or Kōsuke Koyama.<sup>7</sup>

Coming from South Africa, I feel that despite having very different levels of literacy and modernization, Japanese and many African cultures share more commonalities than Japanese and Western cultures. Animism and Shintoism are similar, as is the practice of ancestor worship. If so, our preaching may be more effective by having one central point and returning to this point in a circular way, using emotive illustrations to teach theological truth, as opposed to the traditional Western three-point sermon. (It is interesting to hear about the influence of black culture in Japan, especially among Japanese youth.<sup>8,9</sup>)

Because not-yet-Christian Japanese see sin as being caught committing a crime, could we not start off by preaching that Jesus bore our shame by dying on the cross? After establishing a connection in this shame-based society, we could then go on to teach about sin being internal, causing us to turn from God.

#### Ministry of all believers

Many pastors are tired because of a sense of duty that compels them to attend all church meetings. Delegating to Spirit-led, equipped believers would free them to have more time to lead and serve effectively. A fresh understanding of the reality of God's grace, leading, and purpose may be needed for this to occur. I believe that one of the most important things we cross-cultural workers can do is uphold our Japanese pastors in daily, intercessory prayer.

Furthermore, many believers are tired of serving in a church that requires them to do activities that are not in line with their spiritual gifting. Thirty years ago, I was guilty of this by pressuring believers in a new church plant to support my desire to win Japanese for Christ by all means possible. On reflection, I was working for God but not working with God! Tiredness caused by service out of duty results in a steep drop in the joy that comes from following Jesus and doing "the good things he planned for us long ago" (Eph. 2:10).

May God grant us freedom to truly live in the moment with Jesus, "being" before "doing!"



## Suffering

Marva J. Dawn writes, “Even as Christ accomplished atonement for us by his suffering and death, so the Lord accomplishes witness to the world through our weakness. In fact, God has more need of our weakness than of our strength.”<sup>10</sup>

The group nature of Japanese culture makes it difficult for people to be seen to be different. For the church to grow, Japanese Christians need to openly confess that they are followers of Jesus in the workplace, at school, in supermarkets, in spite of the suffering they may experience. They need our encouragement and support.

Paul proclaims, “Oh, my dear children! I feel as if I’m going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives” (Gal. 4:19). Japanese pastors feel this pain alongside us.<sup>11</sup>

## Unity

On different occasions three Japanese pastors have said to me: “How can we experience revival in Japan when there is a lack of unity and cooperation between evangelical denominations and churches?”

The Sixth Japan Congress on Evangelism to be held in Kobe in September this year<sup>12</sup> will see many pastors and cross-cultural workers come together for reflection, prayer, and discussion. Let us pray for “harmony . . . as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe” (Ps. 133:2), and that this harmony will filter down to local areas and groups. God’s love is seen through our mutual love and unity.

## How can we, as cross-cultural workers, serve in Japan as part of Christ’s body?

- Humbly point people to Jesus, not ourselves.
- Grow daily in our walk with and worship of the living God.
- Express God’s unconditional grace and love in an extremely secular but “religious” country.
- Believe that God will minister through us no matter how bad our Japanese language is.
- Sacrificially identify with our brothers and sisters who often feel bound by their culture.
- Respect Japanese culture, while at the same time asking God to bring this culture and our own under the scrutiny of his Word.
- Engage in intercessory prayer and spiritual warfare.
- Ask God for faith to believe that he will grant revival to Japan.
- Model unity between ourselves and our various mission organizations.

*“So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts*



**God has more  
need of our weakness  
than of our strength.**

*you to do. Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:11–12). **JH***

**Dale Viljoen** (OMF) came to Hokkaido from South Africa in 1979. After 21 years of church planting, he served as director of language, orientation, and training until his wife’s death. Dale subsequently married Karen Harless (formerly TEAM) and continues to serve in Sapporo.

1. Michael Hoffman, “Christian missionaries find Japan a tough nut to crack” *The Japan Times*, Dec. 20, 2014, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/20/national/history/christian-missionaries-find-japan-tough-nut-crack/#.VrUp98ekDzJ>.
2. “Christianity in Japan,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity\\_in\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Japan), accessed March 23, 2016.
3. “Joshua Project: Japan,” <http://joshuaproject.net/countries/JA>, accessed March 23, 2016.
4. “Operation World: Japan,” <http://www.operationworld.org/japa>, accessed March 23, 2016.
5. “OM: Japan,” <http://www.omjapan.org/en/home/about-japan>, accessed March 23, 2016.
6. Kikuo Matsunaga, “Theological Education in Japan,” in *In Preparing For Witness: 1998 Cook Theological Seminar*, ed. Jean S. Stoner, (1999), 295-311.
7. “Japanese Theology (Part 2)” *Project Japan*, Aug 16, 2013, accessed March 23. [http://www.projectjapan.org/pj/Article/Entries/2013/8/16\\_Japanese\\_Theology\\_\(Part\\_2\).html](http://www.projectjapan.org/pj/Article/Entries/2013/8/16_Japanese_Theology_(Part_2).html)
8. “Black History in Japan: Did you Know?” <http://www.blacktokyo.com/2015/02/27/black-history-in-japan-did-you-know/>, accessed March 23, 2016.
9. “Black lifestyle in Japan,” YouTube video, [https://youtu.be/\\_Qe4AZRkFYE](https://youtu.be/_Qe4AZRkFYE), accessed March 24, 2016.
10. Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness and the Tabernacling of God* (Eerdmans, 2001), 47.
11. Evan Burns, “The Missionary Life: No Shortcuts,” *The Gospel Coalition*, Dec. 5, 2014, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-missionary-life-no-shortcuts>
12. “Invitation to the Sixth Japan Congress on Evangelism”, *Japan Update*, Spring 2015, [http://jeanet.org/\\_userdata/pdf/JapanUpdate\\_69.pdf](http://jeanet.org/_userdata/pdf/JapanUpdate_69.pdf), accessed March 24, 2016.

