



**TECHNOLOGY IN MINISTRY**

## 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



## Levain PRIME SNACK

An elegant cracker for those special occasions

YAMAZAKI BISCUITS Co.,LTD.

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

## Forward

- 4 Happenings
- 5 From the Editor
- 6 News



## General Articles

- 29 The case for catechesis  
*by Ian Nagata*
- 30 Helping churches in transition  
*by Gary Carlson*



## Regulars

- 32 Member Care  
*Lifelong learning*  
*by Alan Steier*
- 33 Off the Bookshelf  
*Japanese Perspectives on the Death of Christ*  
*by Michael Widmer*
- 34 Focus on Prayer  
*The peace of prayer*  
*by Ken Reddington*
- 35 Church Planting  
*Let's be worshippers first*  
*by Andy Rodriguez*
- 36 Modern Tech  
*Ah, that sounds better!*  
*by Karen Ellrick*
- 37 Good Writing  
*Engage readers with online writing*  
*by Wendy Marshall*

## Feature Articles

- 8 Loving each other through the gift of technology  
*by Riaan Rottier*
- 10 The church online: staying connected  
*by Jonathan Oh*
- 12 The word of their testimony  
*by Janine Alvarado*
- 13 Zooming with zest  
*by Ruth Gilmore Ingulsrud*
- 14 Straight paths in a pandemic  
*by Liz Jeggo*
- 15 Reaching Japanese through YouTube  
*by Kevin Cochrane*
- 17 The public diaries of a child of God  
*by Erin L. Cook*
- 18 Using manga as a bridge  
*by Robin White*
- 20 Upping the ante: using tech to increase our impact  
*by Andy Meeko*
- 22 Crafting Bible story presentations  
*by Mary Miller-Maka*
- 24 Reaching past closed doors  
*by Ayako Dawson*
- 25 Is online-only church the answer?  
*by Kurt Owen*
- 26 A new digital ministry platform  
*by Scott Klooster*
- 28 Using English conversation online to reach Japanese  
*by Michael Creed*

Please note that event details are subject to change at this time of uncertainty. Please check with JEMA or organizers for confirmation.

## Every other month

### JEMA Online Prayer Gathering

The last Tuesday of each odd-numbered month:  
January 25, March 29

Includes breakout rooms based on language

To register, scan this QR code or go to:

<https://forms.gle/3Q1G8nAVCc8oo2y27>



## January

### WIM Winter Day of Prayer Plus

January 13, 2022

SEND Center, Higashi-Tokorozawa



## February

### JEMA Connect

February 14-16, 2022

Online

## March

### WIM Annual Spring Retreat

March 2-4, 2022

Okutama Bible Chalet, Tokyo and online



### WIM Kansai Christian Women's Conference

March 7, 2022

Mustard Seed Christian Church, Osaka and online



## May

### Prayer Summit for Western Japan

May 23-26, 2022

Nosegawa Bible Camp, Hyogo

Details about future JEMA events can be found on the JEMA website:

**jema.org**

Also see our magazine online: **japanharvest.org**



Japan Harvest

Volume 73 No. 1

Winter 2022

© 2021 Please do not copy any article, photo, poem, or report unless permission is granted. Contact Managing Editor.

#### Japan Harvest Staff

*Executive Editor:* Simon Pleasants

*Managing Editor:* Wendy Marshall ([wmarshall@jema.org](mailto:wmarshall@jema.org))

*Associate Editor:* Rachel Hughes

*Editorial Assistants:* Elena Kua, Jackie Peveto, Ariane Peveto, Jenn Bello

*News Editor:* Peter Swan

*Art Director:* Karen Ellrick

*Advertising Director:* Atsuko Tateishi

*Fact Checkers:* Sara Wolsey, Jocelyn Williams

*Proofreader:* Ken Reddington

**Printer:** Printpac

#### JEMA Leadership Team

*President:* Nathan Snow

*Vice President:* Paul Suzuki

*Treasurer:* Emerita Sakai

*Secretary:* David Scott

*Ministries Facilitator:* Chad Huddleston

*Communications Facilitator:* Simon Pleasants

*Membership Facilitator:* Paul Ewing

*Members-at-Large:* Hazel Yokota, Brett Rayl

#### JEMA Administrative Assistants (part-time):

Atsuko Tateishi, Mayumi Penner, Michiru Pleasants, Ai Nightingale

#### Submissions

The editors welcome unsolicited articles. Non-JEMA members are also welcome to submit.

Writer's guidelines are available at: [japanharvest.org/submissions](http://japanharvest.org/submissions)

#### Submission Deadlines

Winter issue: August 31

Spring issue: November 30

Summer issue: February 28

Autumn issue: May 31

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: Account #: 00130-4-180466

Name: JEMA-Japan Harvest

#### 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](mailto:jema-info@jema.org)

Website: [jema.org](http://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 contributors and not necessarily those of JEMA.

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

# TECHNOLOGY IN MINISTRY

Recently I was interviewed about our mission's Facebook page. For more than four years, OMF Japan has been using social media (Facebook and Instagram) for mobilisation, and I've been a key member of that team. Our page was used as a case study for an in-house social media training session across multiple OMF centres, including Thailand, the UK, and Australia. I was surprised by the answers I could give to questions I would have been clueless about five years ago! It's been a job I've grown into—with help—and I've learnt a lot.

Technology isn't my strong suit. However, in the last five years I've found myself doing more and more techy stuff. Perhaps you're in a similar situation?

## New ministries and resources

As we've prepared this issue, I've been encouraged to see the variety of ministries that have developed in the midst of this challenging period. Actually, the response to this theme was big: we had a large number of people who wanted to contribute! We have articles about various new online resources that JEMA members will be able to use in their own ministries. Members have also written about their own ministries that use technology, and what we can learn from their experiences.

One of our newer missionaries shares with us some biblical foundations for technology and discipleship, and another writer raises the question: "With so many advantages to online church, is it really that important to go back to church in person?"

We also have a helpful article about intentional transitional ministry and one that presents the case for teaching with catechisms.

Three of our regular columns—Member Care, Church Planting, and Modern Tech—are now written by teams who cooperate to provide content for the magazine. We are benefitting from their broad range of experience, interests, and specialties.

## Be inspired, encouraged, and equipped

During this pandemic, learning new ways of doing things has been a key theme, and technology has been a big part of that. Many of us have not just had to find the energy to learn new ways of working, but we've also had to teach others what we've learned. So this issue is timely, and we hope that you'll be inspired, encouraged, and equipped as you read it.



Blessings in Christ,  
Wendy  
Managing Editor

### The themes for the upcoming issues are:

**Spring 2022:** Rest

**Summer 2022:** Mobilization (submission deadline Feb. 28)

**Autumn 2022:** Evangelism in a shame culture (submission deadline May 31)

**Winter 2023:** Art and Ministry (submission deadline August 31)

## Online prayer meeting on the eve of Tokyo 2020 saturates Japan with prayers

*Christian Shimbun, August 8, 2021  
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi*

On July 22, 2021 on the eve of the Tokyo Olympic Games, the Japan International Sports Partnership (JiSP) hosted an online prayer meeting. The call to prayer was “Let’s saturate Japan with a million hours of prayer!” A total of 245 people attended. Pastor of Canaan Praise Church, Takafumi Nagasawa, led a time of praise followed by a message delivered by Keishi Ikeda, Pastor of Hongodai Christ Church.

At the July 22 prayer meeting, four church leaders then gave four prayer points, and each offered a prayer to lead the way. Shigenori Ōshima, Pastor of Hatogaya Evangelical Free Church, pleaded for containment of the pandemic so that the health of the people involved with Tokyo 2020 would be protected. Joshua Hari, National Director of Asian Access Japan, lifted up the Olympic and Paralympic athletes and the chaplains ministering to them. Paul Yokota, Pastor of Fukuoka Church, asked the Lord for a movement of prayer that would spread across Japan and then all over the world. Yokota also asked for unity among the 8,000 Protestant churches in Japan. Nobuyoshi Nagai, Pastor of Tohoku Central Church, prayed for a spiritual revival in Japan.

With anticipation of revival in Japan, the meeting closed with singing

“*Sono hi zen sekai ga* (On That Day the Whole World Shall).”

When they announced that no spectators would be permitted for Tokyo 2020, Ikeda had felt that all the doors had been closed for the ministry initiatives that had been planned over the past eight years to coincide with the Olympics. He soon realized, however, that the door for prayer remained wide open. He was awed when he sensed that God had set a wonderful stage at Tokyo 2020 to seek prayer warriors for Japan. Ikeda encouraged the attendees to keep praying until we see a spiritual revival together.

This meeting served as a forerunner to the prayer initiative Japan 1 Million ([japan1million.com](http://japan1million.com)), co-sponsored by JiSP and JEMA, which began on July 23 and would take place throughout both the Olympics and Paralympics. ■



*Mr. and Mrs. Hani in 1921*

Hani, Jiyu Gakuen celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

Located in Higashikurume City in Tokyo, Jiyu Gakuen’s Minamisawa campus serves as a natural learning site for its students. Here, students are exposed, not only to the rich cycle of nature, but also to the processes behind farming, food, and education. For

example, students raise vegetables in the fields and cook the harvest as part of their meals, learning how to manage the school and their dormitories themselves.

Jiyu Gakuen’s original school building, Myonichikan, was built in Ikebukuro in 1921. It was designed by famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright who sympathized with the Hanis’ disappointment with the

intense Japanese rote repetition style of education and their desire to build a better school. The building is designed to represent freedom and equality under God, rather than authoritarianism. Myonichikan is now designated as an Important Cultural Property by the Government of Japan.

Kazuya Takahashi, president of Jiyu Gakuen, shares the school’s prospect for the coming future—“One of our school’s missions is to nurture each



*Attendees indicating support for “Pray for Japan” and “Japan 1 Million”*

## Jiyu Gakuen celebrates its 100th anniversary

*Christian Shimbun, July 11, 2021  
Translated by Hiromi Kiuchi*

These days, where sustainability is at the forefront of everyone’s minds, Jiyu Gakuen is getting renewed attention for their motto—“Daily life itself is education.” Founded by Christian journalists Yoshikazu and Motoko

# 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!*"

student's power to live better. We want this school to take part in building a better society." The school plans to combine the gender-segregated junior and senior high school departments in 2024 as their first step to building a more collaborative environment, allowing students from various backgrounds to learn and live at peace together.

Although Jiyu Gakuen was founded upon Christian standards and holds Jesus Christ as the one and only teacher, it is only this year that they added Bible classes to their curriculum. Students now learn about the Bible in their "TLP time", a class based on Motoko Hani's policy of "Thinking, Living and Praying." Takahashi notes, "Having Bible classes does not make a school Christian. The biblical teaching needs to be connected to daily lives. Various problems arise when we live together, and it's when we try to solve them that biblical teachings come into play." He concludes, "Each student is precious and has God-given talents. Our aim is to encourage them to take pride in what God has given them and to live their lives to the fullest." ■



*Myonichikan: in 1922 and now*



## 76th anniversary of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: memorial services

*Christian Shimbun, August 22, 2021 Translated by Grace Koshino*

Seventy-six years have passed since atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Memorial services were held to commemorate those who lost their lives in the bombings.

### Hiroshima: Taking a new step as ambassadors of peace

On August 6, a prayer meeting to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the atomic bombing on Hiroshima took place at Hiroshima Nagarekawa Church.

Opening the event, Takashi Koezuka, priest at Hikari Catholic Church, explained that, "this annual prayer meeting was started in 2005 by pastors and priests who felt an urge to pray. It is my hope that through prayer we can each step out as ambassadors of peace."

During the meeting, one of the victims of the bombing, Setsuko Enya, shared her story. She was only five at the time of the bombing yet remembers the horrific event. "What I remember the most is the death of the children. I share my story with the hope that war will not be repeated and that children will not have to suffer. I may only play a small role, but God gave me this role."



*Setsuko Enya sharing her story*

### Nagasaki: Peace is achieved through learning how to hear God's voice

A memorial service was held on August 9 at Holy Trinity Church in Nagasaki (hosted by the

Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan, Kyushu Diocese).

The service began with hymns and prayers, followed by five minutes of silent prayer at 11:02, the time the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Rev. Shibamoto (Holy Trinity Church, Nagasaki) gave a sermon. He showed a YouTube video of the atomic bomb being prepared to be dropped. People were shocked to see how young soldiers casually went through their daily routine the day before the bomb was dropped. "Which of these soldiers could have imagined that this bomb would kill 75,000 people instantly?" said Shibamoto.

In closing, Rev. Shibamoto quoted this verse: "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." (Col. 3:14-15 NIV)

He said, "It is important that young people read Scripture and reflect on it. The words we hear are what affect us later in life. We need to be trained to hear the Word of God. I believe that this is the very thing that spreads peace." ■



*Nagasaki*

# Loving each other THROUGH THE GIFT OF TECHNOLOGY

*These biblical and practical guidelines can help you plan and improve online discipling*

By Riaan Rottier

I am sure you all agree that . . . so next time we will . . .” My computer flashed a note—“Your internet is unstable”—nothing I didn’t know. But everybody in the meeting nods, and I know I missed something important. I find myself longing for the “good old days” of in-person meetings.

We are all experiencing a sense of loss. Our current experience of fellowship is significantly diminished. Even when physically present, we are still constrained by masks, distance, and sometimes a sense of fear. Technology can sidestep some of these constraints, but it will never be the same as in-person encounters.<sup>1</sup>

However, it might be that God’s gift to us in this season is the opportunity to learn to use technology well. If we do so, then even after we return to unconstrained in-person meetings, our discipleship may be enriched by the use of technology. After all, the same God allowed Paul to be imprisoned, forcing him to use the technology of his time—letters—when he would much rather have met in person (1 Thess. 2:17–18, Col. 2:1–2, 4:16–18). Yet we are immeasurably enriched by having Paul’s letters today.

I will share about the “why, what, and when” of using technology to facilitate discipleship but, due to space

limitation I will not cover the “how”. However, once you have a clear idea of the other factors, finding some “how to” guidance online becomes much easier.<sup>2</sup>

## TECHNOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP: BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Let’s consider biblical foundations for thinking about technology and discipleship.<sup>3</sup> We see in Ephesians that Christ gave gifts to his people to equip and build them up. These gifts create a loving environment of truth-speaking that nurtures growth (Eph. 4:11–16).

**Gifts:** Christ gives gifts to each one for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7–11), and every one is commanded to exercise their gifts (Rom. 12:3–8). The lists in Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans consist mostly of gifts that can be exercised by speaking. By extension, they might be exercised through technologically mediated encounters. However, it still takes intentionality and planning to ensure people have the opportunity to do so.

