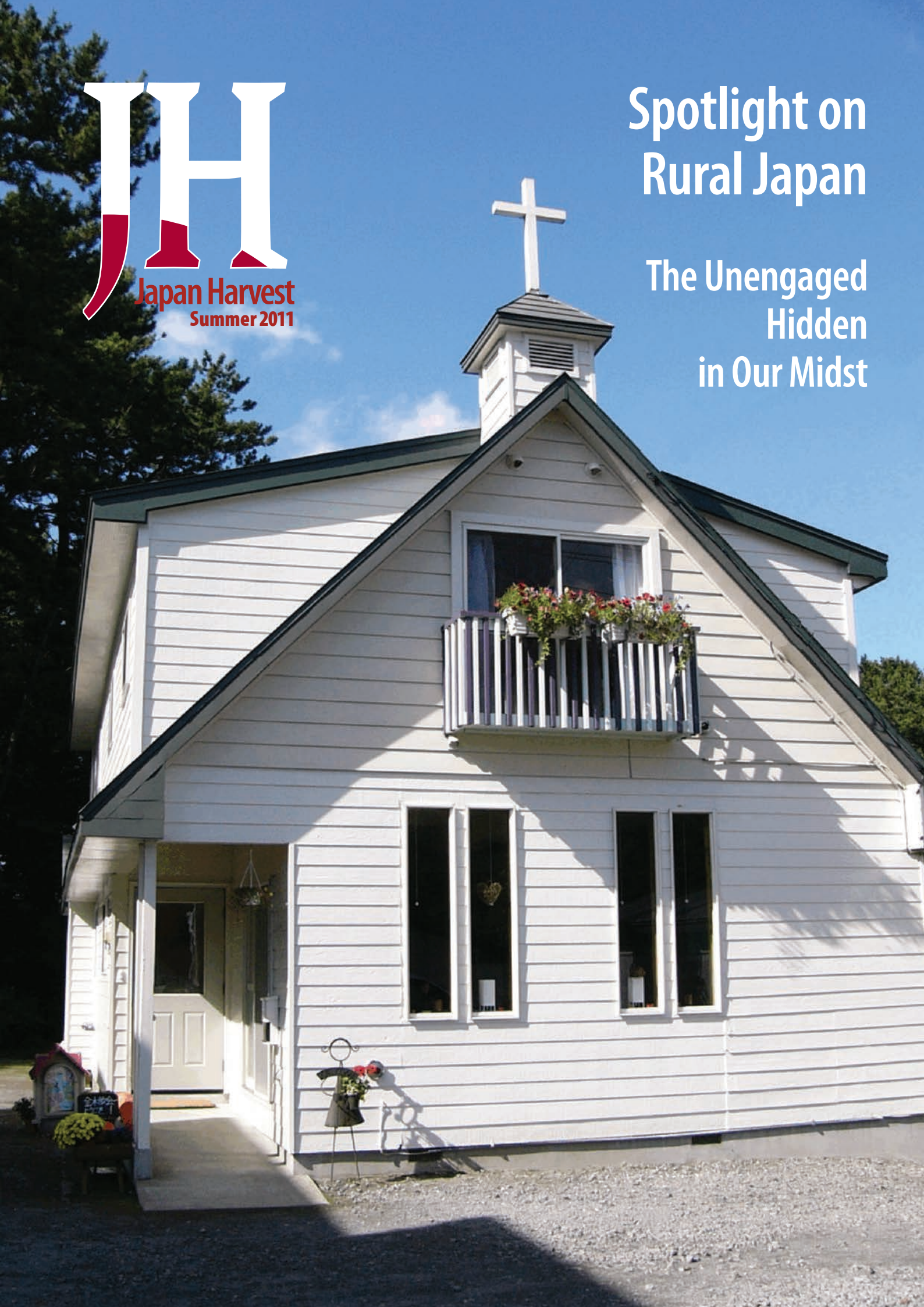


**JH**  
Japan Harvest  
Summer 2011

# Spotlight on Rural Japan

The Unengaged  
Hidden  
in Our Midst



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# In This Issue



Volume 63 No. 1 / Summer 2011

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exists to network and equip  
its members to make  
disciples for Christ***

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# The World in Our Classroom

by Stephen T. Franklin, Tokyo Christian University

Imagine. A Ugandan, Nepali, Indian, American, Korean, and a Japanese brainstorming over lunch on how to present the gospel in Japan, or perhaps discussing the Chinese influence on Japanese culture. You don't have to imagine. It is real, and it happens every day at Tokyo Christian University, affectionately known as TCU.

Although its roots go back to Yokohama in 1881, it was just ten years ago that TCU added a program for English-speaking students from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. We call this program ACTS-es, which leads to a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Christian Theology and East Asian Studies. All ACTS-es courses are taught in English with Japanese as the program's required "foreign" language. ACTS-es students are full participants in every aspect of TCU. They live in the same dormitories as the Japanese students, eat in the same dining hall, attend the same chapel, participate in the same student government, and have church assignments in both International and Japanese language churches in the Tokyo area.