Photos: <https://pixabay.com/en/bible-holy-hands-pray-prayer-706641/>  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/evanforester/6233434292>



# Retreat refreshment in Kanto

Women who serve in Japan were blessed at JEMA's annual WIM Kanto retreat.

By Edie Town

Each year in early March, women in the Kanto region gather for a two-night retreat for refreshment, and encouragement. The retreat is organized by JEMA's Women in Ministry committee. This year we had 64 women gather together at Okutama Fukuin no Ie. Our theme, "Being Renewed," was evident in the speakers' messages, the decorations, and the overall flavor of the retreat.

The theme verse was Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV). We learned that we need to change our thought life to fill our minds with God's word and know what his perspective on our situation is, instead of following what the world is promoting.

We had women from a variety of cultures and countries, from America, Switzerland, and Sweden, to Malaysia, Uganda, and New Zealand. It didn't matter where we originated from; we had similar needs, hopes, dreams, and struggles. Especially, we found a common need for friendships where there is honesty and transparency.

Our speaker, Carol Miyake, shared with us the difficult time she had as a new missionary. She and her husband came to Japan thinking they were going to language school before they got started in ministry. However, they were immediately tasked with teaching English and he with working as a chaplain. Her husband had a busy schedule, and even if she wanted to talk with neighbors, she didn't have the language ability. Her need for friendship was not met until she found another missionary woman whom she could meet and pray with regularly. Before this happened, however, she experienced an array of negative emotions, unfulfilled expectations, and fears about how she would fit in and be used. She came hoping to use her skills and training as a counselor, and yet she disappointedly found that she could not. We heard about her learning process of opening her heart and mind to God and also about her coming to a place of peace with her own childhood difficulties. She challenged us to seek our own peace through prayers of confession and releasing.

*It didn't matter where we originated from; we had similar needs, hopes, dreams, and struggles.*

Along with Carol, we were blessed to have a team of women ministering to us from the United States. Bethany Chang, a worship leader in her church, led our praise time. It was uplifting to sing together in English, joining our voices as one. Rhonda Gee, a counselor who had previously joined us at this retreat in 2012 and 2014, was there to listen and help those who needed encouragement in such things as life transitions, depression, anxiety, parenting, marriage and relational concerns, and grief. Eileen Nielsen, who lives and ministers in Japan, as well as Eun-hyey Lok, also came as counselors.

Sharon Harada and Denise Maeda, from Ascent Christian Fellowship, came to pray alongside any women who had special concerns or needs. Judy Steier, from Barnabas International, presented a workshop entitled, "Journeying into Grace," a well-presented talk on the difference between living our Christian life under obligation, duty and ritual, or in the freedom of the grace of God's abundant love.

During free time on our second day, some women took time to go to a nearby *onsen* while others hiked on the forested hillsides enjoying fresh air, streams and plum trees in bloom. Many enjoyed a craft session with paper, beads, and complex coloring pages. We also enjoyed an accessory swap.

Nozomi Project joined us, selling their recycled bone china pieces made into necklaces, earrings, and bracelets. Ladies from Megumi Project also came with items for sale made from silk kimonos.

Each year when we meet together we rediscover the diversity of who we are and what we do. We are united in our lives as international women, but even more so in our love for Jesus, desiring that his name be worshipped throughout Japan.

We had many "newbies" join us this year, and some were surprised at how blessed they were to be a part of this well-organized retreat. Will you join us next year, March 1-3, 2017? We look forward to having Liz Curtis Higgs, well-known author of more than 30 books and sought-after conference speaker, come to minister. Please come! We'd love to share with you the blessings of this retreat.



All photos on both pages are from the Kanto retreat.

## Renewed in Kansai

By Robin Shaw

Kansai held its second annual JEMA Women in Ministry (WIM) Day Retreat on March 7, 2016 in Kobe. Thirty-five women who live and do ministry in and around the Kansai region gathered for fellowship and teaching. The theme of the retreat, "Being Renewed," was woven into all the messages and activities through the day. Sue Barclay, UK theologian and missionary, led women through Paul's letter to the Colossians. Sue encouraged the women, as Paul encouraged the church at Colossae, to be renewed in their circumstances by the Word of God, a fresh vision of Christ's majesty, and fellowship with other Christians.

Local missionaries, Michelle Jackson and Rachel Hughes, also ran a dynamic workshop about ministering through storytelling. Prayer corners and fellowship were also available throughout the day during break times.

"I think we were all blessed," said Erika Grabowski, WIM Kansai Retreat Coordinator, "It's always good to spend time in God's presence, worshipping together, and listening to what God has to say to us in our ordinary lives and to know that God is there in our ordinary. It was really special."

Keep your eyes open for next year's retreat date.

Advertisement




**2016 Women in Ministry Leadership Team**

**EVENTS!**

**October 5, 2016**  
Fall Day of Prayer Plus  
Location: Rose Town, Okutama

**January 18, 2017**  
Winter Day of Prayer  
Location: SEND Center, Higashi Tokorozawa

**March 1-3, 2017**  
Spring Retreat: March 1-3, 2017.  
Speaker: Liz Curtis-Higgs  
Location: Fukuin no Ie, Okutama

For details visit [www.jema.org](http://www.jema.org)  
or contact us at  
[wim@jema.org](mailto:wim@jema.org)

"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."