**Environment:** We find a deep sense of love and unity in Ephesians (4:1–6). Paul expects believers to show an awareness of others—their joys, sorrows, sins, needs, and hard work. He also expects appropriate responses such as rejoicing, mourning, singing, encouragement, and above all—prayer (Rom. 12:9–16; 1 Thess. 5:12–22;

Eph. 5:15–20). Such awareness and response take place more naturally, and sometimes unnoticed, when we gather in person (without constraints).<sup>4</sup> But, online, these require significant planning and effort. This environment is a key part of effective discipleship.

Thus, we can view discipleship as a community of people all gifted to serve one another in a loving environment, so that each person may grow to maturity in Christ. I believe Christ gives each community access to the technology they need, along with people who have the ability to steward it for the benefit of the community. However, my sense is that, while we have mostly managed to provide online access to teaching, creating an environment of love and unity with opportunities for mutual service remains a challenge. In attempting this challenge, there are a few biblical guidelines that might be worth keeping in mind.

## THREE BIBLICAL GUIDELINES

**Orderly and fitting behaviour** when gathering contributes to building up the church (1 Cor. 14:26–40). To create a loving environment through technology we must pay attention to the orderly and fitting use of the technology. Paul told the Corinthians what constitutes an orderly and fitting physical gathering. Similarly, we need to understand and explain that to participants. This includes doing our best





to ensure everyone is clearly audible and visible and facilitating the encounter so that everyone can participate in an orderly fashion.

**Teach by modelling.** Our online lives ought to be as worthy of imitation as our daily lives (Heb. 13:7–8; 1 Cor. 4:16–17).<sup>5</sup> This is instrumental in creating the environment commended by Paul. To do this well we need to deliberately create opportunities for others to witness our awareness of and appropriate response to those we meet online, and encourage them to imitate us.

**Sensitive to the risks of exclusion.** Recall how Paul criticized the Corinthians for their conduct during the Lord's Supper when those that had food enjoyed it without consideration for those who did not (1 Cor. 11:17–22). It's possible in the same way for exclusion to occur when people who have gadgets, know-how, etc. enjoy their fellowship without being sensitive to people who don't. Likewise, in hybrid (in-person combined with online) gatherings—people who have health, time, or transport might enjoy their physical encounter in a way that subtly excludes those who must be content to only watch through a screen as others “eat and drink”.

## HOW TO PLAN A DISCIPLESHIP ENCOUNTER

**Goal of the encounter.** So how do we create discipling encounters that perpetuate an environment of love? It might be tempting to start from our own abilities, but rather, we should start by identifying the goal of the encounter. In what way do we sense the

Spirit desiring to comfort, transform, empower, or build up the disciple(s)? And only then can we decide the kind of discipleship encounter needed. If people are tired, fearful, and discouraged they might need shared song and prayer. If they feel lonely and isolated, they might need a phone call and a cake delivery.

**Type of communication.** Is it one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, or many-to-many?

Would it be best to have a group of people meet at the same time, for a sense of unity? Web conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Hangouts work well for these. Or, would it be better to provide a resource that people can use individually at their own pace and time? A good method for this might be videos, posted on YouTube.

Regardless, it might be better to divide what we would normally do in a single physical encounter over multiple technology encounters. This allows us to tailor each encounter to a few specific goals, while combatting technology fatigue and allowing us to connect to people more frequently. Because there is no commute involved, shorter but more frequent encounters are possible—and usually beneficial.

**Participants' demographics.** What is most suitable given their age, access to devices (e.g. smartphone, computer), and familiarity with the technology? What disabilities (vision/hearing impairment) or other challenges (noisy household, small screen, poor headphones, poor language ability, etc.) might prevent people from engaging effectively?

Knowing these things allows us to choose an appropriate technology and figure out how to use it to create an

orderly and fitting encounter, while reducing the potential for exclusion. For example, if the activity is the Lord's Supper and the goal is unity, using Zoom will lead to a far richer experience than a recorded video on YouTube. On the other hand, if the activity is prayer with the goal of encouragement and the participants are generally over 70 in age, a telephone conference call might be the most suitable.

You might feel overwhelmed by the number of technologies and your own limited experience. However, if you are clear on why, what, and when, you will likely find someone who knows, or is willing to learn, the necessary technology. Christ is still giving gifts to his church, and if skill with technology is what we need right now to grow saints into maturity, he can provide. As 2 Timothy 2:9 says, though we might be constrained, God's word is not chained! **JH**

1. Whether passages like Hebrews 10:24–25 apply solely to physical gathering has been hotly debated ever since the start of the first online/virtual churches in the early 2000s. I do not intend to enter into that debate but for those interested, Ronald L. Giese, Jr., “Is ‘Online Church’ Really Church? The Church as God's Temple,” from [thegospelcoalition.org/themelos](http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelos), (Vol. 45 – Issue 2, August 2020) is a good starting point.
2. For those interested in exploring further I have put up some of my own thoughts and useful links on the JEMA Community pages. Please see: <https://www.jemacommunity.org/topics/5781760>
3. While discipleship can be considered to start prior to conversion, here we will consider the part concerned with helping believers mature in Christ.
4. I would also argue that as ministries have attempted to limit physical contact and in-person meeting time this environment has also all but disappeared in physical gatherings.
5. Technology can also provide an interesting window into our daily lives in ways that is difficult to duplicate in person. For example, you could record a family devotion with your kids for other parents to see and model. Having a camera in the corner will be much more natural than all the other parents in a circle, watching.

*Riaan Rottier, an OMF Missionary from South Africa/Australia, is learning language and culture in Sapporo. A recovering geek, he still wishes people were as easy to understand as technology. Thankfully God gave him a lovely, empathetic wife to help.*

# THE CHURCH ONLINE: STAYING CONNECTED

By Jonathan Oh

*How can churches sustain an online expression of church in the long-term?*

Ever since the pandemic hit in early 2020, churches across Japan have had to grapple with the challenges of worshiping together while keeping members safe. How do we keep the community united when we are not physically together? Whether you are leading a church of 20 or 200, it's important to understand how the online expression of the church connects with the in-person expression of the church. Whether someone joins in worship in person or online, their experience should draw them closer to the Lord and to others.

Over the past year and a half, the Lord provided me with opportunities to help churches produce live online worship services using my experience as a pastor as well as broadcasting technician. I helped launch production systems at two very different churches. At Tokyo Union Church—an established church with hundreds of members—I developed an automated production control system. At Redeemer Church of Roppongi—a church plant in the heart of Tokyo with 20–30 people attending both in-person and online—I helped launch a simplified production system.

Based on my experiences, here are questions to ask as you seek to build a connected community, during this pandemic and beyond.

## TECHNOLOGY AS A BRIDGE

Many churches have used Zoom for online weekly services. Others have used streaming services such as Facebook Live or YouTube to send out a worship service video. But as leaders we need to think carefully about what is ahead.

➤ Is your current model of online gathering something that can

be reproduced continuously without leading to burnout and burdensome responsibilities?

- Do you intend to maintain an online presence even when in-person gatherings resume? If so, is your current method going to serve your congregation well in the future?
- Are there ways we can improve interaction during worship and help new people comfortably join your service for the first time?

## SUSTAINABILITY

Many churches have had to shift how they gathered. Tokyo Union Church did not have a livestream before March 2020. When in-person gatherings were halted, the church began streaming their services and using ChurchOnlinePlatform.com to help foster interaction. However, the church's inadequate equipment created too much work and the volunteer staff couldn't sustain the pace of producing the services. I developed an automated system for the church that allowed all aspects of production to be operated simply and efficiently by one person from a central control source (automated production control system).

You may not be producing online streams, but if you are running a Zoom service that includes slides plus musicians who aren't in the same location, you need to consider how that will work in the future. To prepare for the unexpected, think of emergency situations—such as broken Internet connections, technical failures, and volunteers suddenly unavailable. To create sustainability, consider a rotation of volunteers to lead the service and operate various

parts of the service, such as PowerPoint slides and music. Ultimately, whether in person or online, serving should be



a joy, and rotating responsibilities will help create a sustainable pattern that will continue past the pandemic.

## TRANSITION PLANS

In addition to sustainability, have you considered how things will change at your church when in-person gatherings resume in full force?

This is where understanding the online expression of the church helps. Instead of considering online gatherings as a separate aspect of the church, it should be considered as one of the many expressions. Those who join online should still be a part of your church, not just spectators. How can those joining

online be a part of the service, and how can you work to keep them engaged?

There is no approach that will work for all churches. However, a willingness to experiment might produce some answers. For example, would the corporate service be better as a single livestream, followed by a more interactive gathering afterward? At Redeemer Church of Roppongi, the services are streamed on Facebook Live, followed by a coffee hour on Zoom. This approach has allowed the service to be a unified experience while bringing in a communal aspect afterwards.



Or is making the Zoom-based approach to the primary gathering something more sustainable? It is possible to feed the service into the call? Whatever the method, thinking on a more expansive basis will create new avenues. Ultimately, our goal should be to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to as many people as possible, making disciples of all nations.

### INTERACTIONS AND INTEGRATIONS

Creating interaction in the age of Zoom calls has been more difficult than we initially thought. It's not natural (except for those who are used to being on camera like myself) to sit in

front of a camera and talk to it as if you are talking to another person. It also doesn't feel natural to constantly feel watched on camera.

One way Tokyo Union Church has approached this is using an online chat box during the services rather than Zoom.<sup>1</sup> Using volunteer hosts, we welcome those joining online, guide them throughout the service, point them to resources, and answer questions. During the service we also give visitors a way to contact our prayer team. This allows visitors to come in without feeling like they have to be in front of a camera, but it also provides a more welcoming atmosphere to all.

### "PRODUCING" A WORSHIP SERVICE

As a pastor, I hate the idea of "producing" a worship service. A worship service is not a production. However, as a production director, I approach the livestreaming side of the service as a production, since it requires coordination, vision, and an understanding of the whole operation.

We live in a day where our screens drive our experiences and we expect a certain level of quality. However, unless your church is aiming to be a video production center, you do not need substantial equipment to produce a livestream.

Here are some things you should consider with any online service production:

- What devices or apps do people use to view the worship service and participate?
- What equipment should the church use to effectively capture and deliver good-quality audio? (Note: Audio is arguably the most important aspect in producing online services, yet easily overlooked.)
- Is there a way the participants can interact with other viewers? How will the church follow up with participants later?

At Redeemer Church of Roppongi, the production equipment consists of:

- ◆ a video switcher (equipment that changes whether we see the video feed or slides),

- ◆ a digital audio mixer (equipment that allows us to use microphones and instruments for sound),
- ◆ a computer for slides and streaming,
- ◆ microphones, and
- ◆ an iPhone.

It is easy to set up and easy to pack up. This is sustainable for a new church plant. There are many options on how to produce a worship service, and it doesn't have to cost a lot.

### WHERE TO GET HELP

Answering the technical questions above requires more space than I have here. Thankfully, there are many resources out there to help you with ideas and explanations of how to put together an online service. Should you need help getting your church online, please do not hesitate to access free resources available at my ministry website, "Genki Today" (<https://genki.today>), which offers tutorials and new ideas. Ultimately, an online broadcast is an expression of the church, and producing services with simplicity and excellence is key to a sustainable online ministry.

### BE ENCOURAGED!

If you feel like you now have more questions than answers, fear not. Our Almighty God has loved and cared for his church for more than two millennia. Through wars, plagues, and persecutions, the church has stood the test of time. In Matthew 16:18, our Lord Jesus says to Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (ESV). Even in the midst of a pandemic, may the Lord redeem this time to enable the church to reach those across Japan and around the world like never before. **JH**

1. Getting started with online chatting is relatively straightforward. Options include the free Church Online Platform (<https://churchoonlineplatform.com>) or the chat functions of your streaming provider (e.g. Facebook Live, YouTube).

Image: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Online\\_Worship\\_at\\_Glendale\\_United\\_Methodist\\_Church\\_\(49868198981\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Online_Worship_at_Glendale_United_Methodist_Church_(49868198981).jpg)

*Jonathan Ob is a tentmaking missionary who serves in the marketplace and in ministry. An ordained pastor from the US, he's a meteorologist working for an international broadcaster in Japan.*

# THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY



*Using the faith stories of Japanese Christians to tell of God's good news to break barriers of unbelief*

By Janine Alvarado

For many people the internet has become a part of our daily lives. It connects us with others and provides resources and opportunities at our fingertips. Technology has developed in an almost revolutionary way, yet we are still called to share the truth of the gospel to those around us. However, Jesus's mandate to make disciples can be a significant challenge for Japanese believers in their home culture and has often been relegated to missionaries and pastors. Thus, the common thought that "Christianity is for Westerners" persists. How can we move past this challenging barrier and proclaim Christ as Lord of all in this nation?

In 2020, my husband and I started The Gospel Through a Click (GTAC) to create an accessible visual-medium bridge to challenge the gap between "Christianity is a foreign thing" and "Jesus is for me." Through a simple click, Japanese viewers can hear the gospel in their own heart language and context. We use a cinematographic story format (i.e. short films) to engage their interest.

The aim of GTAC is to provide contextualized content to reach the Japanese with the gospel, encourage evangelism, and serve the churches. The book of Revelation tells us that "they overcame . . . by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11 KJV). The main thrust of our ministry—testimony films—feature Japanese people telling others about the good news that transformed their lives. Highlighting the work of God in their own words breaks the barrier that indigenous evangelism is impossible. And it encourages other believers that they can do the same in a powerful and effective way.

The Gospel through a Click is a ministry available for believers, leaders, churches, and organizations to take advantage of in various ways. All testimony films and themed video content are available for free download and use. Films can be shared on social media timelines or uploaded to platforms. Pastors have used them to open a service or illustrate a point in their messages. Some churches have used them to tell baptism stories.

I've used them to explain what sin means and who Jesus is. I've sent them individually to friends I've been reaching out to and have seen fruit come of it. Some have said, "I feel exactly as the person in the video felt," or "I can really relate." One woman eventually made her decision to follow Christ after coming to an understanding of the gospel through our conversations and these films.

For viewers on our website, we have a "Find a Church" page where unbelievers can see if there is a church in their neighborhood. Our aim is to promote churches to viewers so that seekers can find opportunities to be discipled.

Churches and organizations can bridge the gap by sharing their own stories. Every testimony of God's faithfulness or power in a new or seasoned believer is powerful and a wonderful tool God has given to bless others. Testimonies are shared for the building up of the body of Christ and used as a light to the world. Ministries meeting needs in specific arenas can have a wider reach by giving hope through a message-specific short video. In addition, this provides a resource many others can use to minister God's truth to the nation. GTAC can help make this possible.