ACTS-es provides a rich liberal arts

education, with courses not only in Theology and Japanese Studies, but also in art, music, psychology, philosophy, history, and much else. In all courses, the professors encourage students to think about how the subject being studied sheds light on the Bible and the Christian faith, and how the Christian faith can lead to a deeper understanding of the content, purpose, or use of that subject.

The B.A. taken by ACTS-es students is fully accredited by the national government of Japan. Tokyo Christian University is the oldest international affiliate of the North American based Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, and has special partnerships with Biola University, Wheaton University, Judson University, Olivet Nazarene University, Lee University, and similar schools. Of course, TCU is also fully embedded in the Japanese and Asian associations of private and Christian universities.

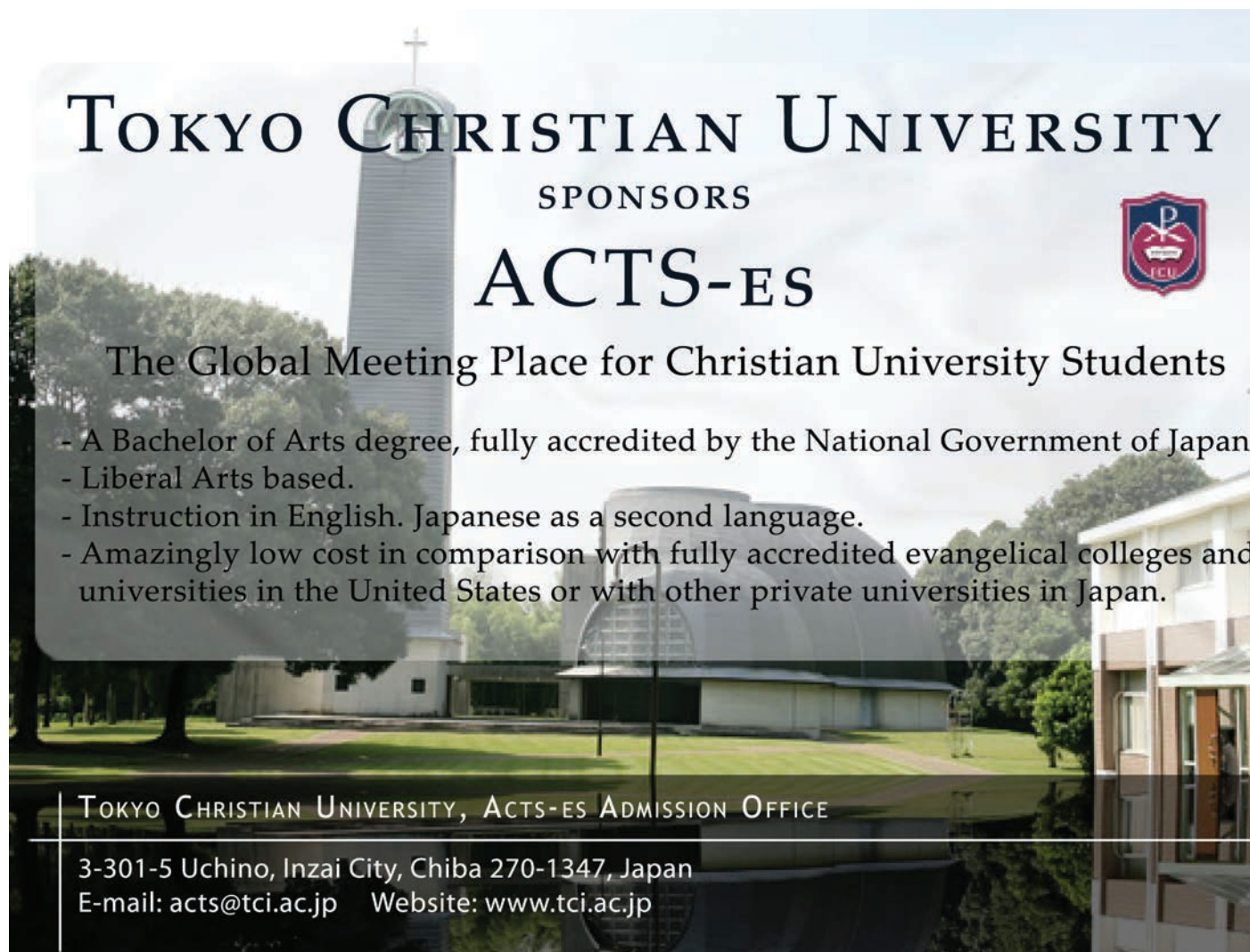
Tokyo Christian University is keenly aware that many of our students do not come from rich families and that our graduates often work in ministry, in NGOs, and the service sector. So we have worked hard to

keep the cost of the tuition, room, and board as low as possible. We are competitive with any private university in Japan and our cost typically comes to half or even one third of that of equivalent Christian universities in North America.