# Being prepared to say yes, and no

*New missionaries find themselves doing lots of preparation, but sometimes it all goes awry.*

## Saturday

Tomorrow I'm preaching at a church I've never been to. Not an uncommon task for missionaries. What is also apparently not uncommon is being asked to do so with two days' notice. Yes, only yesterday I was asked to preach tomorrow. And that highlighted a key lesson I've learned as a new missionary: you can get asked to give a talk at any time, and you need to be prepared to say yes.

Thankfully I am prepared for tomorrow's talk. Hence why I'm writing this article and not the message itself. That was written a while ago, checked by my Japanese teacher, printed out, and waits on my shelf. All I had to do was find it and check I had a clean shirt to go with it.

Now, you need to appreciate that administration is not my gift. I work surrounded by piles—actually, mounds is probably a better descriptor—of paper, books, business cards, and occasionally *senbei*. Being organized does not come naturally.

But I have come to realize that as a missionary you need to be prepared to say yes to requests that are unexpected and, at times, not entirely reasonable. Sometimes that's being asked a sudden question about the gospel. Sometimes it's being asked to give the closing prayer to a meeting. And sometimes it's being asked to preach a full sermon the day after next.

I think this is one of the ways we serve the Japanese. We put in the hard work beforehand so that when those unexpected requests come we're prepared to say yes.

## Sunday

The above was what I wrote yesterday.

Then this morning I happily drove down to the church in question, leaving said sermon script on the floor at home next to where my bag was. A journey that further drove home (pun unapologetically intended) the need to be prepared since I had no electronic backup besides a brief outline I managed to retrieve from my email sent box.

By God's grace I got through the talk and it seems like my main point at least was communicated, but from

now on I am going to ensure I always have a paper and electronic form of a message with me at all times. Because, as a new missionary with limited language skills, I need to be prepared.

## Last month

I had a similar experience last month that taught me what to do when you really are not prepared for those unexpected requests: be prepared to say no.

I was at a youth gathering for the church of one of my Japanese teachers. I thought it was just going to be banter with her family and some students while we enjoyed some Japanese home cooking. In hindsight I should have anticipated the pastor's last-minute request for a Bible message.

"It doesn't have to be long and it can be on any passage. It'll allow me to relax if you do it. But of course, you can pass if you want."

I was not prepared for such a request. I had no notes on me at all, just a vague memory of a youth message I'd given a few months previous. But because I wasn't prepared to say no, I said yes. And needless to say the talk was a horrible, horrible mess. I avoided saying anything heretical, but I also didn't say anything particularly comprehensible. Whatever the pastor had planned to say would have been much more of a blessing to those gathered.

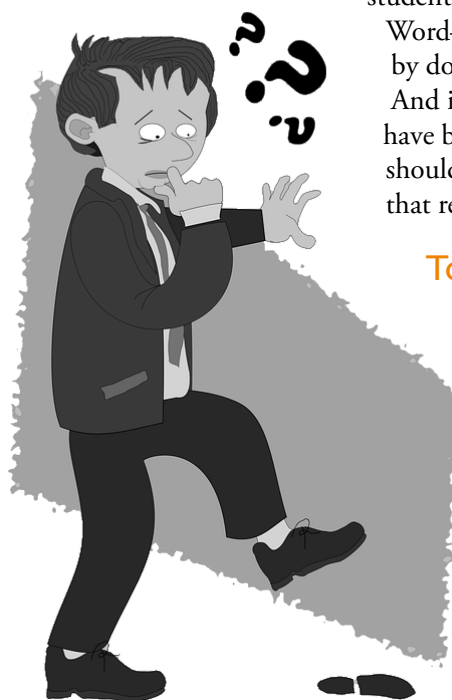
Now we all give talks that flop, right? It was a good learning experience for me. But for the

students who had come to hear God's Word—students who are assaulted daily by doubts and temptations—it was not. And it's them I'm here to serve. It would have been a knock to my pride, but I should have been prepared to say no to that request.

## Today

So I'm now committed to being as prepared as possible so I can say yes to requests for messages, prayers, and such. And when I'm not prepared to say yes, I'll be prepared to say no. **JH**

*Levi Booth is a Brit working in Japan with OMF International. His passion is to see Japanese men reached with the gospel of Christ. He also plays with frisbees, hangs out in coffee shops, and reads manga.*



# Written language exchange

*Exchanging emails and writing blog posts can be great ways to improve your language ability while exploring cultural issues.*

In last issue's article, I looked at conversational language exchange. Another way to exchange language is through writing. Writing is a great way to improve both accuracy and vocabulary as, unlike speaking, it offers you the luxury of being able to look up words and grammar structures as well as the opportunity to review what you've written. Traditionally, language students have practiced writing by exchanging letters with pen pals. The Internet has now made it a lot easier to find people to write to and has opened up other options.

The simplest way to do written language exchange is to find someone to exchange emails with. This is probably also the best way to get language and cultural feedback on sermon manuscripts. For a simple language exchange you could write to someone you already know or find someone through online language-exchange websites (try searching for "language exchange partners").

To get the most out of language exchange, it's best to incorporate some kind of feedback mechanism. For example, when replying to an email you could point out three or four mistakes in your partner's email. Alternatively, by attaching messages as Word documents, you could use the "Track Changes" function to show revisions. This is a particularly helpful way to get language and cultural feedback on a sermon manuscript.