GTAC assists believers, churches, and organizations throughout the process of making a video. We take time to carefully listen as we develop a story

that reaches the heart. Our preproduction process prepares our story partners for the days we film on location, and we diligently work to provide a relaxed and fun setting in which the story can be told well. We use high-quality equipment and careful editing. We do this at no cost (other than our travel expenses in some cases) so that we can bless the body of Christ with good resources. We are partner-supported missionaries, and our calling is to serve the believers and the church in Japan.

We believe these stories of God's grace, forgiveness, hope, and power will allow the word of Japanese testimonies



to break the barriers of unbelief. By making more stories available to all churches and organizations for free download and use, we believe that we all can work together to harness the power of technology and establish an atmosphere of encouragement, inspiration, and unity.

To find out more, visit us at [gtac.jp](http://gtac.jp), or find us on Facebook @thegospelthroughaclick and Instagram @gtac.jp. **JH**

Images submitted by author

*Janine Alvarado and her husband Vicente are missionaries with World Indigenous Missions. They are from the US and have lived with their family in the Tokyo Metro area for the last seven years.*



# Zooming with Zest



By Ruth Gilmore Ingulsrud

*How can teaching online be optimized for young children?  
With lots of energy, imagination, and direct engagement*

Holding the attention of a young child is hard enough in person—but what about online? Practically impossible . . . unless you have a few tricks up your sleeve or at least close at hand. During this extended pandemic, many teachers have had to engage their learners through the lens of a computer camera. Jesus said, “Let the little children come unto me and do not hinder them” (Matt. 19:14 NIV). While nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, I’m sure that lots of kids have felt hindered during this past year. Close connections and personal contact are so important, especially with little ones. Many teachers have also felt sorely hindered over the past year as they struggle to teach digitally.

Zooming through the pandemic could have been a slog for me too, but a few tricks and techniques have added “zest to the Zoom.” Regardless of the limitation of communicating through a camera, my students have sung songs with a sheep, danced with a dog, and tried to feed potato chips to a pig. It helps to have a menagerie on hand in the form of puppets, but a bag of props and toys can also add zest to your own Zoom.

## Using the camera frame to your advantage

The frame of a camera may seem limiting, but it can also become the proscenium, or the doorway to a theater, with you as director. Create magic with a bit of acting and some props that suddenly appear and disappear just out of the range of the computer’s camera.

Here’s one example: When students ask for a certain puppet, I can call off screen for that puppet to join me.

“Hamlet! Hamlet the Pig, where are you? We are going to do our potato chip pronunciation game!” Feigning impatience, I move off-camera to look for my wayward pig. The student hears my voice, now softer and farther away, calling. Enter the pugnacious piglet, holding the bag of chips. The student can see the pig, but not the teacher. The pig disappears, and the teacher reappears. “Have you seen my pig? Oh great! Now my bag of chips is gone.” The student may or may not tell on the purloining porcine puppet, but the learner is engaged and looking forward to the next act of the lesson plan.

## Other camera tips

Set your computer on a box to keep the camera at eye level. Make sure your sound is working and adjust your lighting. Your face should be well lit from in front. Having a window directly behind you doesn’t work so well. The view can distract, and while lighting the back of your head may give you a holy halo, your face will be on the dark side.

I’ve taught English lessons for over a year in orphanages and in private lessons via Zoom and have learned a few things that have helped me capture and hold the attention of my young students.

## My top five tips:

- **Check your tech**—Before you begin your lesson, make sure that you have a strong internet connection, a functioning microphone, and good lighting.
- **Teach standing up**—Not only is this healthier for you, it is more engaging for the learner. It gives you the freedom to move towards and

away from the camera. A changing perspective is more interesting. It also encourages your students to get up and move as well. Movement stimulates the brain, keeps your blood flowing, and helps improve your energy level.

- **Keep props close at hand**—Be aware of your own screen along with the screens of your students. Be ready to bring an interesting prop or illustration into view to spice up your lesson.
- **Connect with individuals**—Noticing and addressing each student is important for their self-esteem, and it helps to keep them engaged. Other students enjoy watching the interactions as well. We are all creatures of a creative and loving God, and we thrive on healthy interpersonal connections.
- **Enjoy creative breaks**—Positive emotions promote learning and foster enthusiasm. Students appreciate a healthy dose of play especially during longer study sessions. Take a dance break, or play a song that encourages action. Have a silly conversation with a puppet. Talk to the student’s pet. Having fun together is a great way to build relationships and reinforce deep and lasting learning. **JH**

Check out a sample Joyful Opportunity English Education (JOEE) lesson here: <https://youtu.be/eInm4IEiVY>

Children’s Message Resources: [Kidsermons.com](http://Kidsermons.com)  
Science Poetry for Kids: [BelovedOfBeasts.com](http://BelovedOfBeasts.com)

Images submitted by author

*Ruth Gilmore Ingulsrud (US) heads up JOEE (joe.jp), which brings lively English lessons to kids in orphanages. She maintains a YouTube channel and several websites for children and for Christian education.*

# STRAIGHT PATHS in a pandemic

By Liz Jeggo

*Unsure how to serve returnees in a pandemic, we asked the Lord for direction. By his grace, an online ministry has developed.*



I looked at the coaster, reading again the familiar words:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your  
own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make your paths straight.  
(Prov. 3:5–6 NIV 1984)

We'd recently returned from a fifteen-month home assignment, intending to continue and expand the returnee ministry we'd been doing before we left for the UK. Previously our work had involved much hospitality and traveling, encouraging Christian returnees, and reaching out to non-Christians. Now, due to the pandemic, we could neither reconnect in person with old returnee friends nor meet new ones.

"Lord, what can we do when we can't meet people?" I prayed desperately.

## An initial idea

A few days later, I shared with my husband, Mike, an idea that I thought might be from the Lord: "Could we start an online English outreach? With the government telling people to stay at home, there must be lots of isolated returnees. And our locked-down friends

in the UK have plenty of free time. We could bring them together for English conversation with a short Bible time at the end." It turned out he'd been thinking along similar lines.

We continued praying, and the idea grew. A trial meeting we called "English Gathering" worked well, so we asked friends around the world to invite their Japanese friends.

We've been meeting twice a month ever since. We choose a topic such as "wisdom" or "community" to discuss in small groups, led by native English-speaking volunteers. At the end, Mike shares a Bible verse and explains how it relates to the theme.

Gradually numbers have increased, including returnees who were previously too busy to travel across Tokyo to join our events, some from other parts of Japan, and even a few who are currently overseas. Some have only attended once or twice, and others are

now regular attendees who are developing relationships with our volunteers.

Feedback shows attendees feel loved and accepted. After attending his first online meeting, Hitoshi said, "Thank you for really great time yesterday. This opportunity makes me happy. I appreciate your kindness and supports. I'm looking forward to meet you next month."

## One thing leads to another

Our hope was that, as well as providing community for isolated returnees, we would be able to share Jesus with them. So we were delighted that several attendees showed clear interest in the Bible. However, we realised they would learn more from a Bible study in Japanese, so we started praying for at least one Japanese Christian to help us lead. Unknown to us, Satomi,\* a friend living in the UK, had been praying for ways to serve the Lord during lockdown, and



this Bible study was the answer to her prayers. Even better, her non-Christian mum wanted to join too!

This was just the beginning. Out of English Gathering, we've started a number of other online groups. Reiko was interested in English Gathering but had recently had a baby and found evenings difficult. At the time, I had to say no, since Japanese morning corresponds to nighttime in the UK when my English-speaking volunteers would be asleep. Then Momoko also asked about a daytime group. I could think of other returnees who might be interested. "But where can I find native speaker volunteers?" I asked the Lord. The answer came through a New Zealand colleague in Japan and a friend in Australia, who were both in the right time zone. We now meet with a number of Japanese ladies twice a month for English conversation and Bible study.

Ayako came to English Gathering and heard about the Bible study, but she told me she couldn't join because of another commitment. She was

delighted when I offered to read the Bible with her one-on-one. Kanako was also interested but didn't want to use Zoom, so we started meeting one-on-one on Skype.

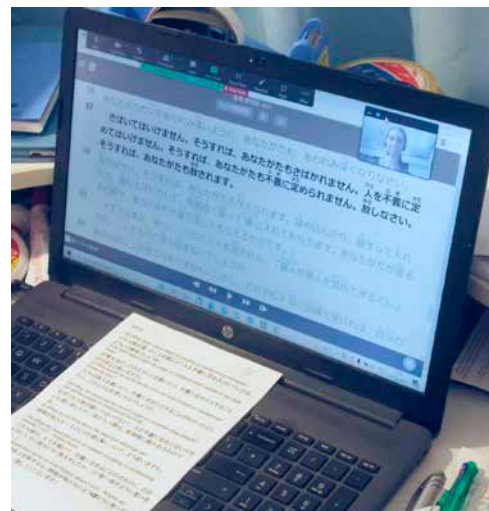
Yukiko expressed a desire to know how and why Satomi had become a Christian, so we ran an online "Story Time" event where Satomi shared her testimony. We're hoping this will become a semi-regular event with other Japanese Christians sharing their testimonies.

We've also started a fellowship group for Christian returnees.

### God gently led us

When we returned from home assignment, we had no idea how we could continue ministry in a pandemic, but God knew and gently led us step by step.

Although online isn't for everyone and has its challenges, it works well for us as we seek to minister to people across the greater Tokyo area and now in other parts of Japan too. Even when



the pandemic settles down, we expect to continue much of this online ministry while also returning to face-to-face ministry. **JH**

\*All Japanese names except Satomi's have been changed for privacy.

Images submitted by author

*Liz Jeggo and her husband Mike are OMF missionaries from the UK. They are involved in returnee ministry in the greater Tokyo area.*

# REACHING JAPANESE

THROUGH



# YouTube

By Kevin Cochrane

*Never thought you would make YouTube videos? Neither did I, until God showed me the amazing potential of using the internet to reach the lost.*

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the task of reaching the vast number of Japanese who have never heard the gospel? More than once, I have felt the enormity of that task. I personally endeavor to do street evangelism and relational evangelism, but I started to feel a restlessness that more could be done. From this sense of restlessness and through a conversation with a friend, God gave me a vision: begin using YouTube to share about Jesus to the Japanese people.

Now you may be tempted to stop reading here because you're thinking—"I don't have the personality to make videos on YouTube," "I don't know the first thing about YouTube," or "My Japanese isn't good enough to make videos on YouTube." So let me encourage you by confessing that I had similar thoughts and never imagined myself being a "YouTube influencer," as the younger generation sometimes calls it. But when God opened my eyes to the potential to share the gospel with

Japanese all over Japan and the world (many of whom I may never meet in person), I began to warm up to this idea.

Soon after, God providentially began to show me how much of an "online society" Japan is. Overall, Japanese people spend a significant amount of time on the internet every day, mostly on smartphones. Various social media platforms, YouTube, and LINE are some of the places Japanese spend their time. If you are interested

in learning more, I encourage you to search for “Japan” on this helpful website: <https://datareportal.com> At this website, you can find various reports and some jaw-dropping statistics about internet, social media, and smartphone usage in various countries. Reading some of these statistics solidified my conviction to use the internet to share the gospel to Japanese people.

Next, I began thinking and praying about what the focus of my YouTube videos should be, at least in the beginning. I was reminded of a missionary named Paget Wilkes that I read about who served in Japan several decades ago. In his writings, Wilkes shared how he found it effective to use John 3:16 as a foundational base to work from when sharing the gospel. However, in order to contextualize the gospel for the Japanese, Paget broke up John 3:16 phrase by phrase and turned it into a six-part evangelistic sermon series:

1. For God: A message about the nature, identity, and character of God.
2. So loved the world: A message about God’s unconditional love for all people.
3. That he gave his only begotten son, Jesus: A message about the birth, identity, and life of Jesus.
4. That whosoever believes in him: A message about the salvation and hope Jesus provides through faith in him.
5. Shall not perish: A message about the eternal consequence of rejecting the message of Jesus.
6. But have eternal life: A message about heaven and the eternal hope Jesus provides.

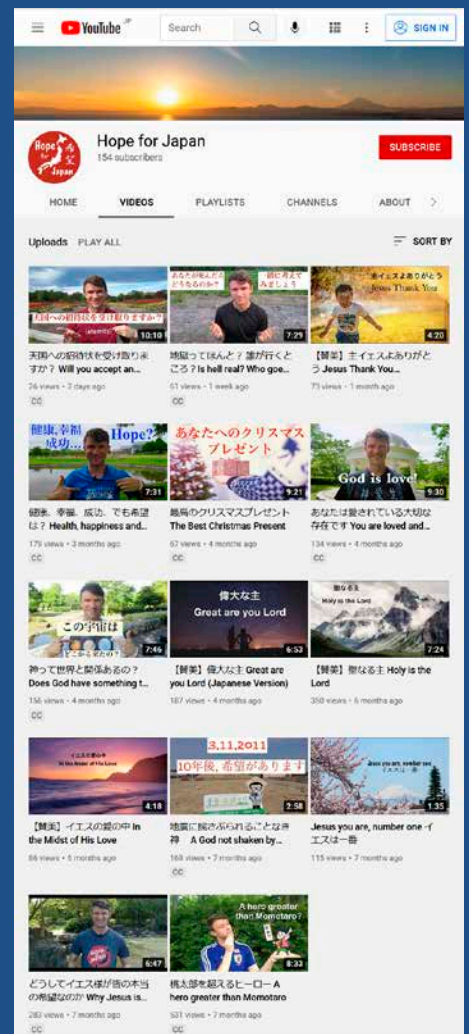
Inspired by this approach, I made a series of YouTube videos in Japanese which explain John 3:16 phrase by phrase. It was a lot of work, but I have already begun to see the fruit of my efforts. God has even begun to bless me with friends who want to make subtitles in various languages so that even more non-Christians can hear the gospel. If you are interested in watching my videos, please check out the following link and prayerfully consider sharing the videos with any Japanese friends that come to mind:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/hopeforjapan316/videos>

Let me encourage you again that using things like YouTube and Facebook is something you can do. Like me, you may be far from perfect in Japanese, or you may not be very outgoing (God can help you overcome that). But as society in Japan continues to change, I don’t foresee the strategic importance of using the internet to reach Japanese people going away anytime soon.

Here are some practical ideas to consider:

- Make a YouTube video where you share your testimony of how you became a Christian.
- Do a Facebook Live video and share a testimony of an answer to prayer.
- Interview Japanese members in your church about how they became Christians.



- Make a training video about how to share the gospel in Japanese.
- Make a channel for kids and read Bible stories in Japanese. **JH**

Hope for Japan logo submitted by author  
Other images from author's YouTube channel (captured November 2, 2021)

*Kevin Cochran* grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He joined SEND International in 2011 and is currently focused on church planting in the city of Sendai.