However, my favourite way of doing written language exchange is through the blogging site Lang-8 ([lang-8.com](http://lang-8.com)). When you write a blog post in Japanese, native speakers will correct it and comment on it. You can get nearly instant feedback on blog posts by multiple Japanese speakers, which is highly motivating. It can also be quite addictive!

To get the most from the site, I advise keeping blog posts short and interesting. It's a good idea not to post entries straight after writing them but to review them several times for any careless slips (you might even consider reviewing the next day). It's surprising how many times I've seen a correction and thought "Ah, I already knew that!" Also, the more corrections you give others, the more corrections you're likely to receive (the site uses a point system to gauge how many corrections you've made.)



Lang-8 is free to use but offers a paid premium service, which, for US\$7 per month (or US\$63 per year), gives you benefits such as no ads, the ability to create PDFs of corrected entries, greater prominence on the site, and the ability to post photos with entries.

It can be a good place to explore cultural issues. For example, I wrote a post praising Prime Minister Abe because he always seems to be accompanied by his wife on overseas trips and they hold hands when disembarking from their plane. I naively thought he was a great role model, as not many Japanese business people travel with their spouses on business trips and they rarely involve their families with their jobs. However, I was promptly informed that it's basically a show put on for foreigners; he'd never do the same thing in Japan. It was also pointed out to me that all previous prime ministers had done the same (one widowed prime minister even took his daughter instead). I'd been well and truly duped!

Whichever way you choose, I'd encourage you to give written language exchange a go. It can be a lot of fun and provides another way to improve your language skills while making friends and learning about Japanese culture. **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](http://www.rjcnetwork.org)*



Screenshot of Lang-8 in action



# Hypocrites and Gentiles

*How not to pray.*

“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full” (Matthew 6:5, NASB).

“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt. 6:7).

Aren't you glad that Jesus not only teaches us how to pray but also how not to pray? Before He gives us a model for how to pray in Matthew 6, He first tells us two ways we should not pray. Jesus does not want us to pray like hypocrites (Matt. 6:5) and He doesn't want us to pray like Gentiles (Matt. 6:7).

## Hypocrites and Gentiles

Neither of these terms sounds very good (and other translations for the second word use “pagans” or “unbelievers”). But Jesus is not just saying, “Don't pray like bad people.”

To most of us, the word “hypocrite” usually has a negative connotation. But really, it just means an “actor.” Of course, actors aren't bad in and of themselves. There is a time and place for acting. But not when we are praying.

The word translated “Gentile,” “pagan,” or “unbeliever” basically means one who is “not one of us.” In other words, they don't know what we do. More specifically, here it means they don't know the one true God.

The first warning has to do with how we see ourselves: Jesus warns us against thinking we are more important than we actually are. The second has to do with how we see God: we are warned against thinking He is less important than He actually is.

## How we see ourselves

We should not consider ourselves more important than we actually are. We should not pray so people will see how good a “pray-er” we are. That is not the proper reason for praying. If we pray to be heard or seen by those around us, it is like Jesus says, “They have their reward in full.” We wanted to be seen and we were! That's all.

## How we see God

Likewise, when we pray, we should not think of God as being less than He actually is. We should not think we are praying to an inadequate God. We shouldn't pray as

**“Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.”**

— Oswald Chambers —

if God requires a certain formula. (Have you ever ‘meaninglessly repeated’ the Lord's Prayer? That's something to think about.) Nor should we pray as if He needs our help to know what He should do, nor as if He needs us to convince Him that our ideas really are the best. This is how those who do not

know God pray. Those who know the One, True God can pray differently.

We pray, not to an audience, but to our Father. We don't have to pray for the ears and approval of others. We have the privilege of praying for the approval of the One whose approval really matters.

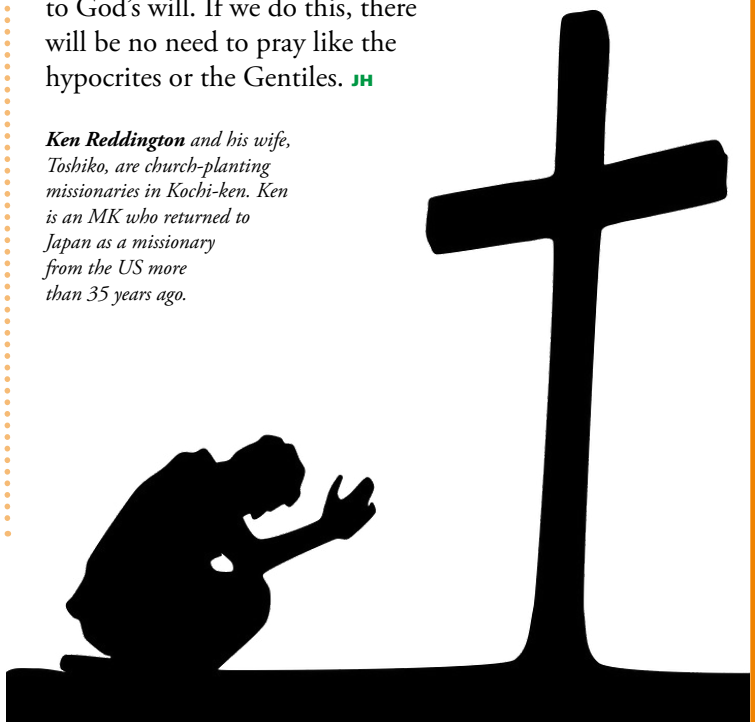
We don't pray to a God who needs us to inform Him, to convince Him, or to help Him. We pray to a God who already knows what we need (Matt. 6:8) and who is already willing and able to meet our needs (Matt. 6:30) ... and much, much more (Rom. 8:32).

## Why should we pray?

So, when we pray, if we shouldn't try to impress other people, nor try to inform God nor convince God, then what's left? Why should we pray?

To put it simply, we should pray to align ourselves with God's good purposes. To line up everything—our hearts, our spirits, our thinking, our desires, our words, our motives, our attitudes, our actions—with what He wants to do in us and through us. This is what the Scripture means when it calls us to pray according to God's will. If we do this, there will be no need to pray like the hypocrites or the Gentiles. **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.*



# Avoid confusion with commas

*Misplaced or absent commas can have dire effects, which can be avoided by careful consideration.*

On a T-shirt sold on Amazon:

*Let's eat Grandma.  
Let's eat, Grandma.  
Commas save lives.*

Bad punctuation can be confusing or even dangerous. Commas provide a classic example. Consider this sentence from my blog:

*It was mentally refreshing to get out of the city as usual and I can't wait until next spring when we can go camping again.*

You might read this and wonder what the phrase “get out of the city as usual” means. Is this a weekly thing? In the context of my blog it makes more sense, but adding a couple of commas helps clarify:

*It was mentally refreshing to get out of the city, as usual, and I can't wait until next spring when we can go camping again.*

Here's a more confusing sentence that needs commas:

*She enjoys knitting her family and her bird.*

This leaves you wondering if she is knitting her family and bird.

We sometimes use commas when we should really use a full-stop (period for our US readers), semicolon, or dash.

For example:

*Not only did I have to try to keep my son from strangling himself with the IV line, I also had to stop him from going too far from a power outlet as it was electrically powered, then add to that the picture of our son in the playroom of the ward with three other kids who also had drips.*

That's a confusing run-on sentence. It would have been better if I'd used a full-stop after “powered”.

Commas are sometimes a matter of opinion, which can make them tricky. Lists always need commas, as do asides, such as the phrase “as usual” in the first example above.

If you're not sure, a simple test is to read your sentence aloud and put a comma where you hesitate or pause slightly.

Remember that commas can clarify your meaning and prevent you from sounding like you might eat your grandma! **JH**

*Wendy Marshall has been the managing editor of Japan Harvest for four years. She and her husband serve with OMF, they have three energetic boys. She's passionate about communication, family, and Australia, but not necessarily in that order.*

Advertisement

## A Bible All Japanese Can Understand Japanese Contemporary Bible – Living Bible (Ribingu Baiburu)



**Japanese Contemporary Bible**  
(Complete OT & NT).  
Hardcover. B6\* size, 2,016  
pages. ISBN 978-4-264-  
03321-9. (69700) ¥4,500+ tax

**Japanese Contemporary Bible**  
**New Testament.** Includes  
Harmony of the Gospels.  
Paperback with dust jacket. B6\*  
size, 576 pages. ISBN 978-4-264-  
03323-3. (69750) ¥1,600+tax



**Illustrated Japanese Contemporary Bible New Testament.** Includes 22 pages of full-color illustrations by manga artist Kelly Shinohara, who also drew for the Manga Messiah publications. Paperback with dust jacket. B6\* size, 614 pages. ISBN 978-4-264-03137-6. (69660) ¥1,600+tax

The *Japanese Contemporary Bible* is released by Word of Life Press Ministries (WLPM) in Japan in cooperation with the copyright holder, Biblica, Inc. This meaning-based translation is a 2015 revision of the Japanese *Living Bible (Ribingu Baiburu)*, first published by WLPM in 1984. The Bible will continue to be called *Ribingu Baiburu* in Japanese and will be known as the *Japanese Contemporary Bible* in English.

This Japanese text in contemporary everyday language will be easily understood by the majority of Japanese speakers today. Its natural fluency brings a fresh experience to its readers. It uses ordinary conversational vocabulary and unusual words are explained in parentheses. This gives readers, including seekers, the confidence to further engage with the text and ask questions that take them deeper into the message of the Bible. Three editions have references for NT quotes from OT passages in parentheses after the verse. The print is larger than previous editions and pronunciation marks are with all Chinese characters so all ages and foreigners studying Japanese can read it easily. They also include topical headings in the text, major section introductions, book introductions and maps.

Reach  
the  
99%  
Without  
Christ



いのちのことば社伝道グループ  
**Word of Life Press Ministries**

2-1-5 Nakano, Nakano-ku  
Tokyo 164-0001 JAPAN  
Tel. 03-5341-6911



# Reasons why they leave

*Reasons for leaving the field prematurely are often lumped under the general category of interpersonal problems, but reality can be more complex than that.*

The most difficult debriefing to do as a mission administrator is one when a person or family is leaving the field early. It's a huge lose all around. A common reason cited for why missionaries leave the field is interpersonal problems. But, Frank Allen, a missionary to the Philippines for 29 years, disagrees; he says that missionaries leave the field for a variety of reasons, some of which include interpersonal problems.<sup>1</sup> I consider these reasons below.

## Lack of gifts and experience

Allen notes that it is surprising how many missionaries come to the field, not only without the proper gifts, but also without having had any experience in evangelism. How much more difficult it is to gain experience in evangelism when doing it cross-culturally and in another language. Not surprisingly, many give up discouraged.

## Culture shock and culture fatigue

In spite of receiving training and warnings in the area of cross-cultural living, many missionaries still leave the field because of culture shock. A more serious form of culture shock is "culture fatigue." Even experienced missionaries can succumb to this over time. The demands to adapt to a different way of doing, thinking, and speaking can wear down even the most earnest missionaries.