# The public diaries of a child of God

By Erin L. Cook

*How God uses his children to impact lives around the world—one blog or vlog post at a time*

There is absolutely no doubt about it—the world seems to be increasingly interested in what everybody else is doing! And with technology on the rise, it's easier than ever for us to inform each other of our daily comings and goings. Posts from all corners of the globe flood websites and social media platforms daily, creating a whirlpool of different ideas, stories, and opinions. With so many different avenues before us, what can a child of God who wants to share the gospel possibly do to make his or her voice effectively heard amid the millions of others?

## Vlogs and blogs

Two popular methods of sharing our lives through technology are blogs or vlogs. The blog (short for weblog) and the vlog (short for video log) basically serve the same purpose: think of them both as public diary entries that can be published online to inspire other people. Blogs are written content, often including photos; and vlogs are videos.



There are various platforms available to create content for your online presence. You can post on Ameba (ameblo.jp—a Japanese website/platform specifically created for people to start blogs) or upload to YouTube (the well-known online space for sharing video content). Or you can go all-out and create your own website with quality tools such as Wix (my top choice for creating a professional-looking website). You could even raise the bar and challenge yourself by trying all three!

No matter which platform you choose, as long as you have a few simple tools, such as an appropriate camera and editing software, your impact can go a long way. Of course good writing or speaking ability, a little confidence, and trust in God helps too.

Now, there are a variety of subjects and genres you can use as the central theme of your blog or vlog. How-to, self-care, business, crafting, opinion—you name it, they have it somewhere in cyberspace!

However, if reaching the Japanese is your main goal, a simple lifestyle blog could be the most effective. Lifestyle blogs and vlogs are actually among the most popular types of content. Japanese people appear to have a great interest in the culture of foreigners. They love to learn about the everyday life of someone of another nationality, so a simple blog or vlog about the daily blessings and adventures of a Christian could prove to be effective.

Once you launch your blog or vlog, social media can also be a great tool to help get your presence out there. Two platforms I would recommend considering are Instagram and Pinterest, but there are many others that you can experiment with and see which one works the best for you.

## Being God's light from where we are

Jesus, in Matthew chapter five, taught that we are to be as a light to a world of darkness by showing his presence in every aspect of our lives. In this way, no matter what we do—if we stay focused on Christ—those who do not yet know him will be able to see a marked difference in us and the way we live. With so many marvelous platforms available, no matter where we are in the world, we can still be a witness and example of God's love to someone on the other side of the earth without ever having to leave our homes!

Nowadays, with the craziness of COVID-19 restrictions, it's very uncertain when new missionaries will be able to travel to Japan to tell the people about Jesus in person. Those of us in that position are all stuck in our own little cages like birds waiting to be released. And while it can be frustrating, God can use technology to reach more Japanese than one could ever do in person. For example, technology can reach those who shut themselves into their homes without work or school and withdraw from society (hikikomori).

A simple story of God's goodness in even our ordinary days can be very effective to inspire and encourage these dear people who so need to experience his grace and love. The wonders of technology could very well be the help God has given us to carry it out!

May our Lord bless you in all your endeavors to feed the gospel of Jesus to the spiritually starving nation of Japan. **JH**

*Erin L. Cook is a Japan enthusiast in her twenties living in Alabama. She dreams of someday traveling to Japan to share the gospel with those who are hurting there.*

# Using manga as a bridge

By Robin White

Drawbridge Creations is using art and story to create connections with Japanese people



Anyone who has spent time in Japan will have noticed that manga is everywhere. It's so popular that in one week, people in Japan buy more comics than people in the US do in an entire year. This is the land of manga cafés, phonebook-sized weekly manga magazines, and bookstores with huge manga sections. Manga can even be rented. The variety is huge and there's something for all ages from toddlers to senior citizens. Cartoons are also commonly used in advertising, instruction manuals, and even new employee handbooks.

So why not use this significant part of Japan's pop culture as a spiritual bridge to the gospel? And since more and more are being read online, it makes sense to take manga ministry online too.

This is where Drawbridge Creations comes in.

## Who we are

"Drawbridge Creations is a web-based manga outreach with the three-fold purpose of reaching the unchurched, resourcing the church, and empowering Christian artists in order to bridge the gap between church and culture; between Jesus and Japan" (quoted from the Drawbridge website).

We are following a webcomic model, serializing the content (for free), with plans to collect the stories for print publication later on. If our first project

is successful, we envision it having the potential to grow into a larger multi-series/multi-platform ministry. But, though we're dreaming big, we're starting small with one self-contained series called Waypoints.

Waypoints  
～分岐点・そこにある出逢い～

in his or her own style. Waypoints launched in August 2020, and there are currently six Japanese and international artists producing work for us.

## How we're building bridges online

We believe art and story can be effective in touching hearts and changing minds. But online, it would be easy for people to come, read some manga, and leave without making any deeper connection. That's why we hope these stories will be conversation starters and that the website itself can be a platform for that. So not only will we upload new manga each month, but we'll also leave readers with questions to think about and respond to in the comments. In addition, we plan to update the blog regularly with articles on the Bible passages and themes related to the stories we've posted, as well as videos to get people thinking and talking about life, faith, and Jesus. We'll also encourage people to contact us if they'd like to ask questions, receive a free Bible, or visit a church. We plan to network with churches and missionaries around Japan so that when a reader is ready, they can connect with a Christian community in person.

## How you can use these tools

We hope this series and website will become a useful ministry tool for you, and for churches and Christians in Japan.

Here are some ways Christians might use this tool: you could share a

Waypoints example page by Masiu



Waypoints is an anthology series telling short stories taken from the gospels, each tale told from the point of view of someone whose life was changed by encountering Jesus. Each story is illustrated by a different artist



Waypoints could also be used to supplement Bible study materials. For example, you could share a link with the members of your Bible study group, asking them to read the manga adaptation before getting together to study the related Bible passage together. These are a few ideas for using our online content as a ministry resource. Perhaps you will think of even more uses—please let us know if you do!

### Where to find us

Waypoints can be found at [waypoints.jp](http://waypoints.jp). The main site is in Japanese, but all the manga are available in English, too, at <https://www.waypoints.jp/english>. For more information about our ministry or to get in touch, please visit [drawbridgecreations.com](http://drawbridgecreations.com). **JH**

Images submitted by author

*Robin White is from Canada and has been living in Japan for over a decade. He and his wife, Yoko, serve with Global Partners (Wesleyan Mission) and live in Ishikawa Prefecture.*



link to a specific story that resonates with you or a story a person you're witnessing to might enjoy. It could be a good conversation starter or even a "springboard" to get people reading the Bible itself. If you have an online ministry platform, you could link to one of our stories when it is on topic with your own blog, video, or social media content. Think of it as "bonus content" for your own online ministry.

Jesus by Robin White

Advertisement

# Intensive Japanese Courses Online & In-person in Nagoya

## Equipping missionaries to reach Japan



**Early birds  
10% off**  
for applications received  
before January 15th

**April - May 2022 | ¥80,000~**

- Double Intensive (88 lessons x 80mins)
  - JLPT + Conversation Course (¥150,000)
- Single Intensive: (44 lessons x 80 mins)
  - JLPT only course (¥90,000)
  - Conversation only course (¥80,000)

Application deadline February 28th.  
More information on our webpage.  
※ All prices include tax.

**Apply now & get a free level check** → [nihongo.connectenglish.jp](http://nihongo.connectenglish.jp)

**JEMA**  
Endorsed Ministry  
Connect Japanese Classes is a part  
of Connect Mission Support Center

Connect is a Christian-owned language  
school based in Nagoya with a heart to  
reach Japanese people with the gospel

**connect**  
JAPANESE CLASSES

# UPPING THE ANTE: USING TECH TO INCREASE OUR IMPACT

By Andy Meeko

*How might we “get digitalized” to give hope, reach, and disciple online seekers, and further spiritual formation?*

It has been said that technology is as dangerous as it is useful. I agree. And if it was said long ago that “technology has surpassed our humanity,” then where might we be now?

If the verdict on whether technology has actually benefited humanity is still pending and since we don’t have much of an option in avoiding it, how might we increase its chances? How might we maximize technology to bring glory to God and to expand his kingdom?

When I founded NewDayToDay seven years ago, I had no idea where it would go or what we would be doing and certainly no clue what tech challenges lay ahead! Piece by piece, it seemed like we were upping the ante. Seven years later, we are beyond our most outlandish dreams of what we thought possible. Let me share some of our tech projects that you may find useful in your own work.

## MIRACLE EVERY DAY

Miracle Every Day (Miraebu ミラエブ) is an upbeat, multi-platform daily devotion: Jesus.net or ja.Jesus.net. We publish on WordPress (blog), Mailchimp (email subscription), Facebook, and Instagram, and are planning to use LINE too. The devotion is designed to uplift, inspire faith, and further spiritual formation of the reader. We have also expanded Miraebu into YouVersion reading plans. Currently, across all these platforms, there are over a thousand readers daily, some days thousands, and it keeps growing. It takes an enormous amount of work, but we have page after page of incredible life changes posted by readers. Not only are many downcast believers being uplifted and growing closer to Christ,

but many nonbelievers are also dedicated readers. Central to our focus is challenging readers to get involved in systematic discipleship.

Recently we gave a challenge for readers to begin testifying by making their personal testimony booklet via our “My Miracle” project マイミラクル (mymiracle.jp). Interestingly a woman in Chiba who would not identify herself as a believer made her booklet and began testifying that God exists, that he is good, and that he is touching her life. That’s right, a seeker already mobilized for the kingdom. We also have a church in Kobe where 200 people have written their My Miracles; of those, 47 people have published them (at 200 copies each, that is close to 10,000 testimonies!) They are also uploading these to the internet to get their testimonies out to untold more. It is fantastic to see how a simple daily digital devotion can help expand God’s glory and kingdom. Encourage your Japanese friends to subscribe—they and many others may be grateful you did!

## T3C (TOKYO COMMUNITY CARE CENTER)

T3C (formerly Tokorozawa Community Care Center) was started with the vision to help prevent and reverse depression, a prevalent and growing global epidemic. For years, I had witnessed the depression problem in churches all over Japan, and it seemed that in almost all cases the only intervention was prescription drugs. We wanted an alternative. The goal of T3C was not just to offer counseling but also to equip community caregivers to provide care.

A dozen years later with countless people restored and hundreds of caregivers trained, I realize that we have barely scratched the surface of the need. So now technology is helping us improve our care by hybridizing. Of course, years ago, we started counseling with Skype and more recently with Zoom or WhatsApp. But how could we increase our reach and touch lives without taking so much time for





traditional counseling? Thanks to the cooperation of Nick Petkoff of TEAM, our new T3C website (tokyoccc.com) is adding tools to help prevent depression as well as tools to train caregivers. We are also currently planning a video series to help the hurting through YouTube. We are trusting God that all of this will help us expand beyond our limited manpower and resources and hopefully help far more than we previously have.

### RISK RIDE AT JESUSLOVES.JP

Know anyone who is discouraged or hurt? Probably more people than we think. Unfortunately in Japan, too many never verbalize their struggles, and you may never know until it's too late. That was almost the case with two brothers in Fukushima. But when one middle-aged believer shared our Risk Ride manga with his younger brother, he found out his brother had wanted to commit suicide three times. Amazing things happened that week in Fukushima after I oriented his church on using the Risk Ride manga (riskride.net). Church members had countless discussions like those two brothers, and in just seven days, seven people came to Christ.

Many years later, we began to consider how we might use such a manga to touch hurting lives online and even find the spiritually ripe. Following the

model of *jesus.net* (where over 16 million online seekers have come to Christ in a decade), Mark Roberts (formerly with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association) and I teamed up to morph the manga into an online interactive experience for *kokoro* care (心ケア heart care) and the gospel. The aim is to minister to hurting hearts, reach those who are ready, and eventually connect them with e-coaches and e-disciplers. Take a look: <https://jesusloves.jp/riskride/> Share this website and help open hearts to hope and eternity.

### TREASURE HUNT MOBILE APP

Would you like to radically change the future? Then there is one demographic you cannot miss! Kids are by far the most ready to receive God and the most ready to share God. One pastor said to me, “Kids’ evangelism is the most intelligent evangelism.”

I began to witness this reality in Japan a decade ago and felt led to make a pocket manga to help even young kids lead their friends to Christ on the playground or anywhere. What might happen when kids are recruited and their potential unleashed for the gospel in Japan?

I started the process by getting the help of kids in the field. Kids previewed and helped test the rough sketch manga, and we integrated their feedback. Thus was born the *Treasure Hunt* pocket manga. It proved irresistible—globally so. Although the pocket manga was designed for Japan, interest was coming in from around the world. Volunteers worldwide began lending a hand to translate. Before we knew it, we had Cambodian, Polish, Spanish, and Chinese, and it keeps going. At the time of writing the count is up to 20 languages. Plus, we have a full kids’ discipleship and mobilization series (*Treasure Hunt Venture* Discipleship Series) and an NPO in the Islamic world of Albania. *Treasure Hunt* | トレジャーハント | ニューデイツウデイ (treasurehuntproject.com). I love seeing a made-in-Japan tool going worldwide, even to a place like Kosovo, which is 96% Muslim. But why not? After all, Pokémon is arguably now the biggest

media franchise in history—yep, just kids comic stuff from Japan.

Now that was all analog; so where is the tech part? How might we mobilize kids to reach friends with tech? How might we digitize things? Enter the *Treasure Hunt Mobile App*—a gamified, cinematized manga experience that makes reaching friends easy, fun, and effective. All a youth has to do is select an avatar and invite their friends to the app, and the experience is automated and personalized. This takes things to a whole other level.



Honestly, I think these projects are all totally awesome. I can say that because I can’t take credit. Everything is way beyond me—I am not even tech savvy. In most ways, when it comes to tech, I feel like Frodo getting stuck with the ring of power. Frodo said he “wished none of it had happened”—amen!