## Unfulfilled expectations

After 10 years on the field, one missionary said to me, "I wish I'd had more realistic expectations." Many missionaries are disappointed when they get to the field and find that their actual role differs from the one their mission had painted. Some adapt, but most leave the field disappointed.

## Moral problems

While it is true that missionaries don't experience disqualifying moral

problems more than those ministering in their home country, there are many strong moral temptations for missionaries who work closely with nationals of the opposite sex.

## Family problems

The stress in marriage is much higher on the mission field than in one's home country. Normal marital struggles and disagreements over child discipline can be magnified on the field. Even sadder is when missionaries justify neglecting their families because they are doing the "Lord's work." Often family problems are too far gone for intervention when they finally come to light. At that point, missionaries are forced to leave the field.

## Disagreements with the mission

People who make good pioneer missionaries are not necessarily good team players. Difficulties occur when a mission agency asks a missionary to do things that differ from how the missionary feels God is leading them. Many interpersonal problems start with a misunderstanding of God is leading and of how the missionary can fit into the overall strategy for a field.

## Difficulties learning the language

Language acquisition is a challenge for any field, but it's particularly difficult for missionaries in Japan. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI), a US institution which teaches languages to diplomats, ranks the time required to learn various languages. For native speakers of English, closely related languages like French and Italian take about 23–24 weeks (575 to 600 hours) to learn. Japanese takes about 88 weeks (2,200 hours) to learn, and falls in the hardest category of languages. Within this category Japanese is assessed by FSI as to be the most difficult language to learn.<sup>2</sup> Even after all that study, the learner is only expected to attain "general professional proficiency."

In other words, language acquisition requires rigorous discipline and infinite humility. In any mission, there are those who never become proficient in the language. Some adapt well or get involved in ministries that use English, but most return home.

## Church planting takes a long time

This is a reason I've added. The hard truth is that it generally takes a long time to plant a church in Japan. In our case, it took us 15 years from start to calling a pastor. It's an experience that most missionaries of my generation go through once and then say they are done. Short-termers come to the field glowing with anticipation to do great things, only to be hit with the reality of church planting in Japan. One shared how he wished he had known how difficult it is to get long-term fruit.

In conclusion, interpersonal problems are a reality. But they are often outward manifestations of other problems. The underlying reasons for interpersonal problems can be one of the above-mentioned causes. So, it is important to consider the real reasons when trying to minimize attrition.

Finally, if someone does leave the field early, it is important to avoid using words like "failure" and "drop-out." I concur with Allen's opinion that returnees should be able to leave with as much dignity as possible. **JH**

*Eileen Nielsen and her husband live in Tokyo. Eileen is the Member Care Facilitator for TEAM and has a private counseling ministry. If interested in meeting for counseling, contact her at eileenpnelsen@gmail.com.*

1. Frank Allen, "Why Do They Leave? Reflections on Attrition," in *Helping Missionaries Grow: Readings in Mental Health and Missions*, ed. by Kelly S. O'Donnell and Michelle O'Donnell (William Carey Library, 1988), p421–432.
2. "Language Difficulty Rating," *Effective Language Learning*, accessed April 7, 2016, <http://www.effectivelanguagelearning.com/language-guide/language-difficulty>

# Creating a good first impression with your website

Have you ever watched someone get ready for a first date? They probably cleaned up more than usual, put on fancier clothes, and made sure their breath was just right. Why? Because first impressions are really important. The same is true in the digital world. That's why I want to give you a few simple tips to 'spiff up' your digital impression, because it matters to this millennial generation. These easily implementable ideas can help you build that "first date worthy" digital impression.

## Keep the address simple

One thing that can deter people from finding out more about your event or ministry is a complicated, long-winded website address (or universal resource locator: URL). A website address containing an off-putting string of dots, dashes, or random numbers is not going to encourage people to check out your website, let alone revisit it.

Many websites exist because Internet service providers (ISPs) offer them as freebies to new customers. The problem is that the website is buried at the end of wherever the ISP decided to let people put websites (for example, [www.internetserviceprovidername.yoursitename](http://www.internetserviceprovidername.yoursitename)).

So what's the solution? You need your own domain name. Thankfully, it is not difficult. Google, GoDaddy, WordPress, DreamHost, and many other hosting companies offer ways for website builders to purchase a personal domain name, often for less than US\$10 a year. Having your own domain name not only makes it easier for people to get to you, but it also allows you to interact with those people in new ways. It opens the door to a lot of other useful digital resources like your own email addresses, subdomains, etc. It's a great first step toward creating a better digital impression.

## Beware of freebies

Free is not always better. Just because your ISP lets you host a website for free does not always mean they will provide you with real services. Often they put a lot of ads on sites, and who knows what ad will show up—they don't always give the impression you want people to get when visiting a ministry-related website. Another snag is what happens to all your content if you switch ISPs? Having your content tied up with an ISP can leave you with little to show for all the work you put into a website when you switch hosting companies. Sites hosted this way may have many other limitations: you may not be able to change the theme, stop the advertisements, make sites mobile friendly or multilingual, or get your own domain name.

## You need data

The greatest problem with free sites provided by ISPs is that they don't give you access to the most valuable tool for improving your site—data. Data (or analytics) includes information such as when people visit, where they are when they look at your site, what pages they access on your site and for how long. Having a site and not seeing data is like going on a blind date blind. Digital analytics have moved way beyond the page hit counter you may still have collecting dust at the bottom of your page. Today, powerful analytics give you information that helps you quickly build a picture of who is checking out your site. They can also be an encouragement because it lets you gauge the effectiveness of your website and the interest people are showing in your ministry. Tie this information-gathering with the outreaches you do and it can often give you a good idea of which neighborhoods in your city are showing the most interest. That can help you see who you are and are not reaching.