But Gandalf replied, “So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us. There are other forces at work in this world, Frodo, besides that of evil. Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, in which case you were also meant to have it. And that is an encouraging thought.”<sup>1</sup>

Each of these tech initiatives seems to be God’s idea, with God making it all possible and God moving it along. And though at times I wish it never was and I really have no idea where all this is going, there is, without a doubt—the God factor—and that is an encouraging thought indeed. **JH**

1. Jackson, Peter, *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring*. United States: New Line Cinema, 2003.

Images submitted by author

*Andy Meeko, D.Min, is a second-gen missionary to Japan with JVenture (JBF). He’s founder of NewDayTo-Day, Treasure Hunt Project, T3C, author of the Gospel-Venture Discipleship series, and producer of GospelShare and My Miracle. He lives blissfully with wife Junko in Saitama.*

# Crafting Bible story presentations

By Mary Miller-Maka

Ways to use creative storytelling to engage young people

The best audience for my passion of storytelling has always been our own children. When they were young we cuddled together on a warm, comfy sofa; they enjoyed their mommy's expressive and reassuring voice and their little fingers helped me turn the pages to reveal engaging and vibrant pictures. That nurturing atmosphere laid a foundation of intimacy, bonding, and memories that are valuable to us even today. Those attentive darlings we read to are quite big now. Our youngest is 15 and towers over all of us.

I love teaching English to the Japanese. While looking for students or my next teaching position, I usually aim at students around the same age as our own children. So, I presently find myself teaching Japanese junior and senior high school students at a Christian-founded school called Love One Another Academy (my translation). Most of our students and staff do not profess an actual belief in Jesus Christ; however, there are many oppor-

tunities to plant seeds in their hearts. The theme "Love One Another" is so often heard at our school that I believe the Holy Spirit is acting in the lives of these youth and teachers.

Our mandatory morning chapel time has an audience totaling about 1,300 students and approximately 100 Japanese teaching staff. At that time, they are usually all sleepy. During chapel we are all treated to the sweet-sounding voices of the girls' choir accompanied by a melodious pipe organ looming overhead in the second floor balcony. If anyone's sleepy eyes happen to gaze at the kaleidoscopic stained glass windows decorating both sides of the hall, one will surely be left in some kind of slumbering trance. So, when it comes my turn to give a presentation, I really need to work to keep my audience awake and engaged.

"Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17, ESV) often rings in my ears when I am considering which story and theme is going to fit in that particular week or season. In my opinion, preachy, programmed messages are

not really the way to get young people to stay awake and inspired. Instead, I like to merge the past and present into creative, engaging, spirit-filled presentations that make the Bible look unbelievably interesting to them.

During the hallway encounters on the days I've spoken at chapel, I often hear the students' feedback such as "I never knew the Bible was so interesting" or "Your sound effects sounded like a Disney movie!" Even for my own big kiddos these days, after our family worship times, I hear an encouraging remark such as "Hey, Mom, I really understood the story better when you showed us the pictures on the TV." What joy fills my heart at hearing those comments from our youth.

I hope some of my ideas below encourage, inspire, and motivate you to create attractive presentations for the situation you are teaching or ministering in.

## Free Bible Images

This website ([freebibleimages.com](http://freebibleimages.com)) is my main starting block. I pick an attractive Bible story to print, download, and even edit. There are many generous Christian artists and publishers who



have donated samples of their artwork in Bible storybook form for anyone to freely use for teaching purposes. Each story comes with an accompanying story planner transcript that allows one to make their own changes or prep notes. The publishers' versions of the stories are usually aligned accurately with Scripture, although abbreviated in their own words in order to keep the story short, simple, and easy to understand. When possible, I prepare the version I am going to tell with a lot of the actual wording of my ESV. In addition, subtitles or non-subtitled versions of the stories are available.

My favorite collection on this website is the 1955 Moody Bible Institute's Bible Story Collection, originally published in my hometown, Chicago, where their institute still thrives today (<https://www.freebibleimages.org/contributors/moodypublishers>). Pastor Moody was a well-known evangelist and revivalist at the end of the 1800s. You can find the original Moody videos on YouTube.<sup>1</sup>

Another option for images for storytelling are *kamishibai* (Japanese-style storytelling using cardboard storyboards). These Bible stories can be printed out and laminated into sturdy kamishibai storytelling format. Or you can just download them onto your device and have a digital version ready to go anytime.

### Crafting a presentation

Here are some ways I put a presentation together:

- I used the stories and images from the Moody videos, but I recorded my own voice on our condenser mic at home. I thought my students would find it more familiar and interesting if their teacher was actually telling the story.
- Our eldest son helped me insert Japanese subtitles. You can add English too.
- Our son also sang a related song before the storytelling.
- My other computer whiz kid showed me an easy app for editing

videos and adding background music and other sound effects ([www.CapCut.net](http://www.CapCut.net)).

- I usually make an accompanying transcript and comprehension questions so the students can replay the video and spend more time later thinking about the vocabulary or the meaning more deeply.

For an example of one of our videos, you can go here: <https://bit.ly/3E1b3pl> (a video file on Google Drive)

Just as I worked on the making of my presentation with our sons, you can invite a Japanese student, church attendee, or friend to join you in making it as a way to collaborate as a project. **JH**

1. Bethany Church - Clarboston Road, "Bible Stories - Moody Institute Films," YouTube playlist, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBCA38CBE84D821C7> (accessed October 27, 2021).

Images from author's video

*Mary Miller-Maka has lived in Japan and Hawaii most of her life, though she was born in Chicago. She and her Tongan husband have three boys and currently work in Gunma Prefecture.*

Advertisement

**WIM**  
Women in Ministry

*When the storms of life come, the wicked are whirled away, but the godly have a lasting foundation. (Proverbs 10:25)*

## Building Your Wall of Faith

**Our Speaker**  
**Laura Harris**  
has spent nearly 35 years ministering in Japan with SEND International.

**Kanto Spring Retreat**  
March 2-4  
Okutama Bible Chalet,  
Tokyo  
and Online

**Kansai Christian Women's Conference**  
March 7  
9:30am-4pm  
at Mustard Seed Christian Church, Osaka and Online

For more info/registration, see our Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/JEMA-Women-in-Ministry-219493158114408](https://www.facebook.com/JEMA-Women-in-Ministry-219493158114408)

# Reaching past closed doors

By Ayako Dawson

*New film and website to reach those who are isolated and lonely in Japan*

“Nozomi, your life isn’t a waste.” A distraught mother utters this heart-filled cry while reaching out to Nozomi, an 18-year-old Japanese girl. Nozomi has shut herself in her own room for almost two-and-a-half years, and she is approaching her breaking point.

This is a scene from the short film *Nozomi* (2021), produced by Christ In Youth (CIY) in partnership with Mustard Seed Network. It follows the inner turmoil of a young girl struggling with hikikomori. *Nozomi* is a fictional story but was inspired by the testimonies of Japanese people who had experienced similar darkness. The film does not directly talk about faith, yet it certainly hints that there is hope that does not disappear even in the most difficult moments of life.

The film was created to impact Japanese people and to be of help to the churches in Japan. Upon its release, it was also shown at Christian conferences in the US to inspire youth to pray for those in Japan who are lost and feel hopeless, and also to pray for the mission work in Japan.

Since 2009, Mustard Seed Network has been planting gospel-centered churches in urban Japan and making disciples for Christ. We are committed to God’s mission to reach the lost but felt called to do something more—to take the gospel to those who are isolated, lonely, and depressed. However, it is often difficult to reach out to them because they remain hidden behind closed doors. That is why many people concerned about this situation have invested in making this film and the online outreach and ministry tools.

## How can we meet isolated people?

How can we let people know that they would be warmly welcomed into

our faith community? One way is to use the internet to reach those who are isolated in their own rooms. We decided to make this film available to watch on YouTube<sup>1</sup> and link it to a website ([nozomidoor.jp](http://nozomidoor.jp)) that explains more about this hope—the hope beyond Nozomi’s opened door.

Therefore, in August 2021, we launched this ministry, Nozomi Door (“Door of Hope”), with prayers that whoever is touched or challenged by the film could be inspired to seek out the hope found in Jesus Christ. We encourage visitors to our website to contact us. They will be introduced to a Christian who is ready to engage with them and share the gospel when appropriate.

We will encourage anyone seeking hope to participate in an online course called “First Steps,” which is an introduction to Christianity tailored for Japanese seekers. Then we will seek to introduce individuals to God by connecting them with a local gospel-centered church. We are mindful that many of these people will probably find visiting a church too challenging at first. Regardless, we still want to offer them a chance to talk and relate with another person; because we are created in the image of God, we are created to be relational. It’s also possible that some people may visit the website without trying to contact us, but we hope that they will still see the truth of God’s hope and that it may plant a seed of the gospel in their hearts.

## Ways you can help

If you feel stirred to join us in this mission, there are three ways you can participate and use this tool to reach out to those in hikikomori situations.

1. Share the film and website with your Japanese friends who might



benefit, as well as with other Christians and churches you are involved with.

2. Cultivate conversations around the issues such as hikikomori, isolation, loneliness, and depression. It is not easy to talk about difficult things. However, if anyone should not be afraid of engaging in difficult topics such as these, it ought to be Christians. We can talk about fear, despair, and death because Jesus conquered them all. To facilitate this, we have created some companion materials that go with the film to help you talk about these things in your small groups. They are available on the Nozomi Door website.
3. Pray for the lonely and isolated people in Japan and for the gospel to be brought to them. Please pray that churches will be filled and renewed with the love of God so that when someone knocks on the doors of churches, taking a brave step to exit the darkness, they will be met with the love of Christ. **JH**

1. *Nozomi*, filmed April 2021 in Joplin, Missouri. WRKR Films, produced by CIY and Mustard Seed Network, 15:18. <https://youtu.be/eZ4PcbPYK0o>

Image submitted by author

*Ayako Dawson, born and raised in Japan, was saved and baptized in New Zealand. A member of Mustard Seed Christian Church Tokyo, she serves as the coordinator of the online ministry Nozomi Door launched in Summer 2021.*



# IS ONLINE-ONLY CHURCH THE ANSWER?

By Kurt Owen

*With so many advantages to online church, is it really that important to go back?*

Due to global circumstances, we are all developing new habits. Everyone's comfort zones are adjusting. Shopping without ever leaving your front door is an exploding frontier. Today, virtually anything can be delivered to your front door. No longer do the boxes on your porch only contain gifts from a loved one. Now, your entire supermarket, your favorite restaurants, and even your auto dealership across town can be brought to your front door.

However not only are we rethinking our personal lives, but our church experience has also changed dramatically . . . and these changes are not unnoticed by our spiritual adversary.

Consider this: Is online church the answer? Is it a long-term solution, or do we miss something with this format?

Many of us, are enjoying the benefits of having church online. In some cases the audience has increased. People can more easily attend or quickly catch up if they have missed a service. In some ways, online ministry has even made it easier for people to share their faith and invite others to church. Many ministers have increased how much ministering they do, adding online Bible studies, prayer groups, outreaches, etc. With so much good, it can be difficult to remember why it is important to come together physically in the same place and at the same time.

## WHY DO WE GO TO CHURCH?

In my travels even before the pandemic, I began to notice something rather shocking among God's people—something that I knew would lead to serious issues in the body of Christ. Multitudes of God's people don't truly know why we go to church. Nor do

they fully understand the pastor's role and kingdom purpose. This was even true among some pastors themselves.

While the world doesn't understand this, we as Christians should be able to readily give an answer when someone asks, "Why do you go to church?" or "Why do I need church?" And our answers must be beyond "I go because I'm a Christian" or even worse, "Because we are supposed to." Even before COVID-19, people had a difficult time explaining the benefits of church or of having a pastor. In truth, there was a time I couldn't either. In part, the problem comes from church history.



## CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

It used to be that people thought of church as a building only and not as a people. They held the building sacred, and as long as you didn't desecrate the church building itself, you were fine. Even if you were ungodly all week, you just made sure you honored Jesus and his building on Sunday morning. In truth, Sunday morning piety is certainly a human trait. Acting virtuous at church, yet forgetting such behavior

during the week is common to the nature of man.

We, the people, are the church. Even if not in the building, we must still live a Christ-like, Christ-centered life. This too can be taken to an extreme. Some have adopted the perspective that, "I don't need to go to the church building because I am the church."

Look at what Paul explains in 1 Timothy 3:15: "But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (NKJV). Paul is referring to a physical building that God is expecting his people to go to. And why are God's people going there? Because that gathering where Jesus's church assembles is the pillar and ground of the truth, the place where you learn to stand on truth (ground) and hold on to truth (pillar). From Matthew 9:36, we also learn that Jesus's solution to keep people from being wearied and scattered is to give them a pastor (or a shepherd). It is completely understandable that pastors would be responsible for God's pillar and ground of the truth and for personal care of the flock. The Greek word translated "shepherd" in Matthew 9:36 is the same Greek word translated "pastors" in Ephesians 4:11–12 "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

## THE SPIRITUAL IMPORTANCE OF BEING FACE-TO-FACE

But does the local church need to gather in a building? Can't it just be online?



Paul says, “For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?” (1 Thess. 3:9–10). Let’s

note that letters like Paul’s to the Thesalonians were the mass media of the day, much like how we use the internet, social media, and television today. These letters were meant to be read out loud to the church or churches in the region. But were letters enough? Paul says no.

Paul is seeking the Lord day and night to find a way to see the people face-to-face. Why does Paul feel so strongly the need to see the people in person? Without physically being together, there will be things lacking in their faith. Something will doubtlessly be missing if their encounter is not face-to-face in the same room. Mass communication will not be enough. Without assembling together, the growth of your faith will not achieve the same level of genuine relationship and personal connection—thus limiting your spiritual maturity. These truths should excite us about gathering

together in the same place, at the same time—offline.

Through our pastor’s grace, rather than being wearied and scattered, we will be rooted and grounded in truth. And being face-to-face, we will have perfected that which is lacking in our faith. Not to mention the other benefits we haven’t talked about—the added strength of corporately worshipping and praying as well as each of us putting our own gifts to work, as a body fitly joined together in loving devotion to our kind, our church family, and our community.

Isn’t this exciting?

Thank God for online church, but as soon as possible, let’s assemble ourselves together once again! **JH**

*Kurt Owen has served in ministry for over 20 years. He is currently senior pastor of Real Life Church in Florida. He’s traveled to more than 25 nations, helping churches be healthy, strong, vibrant, and active.*

# A NEW DIGITAL MINISTRY PLATFORM

*East-West Ministries engages Japanese people through digital content, online conversations, offline meetings, and teaching*

**By Scott Klooster**

## EAST WEST

In February 2020, I was halfway through my eighth year of serving as a full-time missionary with East-West Ministries<sup>1</sup> in the United States when I accepted the new position of Japan Field Leader. I was excited to travel to Japan in order to establish a formal presence for our agency.

One month later, the world shut down.

Little could we know at the time, but the landscape of conventional global missions was about to drastically change. Throughout the next several months, many of us were forced to rethink our missional methodologies. What emerged from this was the undeniable truth that through our Savior we “receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb. 4:16 ESV). It

was from this profound reality that we began to see the Lord provide new avenues for witnessing, and for East-West Ministries, the seeds of our Media to Movement (M2M) plan were planted.