## Final thoughts

If you are just starting from scratch and want to get something off the ground easily and without cost but with enough features and information to assist you in the long run, I recommend Blogger.com or a Facebook page for your ministry. Both have well-developed social systems and data gathering and will be there if you forget to pay your Internet bill. They can also serve as a framework for a more robust website in the future as your ministry continues to grow.

I hope these tips serve you and your ministry well. If there's ever anything I can do to help, don't hesitate to write to me at [techie@impactjapan.net](mailto:techie@impactjapan.net). **JH**

*Jared Jones lives and works in Takasaki as a church planter for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. He and his wife, Tara, have been in Japan for nearly ten years and have four children.*





## Serving God in Today's Cities: Facing the Challenge of Urbanization

Patrick Johnstone with Dean Merrill  
(GMI: Colorado Springs, CO, 2015, 102 pp.)

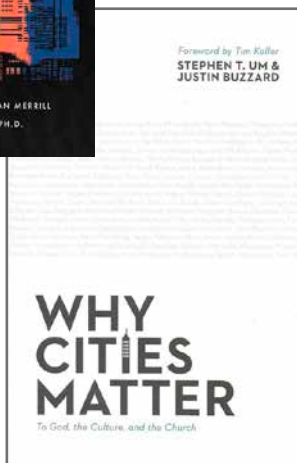
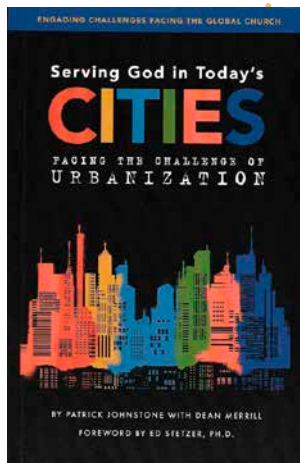
This new book by veteran researcher and missiologist Patrick Johnstone will help a new generation of missionaries and pastors engage one of the key challenges facing the global church—urbanization. According to a 2014 UN World Urbanization report, Tokyo is projected to remain the world's largest city in 2030 with 37 million inhabitants. The future of mission in Japan will continue to focus on planting churches in Japan's cities.

In Part One "Eyes to see," Johnstone, author of *Operation World*, shows how the 21st century is the first urban century in human history. He looks at how we think about cities—our assumptions, prejudices, and attitudes, and also at how God thinks about cities—his deep love for cities and for the people who live there.

Part Two looks at "Eight Critical Responses," practical action steps for those who want to engage cities. Johnstone begins with what is most important: pray together. He wisely reminds us that our work in cities "is more dependent upon prayer than any sophisticated strategy or formula" (p. 31). He writes, "Prayer—bold, insistent prayer—faith-filled prayer—persistent, determined prayer—is key to seeing the powers of darkness repelled and the light of Christ exalted" (p. 40).

Johnstone gives practical help to learn how to get to know the city, reminds us of the need to be active against urban poverty and to reach out to immigrants and displaced peoples. In the fifth action step, "Form healthy churches," he focuses on what healthy urban churches are like. He urges us to confront sinful practices and evil and to directly address human pain. We are reminded that "social changes without heart change doesn't work. What is the use of filling someone's stomach, or clothing their body, if they end up in a lost eternity? In our attention to physical needs, we must never neglect the good news that redeems the troubled, sinful soul" (p. 85).

His final action step, "Embrace a wider vision," calls on "churches to embrace a vision for spreading the gospel beyond their own sectors" (p. 89). He laments that "many urban congregations speak of their mission field only in local terms, making this the sole focus of their mission work . . . in doing so, the Great Commission has been parochialized." Each chapter in Part Two ends with reflection questions which would be a great springboard for mission teams wanting to work through this book.



In the brief conclusion, Johnstone recounts the story behind the song "You're the God of this City" and challenges us to bring hope to the cities of the world.

This book is the first in a new series from Global Mapping International entitled Engaging Challenges Facing the Global Church. Johnstone's next book, *Serving God in a Migrant Crisis: Ministry to People on the Move* was published in March 2016. **JH**

Reviewer rates it 4.5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

## Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church

Stephen T. Um & Justin Buzzard (Crossway, 2013, 175 pp.)

Stephen Um, senior ministry of Citylife Church in Boston, and Justin Buzzard, founder and lead pastor of Garden City Church in Silicon Valley, have teamed up to write an engaging survey of the trends and issues in urban ministry. Their love for the city and years of fruitful ministry in the city shine through the book. The first two chapters outline the importance and characteristics of modern cities, showing how cities function and the crucial role they play in our world. Chapter Three looks at what the Bible says about cities.

The final three chapters help readers work through issues they will face as they serve in the city, such as contextualization, the common storylines, and developing vision. The chapter on contextualization gives five insightful questions for understanding a city: What is your city's history? values? dreams? fears? ethos? Buzzard answers these questions for San Jose where he serves. They show how to relate to the city's dominant story line such as knowledge in Boston or success in Silicon Valley. In thinking through the development of a ministry vision for the city, they emphasize the gospel, community, balance, and reproduction.

Each chapter ends with helpful discussion questions and they have a two-page recommended reading

list at the end including helpful guides and some essential books to read.