### THE GROWTH OF A MINISTRY STRATEGY IN JAPAN

East-West began to partner with the amazing team of folks at Kingdom Training<sup>2</sup> to develop a web-based approach designed to engage people online with the message of hope in Jesus Christ. The M2M strategy leverages the powerful digital influence of social media as a tool for the gospel. As millions seek existential answers from the glow of their screens, we invite them to respond to targeted Facebook

ads offering the message of hope. We believe the timing for this approach has never been better, nor the harvest so ripe. Many people are living under the bondage of isolation inflicted by COVID-19 restrictions, and they are searching for relief as never before. The tremendous impact of prohibiting face-to-face gathering has created untold levels of depression and stress. To dispel this darkness, we share the light of the gospel.

Through many weeks of prayer, planning, and test marketing, our team created the “3 Light Cross, Where True Life Begins”<sup>3</sup> brand (3lightcross.com).

Our research showed that anxiety levels, deep depression, and an overall sense of displacement from society were all key metrics to target. Another metric was a sense of



本当の人生が始まる

unfulfillment, one that saturates many Japanese people who live in long days of academic pursuit, demanding work responsibilities, and loveless marriages.

### HOW WE PLAN TO REACH JAPANESE PEOPLE

By better understanding the felt needs of the target audience we hope to reach, we can create Facebook ads that effectively reach them. For example, acknowledging the intense cultural pressure on many Japanese to be productive and hardworking helps us craft ads that address this pressure. We can reach out through Scriptures such as “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28), accompanied with questions like, “Would you like to understand true peace in your heart?”

Initial interactions to queries like these become touch points with the gospel. And for many Japanese people, it is the very first encounter they have ever had with Jesus. There is an enormous segment of the population that has never met a follower of Jesus or

visited a church.<sup>4</sup> For various reasons many Japanese people are uncertain, confused, and ultimately lost and broken. By asking specific questions, we seek to begin their healing by introducing them to the living Savior.

When an individual shows deeper interest and provides their contact information, they are redirected from Facebook to a landing page on the 3 Light Cross website. This information is used to connect the individual to a Christian who will share the gospel with them, encourage them to learn the Scriptures, and, if the person is interested, also invite them to meet some Christians.

The back end of our website is powered by disciple.tools, which is software developed to help organize the measurable data gathered in specific people groups. This intentional approach is a key part of our overall strategy to disciple people in Japan so that they can disciple others in their country. With M2M, we are building partnerships with many Japanese Christians, missionaries, and agencies who are also

burdened for the lost in Japan. We are currently seeking a Japanese leader to serve on the ground, as well as digital responders who filter incoming communications and people who will meet face-to-face with seekers.

Digital media is the twenty-first-century printing press. As faithful stewards, we must learn to speak the language of technology and to use the far-reaching grasp of media to deliver the gospel message into every home, even those with closed doors. We are praying that today is the day that Japan will be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). **JH**

1. <https://www.eastwest.org>
2. <https://kingdom.training>
3. Play on words, Japanese three “san” sounds like sun. Since Japan is the Land of the Rising Sun, we wanted a subtle reference to the true Son.
4. Joshua Project, Country: Japan, <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/JA> (accessed Nov 18, 2021).

Logo images submitted by author

*Scott Klooster is the Japan Field Leader of East-West Ministries. He has served with them for nearly ten years, leading short-term evangelism missions to unreached people groups around the world.*

Advertisement

# Olives

Resource for your life and ministry in Japan

2021 Winter vol. 22



Christmas items to help celebrate the birth of Christ. 2022 Calendars, Gifts, Cards and Stationery. Some have Bible verses in English and Japanese and make great gifts to supporters and prayer partners.



Contact for orders.  
Either Fax or e-mail:

FAX 03-5341-6928  
mail [cr@wlpm.or.jp](mailto:cr@wlpm.or.jp)

Web catalog is from here:  
<https://www.wlpm.or.jp/actibook/olives22/>



# USING ENGLISH CONVERSATION ONLINE TO REACH JAPANESE

An English outreach seeks to connect non-Christians with local churches nationwide



By Michael Creed

When my wife and I moved from Nagoya to Tokyo in October of 2019, we had no idea that a pandemic awaited us right around the corner. Mustard Seed Christian Church Tokyo planned to hold its first service in March of 2020, right as schools began to close and we started hearing the term “novel coronavirus.”

In reaction to the government’s orders to stay home, we did just that and took our outreach events online. For the purpose of networking, we had already named our church’s English outreach Tokyo English Connect (TEC). We ran events sometimes four to six times per week, inviting participants to our church. TEC began amassing a large number of online members at meetup.com. We ran events sometimes four to six times per week, inviting participants to our church.

We began brainstorming and came up with an idea for English outreach. Was there a way we could connect Christian native English speakers to the people we were trying to reach in Tokyo? Could we mobilize brothers and sisters in Christ from anywhere in the world who were also in lockdown situations to help us reach the lost? Who could run point on the logistics? The advertising? Asking these questions led us to begin a ministry effort that endeavors to introduce non-Christians in Japan to the local church.

Enter Japan English Connect (JEC), which serves as a platform to connect Japanese individuals with English teachers.<sup>1</sup> We run online advertisements appealing to those who desire to practice English and make more friends. Participants can take four-week courses with a nonprofessional English-

speaking volunteer. Meetings take place once a week on Zoom at a time of the participant’s choosing and last for one hour. Courses begin and end in the same month.

## MOBILIZATION

On the other side, we recruit English-speaking Christians we know personally or who receive recommendations from their pastor. Mobilization for mission happens naturally as the believer meets with a Japanese person who has never heard the gospel even once. As we recruit, we try to constantly remind the volunteers that millions of Japanese live and die without a gospel witness. Even though conferences, stats books, and a quick Google search can tell them that the Japanese comprise the second largest unreached people group, meeting one-on-one with a Japanese person can actually show them. We pray that God will use these meetings to raise up more workers for the harvest. God may very well use JEC to inspire more Christians to serve, send, pray, give, and partner long-term.

As much as we also want to mobilize more workers to Japan, JEC primarily exists to connect unevangelized Japanese with local churches. Volunteers receive training on how to invite their conversation partners to a local church. We send them a document with a list of cities and corresponding churches. However, the volunteers often ask us

questions such as “Hey, guys, does anyone know of a good church in \_\_\_\_\_?”

## PARTNER WITH US

So, I want to ask for your help. Mustard Seed Network has a goal to plant a church in Japan’s 12 largest cities. By God’s grace, six churches now exist within the network. We praise God for this, and we also want to work together with the greater body of Christ represented in Japan. JEC can serve as a way to connect Japanese everywhere with local churches, not just the 12 cities that Mustard Seed Network targets. If your church proclaims God’s Word, we pray people will cross the bridge of JEC to your Sunday services.

We all represent Jesus and strive to make Christ known in Japan. If you’d like for us to add your church to the list of local churches we connect people with, please email me at michael.creed@mustardseed.network. We would love to partner with you in the gospel for God’s glory.

To find out more about JEC, visit the website at [japanenglishconnect.com](http://japanenglishconnect.com).

I pray God continues to glorify himself by all of our efforts to share the good news with the many, many around us who have yet to hear. To that end, I pray the Lord blesses us. **JH**

1. Though I use the word “Japanese,” non-Japanese participants are also welcome if they live in Japan. We have had several non-Japanese participants already.

Logo image submitted by author

*Michael Creed moved with his wife, Yumi, from Georgia (US) to Nagoya in 2015. They are with Mustard Seed Network and are currently working in Tokyo.*

# The case for catechesis

*A discipleship method that has been used for centuries is still relevant and can be fun too*

By Ian Nagata

## Q1: What discipleship method has the church used for centuries, yet largely forgotten today?

### A1: Catechesis—teaching with catechisms.

Often based in Q&A format (like this article), catechisms are primers that walk people through the truths of the gospel and how these truths form us. Like links in a chain, they connect one truth to another, asking questions in a logical series like “What is God?” “How and why did he create us?” and “How do we glorify him?” And most include the three pillars of the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

Catechesis dates back to the early church. The church back then made its study a prerequisite for baptism. The reformers revived the practice with Luther reinstating the office of “catechist.” Calvin even said, “The church of God will never be preserved without catechesis.”<sup>1</sup> And though the two best known catechisms—the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647)—come from the Reformed tradition, nearly all denominations have their own versions.

## Q2: How did this vital practice nearly vanish?

### A2: Sunday school.

Despite the many blessings of the nineteenth-century Sunday school movement, it replaced pastor-catechists with lay teachers, and catechisms with Bible stories.<sup>2</sup>

But there are other reasons why some hesitate to try this ancient practice. After all, isn’t memorization of doctrinal truths too heady? Shouldn’t we devote such memory time to Scripture itself? And aren’t Bible stories more engaging anyway? Such were the concerns we had when considering *The New City Catechism* (Japanese version) for our children’s ministry curriculum. Several years and 52 Q&As later, here are four ways we found it fruitful.

## Q3: How might catechesis be valuable today?

### A3: For Children

When we took our Sunday services on Zoom last year, I was concerned for the children reluctant to participate. But I won’t forget what happened the week themed “Ask anything about the Bible.” The kids erupted with questions: “Who wrote the Bible?” “Why is the cross important?” “Who made God?” Not to mention the questions about heaven and hell!

Such is the brilliance of catechisms. They start with what children are full of—questions.

### A3: For Evangelism

Early on, we began writing songs to help memorize the catechism. After several weeks of learning a song, I’d test the kids by asking, “How would you respond if someone asked . . .” and then insert the catechism question, slightly reworded. Sometimes I’d get blank stares, other times long-winded responses. Nothing clicked. Then I’d re-ask the

question, only singing it as they had learned. Nearly every time, the kids could sing back the answer, only this time with an “Aha!” look in their eyes. They realized the lyrics were more than a gospel truth, but the answer to a real question a friend or classmate might ask. (We don’t doubt the unchurched dads listening in each Sunday had a few of their own questions answered too!)

If the catechism’s first advantage is starting with a question, its second is providing a memorable answer for all who ask.

### A3: For Missionaries

Catechisms during the Reformation not only helped spread the gospel, they spread literacy.

Teaching through *The New City Catechism* helped my Japanese. Catechisms are great textbooks for missionaries building a gospel vocabulary.

### A3: For Worship

One Sunday after the kids acted out a Bible story, we interviewed all the characters. Among the questions were four from the catechism leading to Question 19: “Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God’s favor?”

What struck me wasn’t how they connected the dots from question to question. Nor was it seeing the catechism give them a framework to interpret the story. It was the joy on their faces as we ended, singing the answer to Question 19: “Yes, God reconciles us to himself by a Redeemer.”

Mere knowledge has never been the final goal of catechesis. From the days of the early church, it’s always been the formation of “habitus,” our reflexive, habitual behavior.<sup>3</sup> And if there’s one habit that catechesis led us to every week, it was worship.

The Japanese catechism text, as well as Japanese musical resources for the first volume (Questions 1-13) are all available for free via the links below. Christ Bible Institute also published *The New City Catechism* devotional book (Japanese), available by contacting them directly. May these resources help to form our worship, just as catechisms of old have across the centuries. **JH**

*The New City Catechism Japanese Free Resources:*

Text: <http://newcitycatechism.com/translations/japanese.html>

Music: [www.unisonworship.com](http://www.unisonworship.com)

Devotional Book: Email [cbipress@cbijapan.org](mailto:cbipress@cbijapan.org) (only shipping fees required)

1. J.I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 23.

2. Ibid.

3. Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 2.

Image: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Westminster\\_catechism\\_first\\_page.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Westminster_catechism_first_page.jpg)

*Ian Nagata is a pastor at Toyosu Community Church, and helps lead UNISON, a songwriting community for the Japanese church. Originally from Los Angeles, he and his wife, Chihiro, have one daughter.*

# Helping churches in transition

*Taking churches from crisis to hope*

By Gary Carlson

“Pastor Carlson, we’d like to ask you to become interim pastor of one of our churches.”

In December 2004, a leader in the denomination I serve in Japan phoned me with this request. The pastor of one of our churches had been forced to resign, leaving the church in a state of crisis. The administrative committee of the denomination was looking for someone who could step in right away and provide pastoral leadership. I was serving with a Japanese pastor at a nearby church, so the committee thought I might be able to take this interim position.

I was already aware of the crisis, but had never considered that I could help in this way. After all, I was called by my mission organization to serve in Japan in church planting and evangelism. I’d never considered working with an existing church. More than that, I had no experience as an interim pastor and had never worked with a church going through such a difficult time.

Missionaries are usually sent to another country to proclaim the good news of Jesus, to help see new churches get started, and to care for people in need. This can happen through a variety of ministries. We rejoice when someone comes to faith in Jesus and is baptized, and when a new church is started. But what happens after that? Christ followers and their churches experience times of growth and also times of challenges and difficulties.

One of the difficulties a church can face is when a pastor abruptly ends his/her ministry in that place. What happens next? How does a church get through this time if a pastor leaves it in turmoil?

## Will you help this church by becoming their interim pastor?

When I heard this question, I knew two things: I had no experience from which to work, and I felt compassion for these people and wanted to help. After taking time to pray, to talk with my wife, and to check in with the Japanese pastor I was currently working with, I answered yes.

During the month before I started work there, one of the women in that church died suddenly. One of the church council members called me: “Pastor Carlson, could you do the funeral for this woman?” I hadn’t officially started my ministry, but readily agreed to do this. Working with church leaders and the family became a wonderful chance to bond with people.

## Learning about intentional interim ministry

About the same time, a magazine for pastors published by my US denomination arrived. The theme of that issue of the magazine was “Intentional Interim Ministry.” Several pastors

wrote articles about how they were doing this as a specialized ministry. Not just filling a pulpit on Sundays, they were guiding the congregations they served through a process of dealing with past issues and preparing for the future.

These articles were exactly what I needed as I prepared to pastor a church in crisis. Several articles referred to the Interim Ministry Network (IMN), an interdenominational organization in the US that trains and supports pastors to do this specialized ministry. I found their website ([imnedu.org](http://imnedu.org)) which includes information about a number of helpful books on the subject.

I had three basic tasks in this church: to help the church grieve the loss of the previous pastor, to assure them of God’s ongoing love for them, and to help them think about what kind of future God had in store for them. With no previous experience in interim ministry, I had to learn on the go, but the fifteen months with this church was a wonderful experience. At the end of that time, the church was able to call their next pastor. He later told me that it seemed the church had pressed a “reset” button and was ready to move on with him into the new future God had for them.

## It is important to look at the interim time between settled pastors as a wonderful, God-given opportunity.

This experience caused me to take a new look at my calling to Japan. I knew I was still called to share the gospel and help plant new churches, but I now also had a heart for helping churches in transition. During my next home assignment, I attended seminars offered by the Interim Ministry Network, completed their training, and received their certificate as a transitional interim ministry specialist.

Fast forward to September 2019. At a retreat for pastors and missionaries here in Japan, two members of the administrative committee talked to me about helping another church that was in turmoil. Their situation was very different from what I faced in my previous interim ministry, but a pastoral crisis had created a similar need.

I felt the same two things I had before—a lack of experience and a heart of compassion for the people of this church. I started as their interim pastor in December 2019, and I continue in that role to this day. As in my previous interim experience, I have helped this church work through issues that came up during the previous pastor’s ministry, have reassured them of God’s ongoing love and presence, and continue to help them discover what kind of future God is giving them.

## What is “intentional interim ministry”?

Or as it has recently been renamed, “intentional transitional ministry.” What churches need this kind of specialized pastoral care, and what are the benefits?

It is important to look at the interim time between settled pastors as a wonderful, God-given opportunity. For whatever reason, the previous pastor is no longer present, and so the congregation is free to look at themselves and their community in new ways. The next pastor has not yet arrived, and so the congregation can come to a fresh understanding of their own identity and calling in Christ. This can actually help with the search for another pastor, as the church will have a better understanding of who will be a good fit.

Any church in a time of transition between settled pastors can benefit from an intentional transitional ministry. But this is especially true of churches who have lost a pastor through some kind of crisis, churches who have had a pastor serve for a long time (20 years or more), and churches which are experiencing major change in their community.

One of the key benefits an intentional transitional minister brings is a non-anxious presence. Churches experiencing a pastoral transition, especially those in crisis mode, need an interim pastor who is not ruffled by the situation. This person needs to listen to all of the voices in the congregation, even those which are angry or expressing deep pain. Such a pastor, simply by her/his presence, can communicate that God is still present, still loves these people, and that they can and will make it through these difficult days to find God’s bright future for them.

This time of transition, guided by the specialist interim pastor, can take anywhere from one to two-and-a-half years. This is enough time to address the following:

1. Work through issues remaining from the previous pastor’s time of ministry.
2. Reconnect with their denomination and its leaders (if part of a denomination).

3. Rediscover the gifts and abilities of the church people.
4. Rediscover the community around the church and sense God’s call to reach out.
5. Identify the kind of person they wish to call as their next pastor.

The intentional transitional pastor does not tell the church what to do. He/she provides guidance and points the way, and helps the congregation to know what options they have in order to make good decisions. And all this is done while the pastor carries on the usual duties of ministry.

## A real need in Japan

This kind of specialized ministry is a growing field in the US. Many pastors have made this their full-time work. Here in Japan, intentional transitional ministry is almost unknown. I contacted IMN while writing this article and asked if they had anyone else they had trained who was doing this kind of work in Japan, or if they knew of any kind of ministry like this being done here. The answer was no on both counts. Yet I have seen that there is a real need in this country for churches in pastoral transition to be helped in this way.

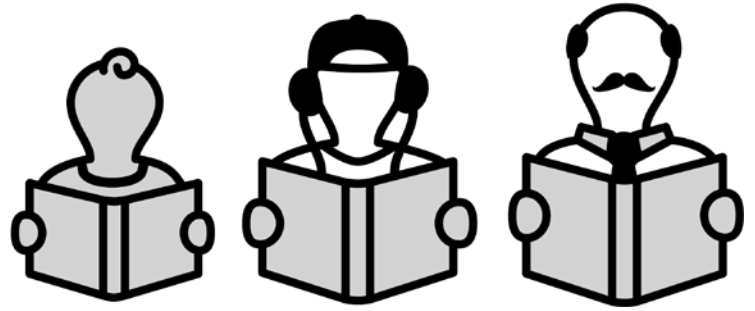
My first intentional transitional ministry began with a funeral. At the end of my fifteen months, I performed a wedding. The two events for me symbolized what I experienced in my ministry: a congregation that had moved on from a time of loss and grief to a time of joy and celebration as they welcomed their new pastor. My prayer is that this kind of ministry will become more known and available to churches experiencing pastoral transition in Japan. **JH**

*Gary Carlson and his wife Pauline are from the US and have served in Japan with the ECC (Evangelical Covenant Church) since 1983. They’ve been involved in the planting of three churches, working with the Japan Covenant Church.*



# Lifelong learning

*Cultivate growth in your spiritual journey*



All missionaries are encouraged to learn about the culture in which they serve, to study the language to communicate effectively, and to study the best way to share Christ within that culture. Those are important aspects of missionary service and vital to the effective proclamation of the gospel. But is there more to learn?

When I entered seminary in 1980, I remember one of my uncles telling me that by the time I was finished with school, I would be too old to work! At that time, I had been going to some form of schooling for over 16 years and was looking forward to three or four years of seminary. And after spending a significant time in ministry and several more years of periodic classwork, in 2014, I finished a doctor of ministry degree.

I got a good chuckle out of my uncle's statement, but there are many who equate completion of the school years as the ending of learning. But should that be the case? Some people can't wait to get out of school so they can get into the real world of making a living. But should we stop learning? It is imperative, especially in vocational ministry, that we maintain a posture of growth in many areas of life, not the least of which is learning.

A commitment to being a lifelong learner has been vital for my own involvement and growth in ministry. In my current work with Barnabas International, I've learned a great deal about God's Word, my own self-awareness, and ways to best shepherd those I serve. Proverbs 9:9 tells us, "Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning" (NIV 1984). Here are a couple of keys to remember.

## Humility

The first key to having a learning posture in life and ministry is humility. I remember taking a leadership course at my church, and one of the unforgettable statements at the beginning of that course noted the need to unlearn things even as I anticipated learning new concepts. That takes humility. Lifelong learners understand that they have limitations and need to ask questions of themselves, of God's Word, and of the world in which they live and minister. There are so many opportunities to learn. But we need to have a spirit of curiosity and attentiveness to be able to really see.

## Openness

The second key is openness. I ask myself, am I willing to look at things a different way, or from a new perspective? This is especially true in our spiritual lives. How does every part of my life affect or influence my life with God? We all need to pause at times and evaluate ourselves and our

relationship with the Triune God. As my colleague Herb Lamp writes, this recalibration,

*is circular as well as progressive. In other words, we are open to revisiting life lessons once learned before yet forgotten. We are not afraid to review and go back to reacquire some knowledge or behavior which we had thought we had already conquered or put into practice.<sup>1</sup>*

Segmenting our lives into sacred and secular is fraught with danger, as we can often neglect some of the simplest things that can open our eyes to God and his love. We become like the religious leaders of Jesus' day who were blind to the dynamic of the kingdom of God, especially communicated through Jesus' teaching, and could not get past their own closed-mindedness. Jesus came to point us to the truth that everything in our world is sacred and for our growth, as it comes from the hand of the Father.

I agree with Joyce Rupp, who wrote,

*every part of my life affects or influences my life with God . . . Everything and everyone teaches me about God, life, and myself . . . I try now to approach each person, event, creature, with two questions: How are you my teacher? What am I meant to learn?<sup>2</sup>*

Final words from the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:18 encourage us even today, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (NIV).

How are you growing? What are you learning? What are you learning about God? About yourself? About the journey you are on with Christ beyond your identity as a missionary? What are you learning from the struggles, the heartaches, the challenges, and the pain? What are you learning from the joys, the victories, and the celebrative times? What are you doing to make sure you don't stagnate as a person or as a missionary?

When you get together with your friends or colleagues in ministry, why not take some time to answer this question: What are you learning? It will take intentionality on your part, but the reward is certainly worth it. **JH**

1. Herbert F. Lamp, Jr., *Journey with Me: Spiritual Formation for Global Workers* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2021), 106.

2. Joyce Rupp, *The Cup of Our Life: A Guide to Spiritual Growth* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2012), 36.

*After time in Japan as a missionary, Alan Steier (D. Min.) was a pastor in the US for 22 years. He and his wife, Judy, have been with Barnabas International since 2012. They are the leaders of JEMA's Member Care Ministry.*



# Japanese Perspectives on the Death of Christ

*How Chuang Chua (Regnum Books International; Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2021). 308 pp.*

The book starts with a story: A missionary was preaching the gospel in Japan and concluded with “Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins. If you accept him as your personal Lord and Savior, you will have everlasting life.” After the meeting, an elderly lady approached the missionary, saying, “Sensei, how can the death of Jesus cause me to go to heaven? Besides, I don’t want to go to heaven, I just want to be where my ancestors are.”

Written with an international theological background and years of experience as a missionary in Japan, this book by Chua offers a well-researched and insightful study in contextualized Christology. It is based on Chua’s PhD dissertation submitted to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His doctoral supervisor (Harold A. Netland) endorses the book and provides a thoughtful short biography of the author, who passed away in 2015.

Most missionaries to Japan can relate to the story above: communicating the message of the cross in a way that is both understandable and perceived as truly good news is challenging. Chua acknowledges the effort that missionaries have put into creative and culturally intelligible ways of communicating the gospel. However, he takes contextualization a step further by looking at how influential Japanese Christian thinkers have understood the cross for themselves.

## Three Japanese thinkers

Chua provides an overview of the history of Christianity in Japan and a summary of the development of Christian theology there. This sets the context for the heart of the book: in-depth expositions of three modern Japanese thinkers. All three agree that the cross demonstrates God’s suffering love.

Kitamori Kazō (1916–1998), a theologian. For Kitamori, the cross is the site where the God of love embraces his enemies, the very ones who have betrayed that love and hence come under his wrath. The divine embrace is thus an act characterized by deep pain.

Endō Shūsaku (1923–1996), a novelist. The theme of divine embrace is also prominent in Endō’s religious writings. It is an indiscriminate embrace of a maternal God—especially of the weak, the helpless, and the cowardly. Endō departs considerably from biblical teaching by focusing only on divine love and ignoring divine judgment.

Koyama Kōsuke (1929–2009), a missionary and theological educator. For Koyama, the cross reveals an impassioned God who continually moves toward the periphery in search of that one lost sheep. He develops a missiology of the cross using the motif of the “crucified mind” as

opposed to the “crusading mind” (“Let the same [crucified] mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” [Phil. 2:5 NRSV]. See also vv. 6–8 and John 3:30.)

Through these writings, Chua insightfully illuminates cultural themes, religiosity, and the nature of Japanese Christianity. Common to all three writers are the themes of suffering, self-negation, and universal embrace. Chua evaluates their writings both in the light of biblical teaching on the cross and classical Western theories of atonement, and shows how these themes have parallels in Japanese culture.

These three Japanese thinkers are less interested in how the cross saves than they are in the divine demeanor displayed through it. Chua summarizes their views this way: “Christ suffered because of us; Christ suffered like us; Christ suffered for us” (p. 277). The impassioned God who identifies with the suffering of the people seems to resonate more readily with Japanese than the sovereign God who judges them. For this reason, Chua suggests that gospel preaching should focus on the manner of God’s suffering love and on what God has done through the painful death of Christ in order to redeem us from judgment of sin and death.

## Approaching theology cross-culturally

In the final chapter, Chua offers three suggestions for an evangelical approach to cross-cultural theologizing:

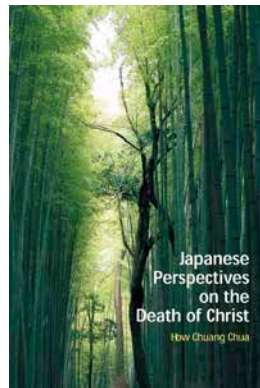
- 1) The incarnation as a theological model.
- 2) Epistemic humility as a theological virtue.
- 3) Canonicity and catholicity as theological principles (theological evaluations must be based on the entire biblical canon and evolve in dialogue with the global church).

Missionaries must avoid what Koyama calls a “passive-answer theology” and should instead cultivate a “lively invitation theology.” We should meet people on their own terms and invite them to walk with Jesus so that they can taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. 34:8)

Overall, this book is an excellent model of how to do theology in conversation with the global church. It is a treasure trove of contextual insights into Japanese interpretations of the cross. Any reflective practitioner who is involved in cross-cultural communication of the gospel will greatly benefit from this book. **JH**

Book cover image from Amazon

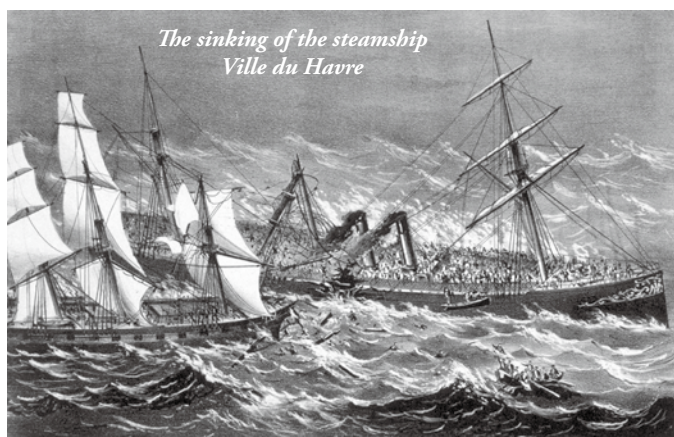
*Michael Widmer is from Switzerland. Together with his wife Haruhi, he has been working in Japan with OMF International since 2005. For the past fourteen years, he has served as OT lecturer at the Hokkaido Bible Institute.*



# The peace of prayer

*We can rest in God's sovereignty and be at peace*

As a child, I sang, “I have the peace that passes understanding down in my heart.” But what is this peace? And how do I get it? Let’s look at what Paul says in Philippians 4:6–7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (NASB 1995).



## Prayer

We are to stop worrying—about everything! God knows what we need before we ask, though He does want us to pray. He knows and will provide for our basic needs. So there is no need to worry. Our anxiety denies God’s sovereignty—that He is in control of everything that happens and He can use even what is wrong to bring about His will.

Instead, we are to bring everything to God in prayer and supplication. Prayer is not just asking for things, but also acknowledging who God is and what He does in an attitude of thanksgiving. That is the environment in which the peace of God comes.

## The peace of God

As a result of being anxious for nothing and being prayerful in everything, God’s peace will place a guard over our feelings and thoughts (v. 7). What is this peace? The Greek word for peace, *εἰρήνη* (*eirēnē*), originally referred to the absence of conflict, but it came to mean an inner peace with God and others. Like the Hebrew word *shalom*, it was (and is) used as a greeting or as a farewell.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1), but the peace that Paul is talking about here is an inward repose that comes from walking with God and steadfastly trusting in Him.

But it’s not just a feeling. Jesus in Gethsemane did not feel peace. He was in agony. And Paul said, “There is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor.