This is another useful book for missionaries to read and digest as they do ministry in Japan. **JH**

Reviewer rates it 4.5 out of 5 stars ★★★★★

*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.*



**HOPE for LIVING**  
PHILIPPINES  
Children in CRISIS



Manila Philippines  
Tacloban City

**Previous Success**

DTC has already used these manga materials in their outreach in Tacloban, Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan. It was met with positive reaction from the children thanks to its visually appealing and compelling style.

# For the Children's Future

Providing heart care through Japanese Manga

**Department of Education (DepEd)**  
Philippine Government Agency

DepEd is spearheading the roll out of 100 pushcart classrooms to reach out to children at-risk in Metro Manila; to help these children be ready for re-integration into the public school system.

**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**

Pushcart Classrooms

→

**8000**

Children At-Risk



**CNN 2009 HERO Of the Year**



Prayers



Recommendations



Finances

For more info:  **How YOU can help**

 **新生宣教団**  
New Life Ministries





*Loving God, serving others*

## Christian Academy In Japan

[www.caj.or.jp](http://www.caj.or.jp)

042-471-0022



# Focus everyone on the purpose

*This article is part two 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.*

The question isn't if people focus; it's on what. People focus—effective ministry leaders know this. And they know that what gets focused on gets done.

Let me show you what I mean. Read the following three sentences, and count the number of times the word “purpose” appears. Ready? Here we go:

You're at the end of a difficult week, sitting at your desk, reflecting. You recognize that you've accomplished some tasks (writing a newsletter and planning an outreach event) and that you haven't accomplished some tasks (preparing a message and submitting an expense report). This leaves you wondering, “Why do some tasks get done and others don't?”

Okay—how many times did the word “tasks” appear? You weren't expecting that question, were you? You thought I was going to ask how many times the word “purpose” appeared. That's what you were focused on. (The word “purpose” didn't appear; the word “tasks” appeared three times.)

My point: What gets focused on gets done—so focus everyone on the ministry purpose.

“I agree with you,” you think to yourself, “but getting people to focus on the ministry purpose isn't all that easy. What can I do?”

Good question. Reflect on what helps you focus on ministry purpose, and then use your reflections with your ministry team. To get started, use these questions:

## 1. What happens when you are/aren't

**focused on your ministry purpose?** When I'm focused on my ministry purpose, I'm effective, I feel inspired, and I'm ready to take on challenges. When I'm not focused on ministry purpose, I let the good get in the way of the best, let goals become as important as ministry purpose, and think that the point of a given task (making photocopies) is to complete it, instead of to carry out the ministry purpose. What about you?

**2. What helps you focus on ministry purpose?** Two foundational things that help me focus on ministry purpose are understanding the importance of focusing on the purpose (see [http://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action)) and having a ministry purpose statement that is memorable, memorizable (10 words or less), and easy to say.

What helps me on a personal level is praying each day about the ministry purpose, using the ministry purpose to help me plan my week, and doing weekly reflections

on, “How did my activities this week help achieve the ministry purpose?”

What helps me at the team level is having team devotions related to the ministry purpose, hearing an explanation of how today's meeting will help us carry out our ministry purpose, and being asked to explain how my proposal carries out the ministry purpose. Having an annual team retreat to think about the ministry purpose is also helpful.

Other things that help me include having a purpose-driven job description, using a template for annual planning that frames my goals and activities in terms of ministry purpose, and having the following question as part of my annual evaluation: How did you contribute to the achievement of our ministry purpose?

What helps you focus on ministry purpose?

Bottom line? Be an effective ministry leader. Focus everyone on the purpose.

## What about you?

1. What's your ministry's purpose?
2. What's encouraging/discouraging about focusing everyone on the purpose?
3. What happens when you are/aren't focused on your ministry purpose?
4. What helps you focus on the purpose?
5. What's next? **JH**

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



# JEMA ORDER FORM

All items postage paid.

## Membership Dues

Includes JEMA Web site login, JEMA Directory, *Japan Harvest*, and membership discounts. (Not a member? Go to [www.jema.org](http://www.jema.org) and click "Liaison/Membership" for an application.)

	Qty	Subtotal
¥6,300 Single	_____	_____
¥7,500 Couple	_____	_____

## Japan Harvest Magazine

One year subscription for non-member

¥2,800	_____	_____
US \$30.00 overseas (economy air)	_____	_____

## JEMA Directory

¥1,500 Member	_____	_____
¥2,000 Non-member	_____	_____
US \$25.00 overseas (economy air)	_____	_____

**Grand Total** \_\_\_\_\_

## Postal *Furikae*:

00130-4-180466 JEMA-Japan Harvest

If you itemize your order on the *furikae* in the "This payment is for:" column, it is not necessary to mail the order form separately.

To order, call the JEMA office at 03-3295-1949,  
fax this form to 03-3295-1354,  
or mail your completed order form to:  
JEMA, OCC Bldg, 2-1 Kanda Surugadai,  
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101 Japan

## Moving?

Contact JEMA office so we can update our files!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





**Career opportunities for passionate, creative teachers.**

**MeySen Academy Schools**  
Specializing in early childhood development and English as a Foreign Language.  
For more information go to [www.meysen.ac.jp/en](http://www.meysen.ac.jp/en)  
For a list of available positions, go to [www.meysen.ac.jp/en/available\\_positions.htm](http://www.meysen.ac.jp/en/available_positions.htm)





*Good Day, Good Bread.*

YAMAZAKI BAKING CO., LTD.  
3-10-1 Iwamoto-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-8585



[www.yamazakipan.co.jp](http://www.yamazakipan.co.jp)