11:28). That is hardly a peaceful situation unless Paul meant something different from what we normally call “peace.”

The peace that passes understanding is a strong, resolute faith and confidence that no matter what circumstances you encounter, God is faithful and good, God will keep you, and He will provide for you and bless you. It’s a faith that looks past circumstances to the God who works all things for your good and His glory.<sup>2</sup>

It’s an inner serenity based on who God is and what He has done in the past, and a confidence that He will be the same God in the future.

## It is well with my soul

Horatio Spafford was a lawyer in Chicago. He was a devout Christian. He and his wife had a son and four daughters. His son died of scarlet fever, and soon after, the real estate he had invested in was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.<sup>3</sup>

Two years later, he planned to visit England with his family during the evangelistic campaign of his friend, Dwight L. Moody. But he had some business to take care of first, so he sent his wife and daughters on ahead.

When they were almost across the Atlantic, there was a collision with another ship. Their ship (the *Ville du Havre*) sank in 12 minutes, taking the four daughters to their graves. His wife was rescued.

On hearing the news, Spafford left at once to meet his wife in England. The captain told him when their ship passed over the spot where his daughters had died. It is said that Spafford then wrote:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.<sup>4</sup>

Just like Spafford, we can have God’s peace in spite of the circumstances. We can rest in God’s sovereignty and be at peace. Isn’t that wonderful? **JH**

1. Bible Lessons International, “Special Topic: Peace (*eirēnē*) [NT],” [http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/special\\_topics/peace.html](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/special_topics/peace.html) (accessed Sept. 1, 2021).
2. Stephen Altrogge, “The SURPRISE Way to Have Peace That Passes All Understanding,” <https://theblazingcenter.com/2018/08/peace-that-passes-all-understanding.html> (Aug. 31, 2018).
3. “Horatio Gates Spafford—The Story behind the Hymn ‘It Is Well with My Soul,’” <https://www.bethelripon.com/life-stories/horatio-gates-spafford> (accessed Sept. 2, 2021).
4. “When Peace Like a River,” [https://hymnary.org/text/when\\_peace\\_like\\_a\\_river\\_attendeth\\_my\\_way](https://hymnary.org/text/when_peace_like_a_river_attendeth_my_way) (accessed Oct. 21, 2021).

**Ken Reddington**, an MK, returned to Japan as a church-planting missionary in 1978. He is on the Servant-Leader Team of the Prayer Summit for Western Japan and secretary for the Kochi Citywide Pastors Group.

# Let's be worshippers first

*It's important to prioritize being a worshipper in the worship service, even when we're a church leader*

If you have been in church ministry for any time at all, you know that Sunday worship services can be quite hectic. There are people to talk to, chairs to set up, meetings to prepare for, attendance to count, refreshments to prepare, and messes to clean up. However, an occupational hazard of being a leader at a church is that the worship service can become an event we put on for others rather than a time when we come humbly before God, sing heartfelt praises to him, confess and repent of sin, learn from God's Word and apply it to our lives, and participate in the communion of the saints as fellow members of Christ's body. If we are not careful, we can ironically miss our opportunity to fully participate in the body of Christ in the name of doing church ministry.

## Be an active worshipper

One of the things I try to emphasize to our church planting team and volunteers is that once the worship service begins, we need to take off our church staff/volunteer hat and put on our church member hat. From the beginning to the end of service, we should be active, participating worshippers along with everybody else.

Those who help lead worship should sit with the rest of the congregation under the teaching of God's Word during the sermon, not in another room or standing in the back waiting to play the next song. Those who preach should worship wholeheartedly together with the congregation before and after preaching, not simply thinking about the sermon they are about to give. If for some reason your serving prevents you from participating in the worship service (e.g., serving in the kids ministry classes during the service), avoid letting that happen every week.

The key to doing this well is preparation. As a preacher, my sermon can be completely ready to preach before Sun-

day. Those serving in hospitality or those who have other responsibilities can prepare what is needed ahead of time rather than doing those tasks "for the sake of the church" while the rest of the congregation is worshipping, praying, and learning together from God's Word.

## We are role models

Not only is this kind of active participation in worship needed for our own soul and discipleship, but as leaders, we teach and model to our congregation by how we worship. This is why, in our church, we expect our kids ministry volunteers to sit on the floor when the kids should be sitting, and jump up and down and be silly when the kids are supposed to jump up and down and be silly. Kids can learn to worship by watching their leaders and adults can too. If the congregation sees the church leaders running around doing tasks during the worship service and not fully participating with the rest of the body, it subtly communicates that church leaders are special and don't need to fully engage in the worship gathering in the same way the rest of the church members do.

During our worship gatherings, as church planters and pastors and leaders within God's church, let's strive to be more like Mary who sat at Jesus's feet listening to what he said, rather than like Martha who was distracted by all the preparations. For our own souls and Christian discipleship, and to model to our congregation what it means to be a part of the body of Christ, let's be worshippers first. **JH**

*Andy Rodriguez, CPI Leadership Team member, moved to Japan from the US in 2008 to help plan Mustard Seed Christian Church in Nagoya where he continues to serve as the pastor. He's also the Vice President of Mustard Seed Network*



# Ah, that sounds better!

*How to more effectively use microphones and speakers*

Whether you are helping out with your church's sound system, taking a video with your phone, or talking on Zoom, you have to deal with mics and speakers. In other words, you make sound go into electronics and then back out again as sound—hopefully decent sound. If you find that challenging, here are some tips that might help. Those who really know audio will notice that I'm simplifying significantly and avoiding some terms, but I want to be sure everyone can understand the main points.

## Distance really matters

The power (the “amount” of sound) is dramatically affected by the distance between the source and the destination—in math terms, it's the inverse square of the distance. Here is an example:

If a mic sounds okay when your mouth is 10 cm from it but then you move to 20 cm away, you will only get 1/4 as much sound. And at 30 cm, you will only get 1/9 the sound. You may think, “OK, I'll just turn up the volume to compensate,” but then any background noise will end up nine times as loud as it would be otherwise.

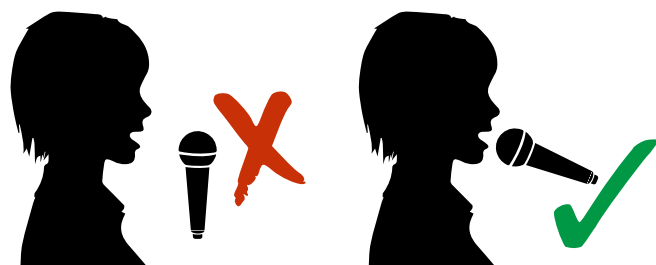
In addition, many mics (especially mics designed for singing, like the type pictured below) will give a voice a richer sound if the person is very close to the end of the mic. Don't worry—it won't bite!

**The lesson:** Try to get mics as close as possible to what you want them to pick up, and keep that distance consistent.

The same is true for speakers. Ever wonder why earbuds seem to stop working when they loosen from your ears? They're still working, but they are a lot farther from your eardrums. Distance really matters.

## Feedback: The tango of mics and speakers

We've all heard that howl or scream from a sound system gone awry. What's happening? The signal from a mic is always increased (or amplified) before it is sent to a speaker. If the amount of increase is too much for the distance (yup, there's that distance point again), the mic will pick up the speaker's louder version of the original sound. Then the speaker will get louder again, and this will continue until everyone holds their ears except the brave soul who turns it off.



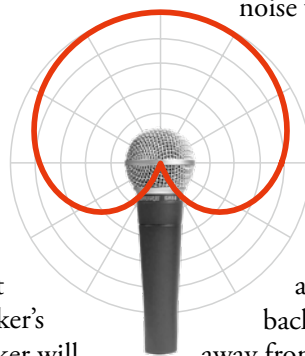
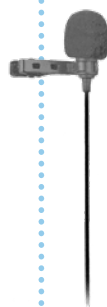
**The lesson:** Aim speakers away from mics, and don't turn up the volume too much, especially in a room that echoes.

So why don't computers or smartphones do this when you're on a video call (or even a phone call) without headphones? After all, the computer's mic is quite close to its speaker. That's a good question; the answer is clever software. Smartphones' phone apps, Zoom, Messenger, Skype, etc. all know what sound is coming from that device's mic and simply won't send it to the same device's speaker. But watch out if you have two devices in one room joining the same video chat—unless you use headphones, multiple devices with mics unmuted will have quite a feedback tango.

## Not all mics are created equal

There are many types of mics and many different characteristics, but I will highlight one aspect that everyone should be aware of: how directional the mic is. Some mics pick up sound equally from all directions, and some are very picky (like the long ones on a pole that news reporters use). The rest are somewhere in between.

Most of those little mics you can clip on your shirt are omnidirectional (equally sensitive in all directions), so you don't have to worry about which way they're pointing to pick up your voice. That's convenient, but it also means that no matter which direction it is pointing it will pick up everything in the room equally—that guy coughing in the front row, the ambulance passing by the open window, or the speaker at the side of the stage (with more chance of feedback). **The lesson:** You have to be more careful about background noise with mics like this.



Most mics that you see singers hold are somewhat directional (the fancy term is “cardioid” because the shape of its pickup pattern looks like a heart). They pick up sound in front very well but less on the sides and even less at the back. That's why singers can have a monitor speaker sitting on the floor aimed straight at them without creating feedback—that is, as long as they keep the mic aimed away from the speaker. **The lesson:** If you're using a mic like this, talk/sing into the front of it, not the side.

I hope some of the tips here are useful. The Bible says to make a joyful noise, but if we can make it a little less noisy, it can be even more joyful! **JH**

*Karen Ellrick and her husband, Dan, have been missionaries in Japan since 1996 and live in Osaka. Karen ministers through print design, web development, video audio editing, etc. and is the designer for Japan Harvest. <https://L4JP.com>*

# Engage readers with online writing

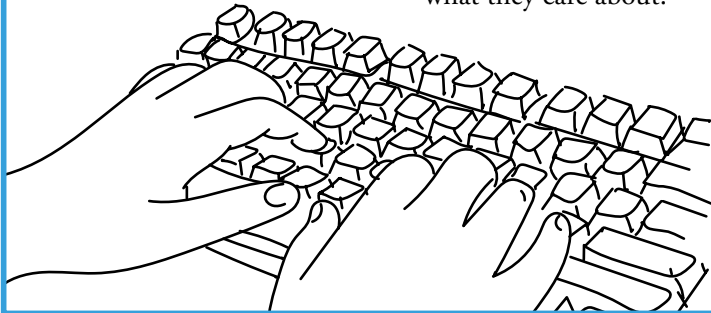
*Readers behave differently when looking at writing on screens. How can we write well for e-publishing?*

Writing for print publication and for the Web is different. Good writing is important no matter where it is published; but there are a few things worth noting if you're writing especially for online publishing.

## Reader's attention

Probably the biggest difference between print and online is that it's easier for readers to keep scrolling or searching if what they see online doesn't capture their attention. It's most important to seize people's attention at the start of an online article. Crafting a good start is not as simple as inserting an interesting anecdote; an engaging start requires careful thought.

Another difference is length. When people read online they are not willing to wait while we writers waffle. We need to write concisely and stick to our main point. Ensure everything relates to the topic. It's important to think about our audience and what they care about.



## Top tips

- » Headlines and headings are important
- » Concise writing is vital
- » Lists are valuable
- » Relevant images save words
- » Short sentences and paragraphs help readers
- » Great content that engages readers is always the aim

Reading on the Web often includes lots of skimming. People read headlines. If one captures their attention, they might scan through an article to decide if it's worth spending time on. If we keep our paragraphs and sentences short, we'll help our readers engage. If people scan our writing to see if they want to invest time in reading it, short chunks of information are easier to pick up.

Images are important too, especially if we're publishing via social media. We will catch people's attention as they scroll through content if we use great images, captions, and headlines.

## Control what you can

A writer may not have control over some things mentioned above. For example, the editor(s) of a publication usually decide on headlines for articles. Similarly, a writer often has little choice on the images that are included with their writing.

However, if you are publishing your own writing on a blog, online newsletter, or social media page, then you have complete control, and it's worth taking the time to consider these tips. **JH**

*Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest. She's Australian and has been in Japan with OMF International since 2000 with her husband David. She also does mobilisation for OMF using social media.*

Advertisement



**KIU**  
KYOTO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Live, work, and serve in tomorrow's world

Your international degree starts here



**Kyoto International University**  
[www.kyotoiu.ac.jp](http://www.kyotoiu.ac.jp)

TEL: 0774-64-0804 Email: [info@kyotoiu.ac.jp](mailto:info@kyotoiu.ac.jp)

[www.facebook.com/KIU.ac.jp](https://www.facebook.com/KIU.ac.jp)

**The mission of KIU is to educate individuals from a Biblical worldview in the western-style liberal arts tradition.**

- Bilingual education
- Credits transferable to most universities/colleges in the US and Canada, as well as some universities in Japan
- Affordable tuition and fees:  
KIU : ¥960,000  
Compared to:  
Public Univ. (US) : ¥1,800,000  
Private Univ. (US) : ¥4,000,000
- Scholarships, including generous scholarships to children of pastors and missionaries

Source: <http://www.statisticbrain.com/average-cost-of-college-tuition/>

*Name is* KIU and KIU Academy (Grades 1-12) are eager to serve you.

# 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)

# JEMA ORDER FORM

All items postage paid.

## Membership Dues

Includes JEMA Directory, *Japan Harvest*, and membership discounts.  
(Not a member? Go to [jema.org](http://jema.org) and click "Join" 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	_____	_____

## JEMA Directory

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

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

To order, email to [jema-info@jema.org](mailto:jema-info@jema.org), call the JEMA office at 03-3295-1949, or fill out this form and either fax it to 03-3295-1354 or mail it to:  
JEMA, OCC Bldg, 2-1 Kanda Surugadai,  
Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062 Japan

## Payment Methods

### Paypal:

Go to [paypal.com](http://paypal.com) and send money to:  
[payment@jema.org](mailto:payment@jema.org)

### 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.

## Moving?

Contact JEMA office so we can update our files!

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

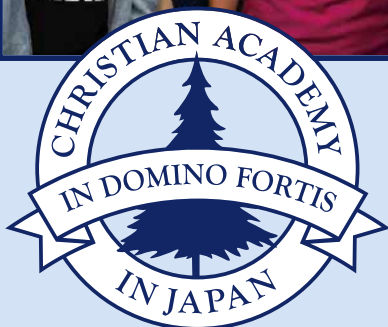
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Supporting missionary families today.

## Preparing the next generation of missionaries for tomorrow.



Equipping students to serve Japan and the world for Christ



[caj.ac.jp](http://caj.ac.jp)

Phone: 042-471-0022



# 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)