For the last twenty years, TCU has received the occasional visiting university student from North America, seeking a semester or year of study in Japan for transfer back to their home school. Last year we formalized this as the East Asia Institute at Tokyo Christian University. The EAI offers a package of courses and field trips in the fall semester designed to give the North American or European student an in depth introduction to and experience of East Asia at a very competitive price.

For ACTS-es, go to the website at: <http://acts.tci.ac.jp/>

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# President's Pen



## For Such a Time as This

*Dale and Anne Little serve in Japan with the Evangelical Free Church of Canada Mission. They will be leading the EFCCM tsunami recovery ministry from November 2011 to November 2012 before launching their next church planting project, Tokyo Multicultural Church.*

“Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (Rom. 8:20-22, NLT)

Creation groaned in north-eastern Japan on 3/11. Sin and its divine curse have marred all of creation, including the depths of the sea. Death, destruction, and despair have followed in the wake of the quake-induced tsunami. But the

Scriptures bring words of hope in times of crises. Creation will be re-created! We look forward to the day when God in Christ will eliminate the decay of death, which is the curse of sin.

In the meantime, the diverse and gifted community of expatriate missionaries in Japan has an unprecedented opportunity to show God’s love to Japan. Since 3/11, many churches and missionaries in Japan have sent a tsunami of prayer and of God’s love to northeastern

Japan. Christian relief organizations from

Japan is back  
on the mission  
map of many  
churches in our  
home countries.

## JEMA Datebook

Event	Date	Time	Place
JEMA Leadership Team	September 12, 2011	10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	OCC
WIM Prayer Day (see p. 31)	September 29, 2011		Ome, Tokyo
JEMA Ministry Consultation	Fall 2011		Miyagi Prefecture
CPI Pre-conference Day	November 8-9		Fuji Hakone Land
CPI National Conference	November 9-11		Fuji Hakone Land
WIM 2012 Spring Retreat	March 7-9, 2012		Megumi Chalet

outside have descended upon Japan like never since the end of WWII. Japan is back on the mission map of many churches in our home countries (at least for a little while).

JEMA has received over two million US dollars for CRASH Japan, one of JEMA's endorsed ministries, to bring help and hope to survivors and evacuees. JEMA leaders and many JEMA related missionaries have volunteered energetically in CRASH Japan leadership and projects. Other JEMA connected missionaries have given their energies toward the recovery ministries of their own mission organizations.

The overwhelming attitude of cooperation and mutual respect has been impressive. What a joy to see churches, missionaries, and mission agencies working together for the

cause of Christ in this land!

Your JEMA leadership team would like to help take this synergy to the next level by hosting a ministry consultation in the late fall in Sendai. We desire to network and encourage JEMA connected missionaries and mission agencies who are serving in the tsunami hit areas of Japan. We believe one way to do that in the post 3/11 era in Japan is to share with each other what we are doing or planning to do for ministry in northeastern Japan over the long term. To facilitate this discussion we invite all JEMA member missions to share their recovery related ministry plans at this consultation. Please keep your eye on our website, [www.jema.org](http://www.jema.org), for further details.

Just as the events of 3/11 have brought us face to face with death

and destruction, there was death and destruction in the air when Esther's uncle Mordecai (and for all practical purposes, her father), reminded her, "Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14, NLT)

The rest of the Old Testament book of Esther shows how God used Queen Esther to implement his sovereign plans. Perhaps God in his sovereignty has placed us here in Japan for just such a time as this. May we work together in showing the love of Christ to a hurting post 3/11 Japan! JH



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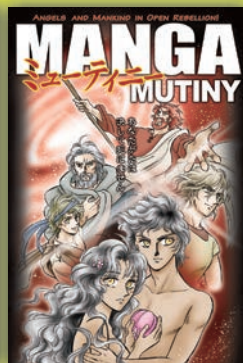
— Paul Nethercott

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*Gary Bauman has been managing editor of Japan Harvest since September 2005. He and his wife Barbara have served in Japan since 1988 with Asian Access.*

### *What Will Church Planting Look Like in the “New Japan”?*

We devoted our spring 2011 issue of this magazine entirely to the experiences and reactions of people to the events and aftermath of March 11. But not so in this issue.

From gospel choir outreach, to rural church planting, to the recovery effort in the Tohoku region, the wide-ranging content of this summer magazine reflects the wide-ranging activities of our readership.

Do you serve in the southern or northern reaches of Japan? Perhaps in the daily busyness of your ongoing ministries, it's difficult to grasp the reality of the daily emotional struggles of Fukushima evacuees—many of whom are still living on a few square meters of concrete bounded by corrugated cardboard “walls” in a gymnasium or convention center.

Do you serve in central Japan? Perhaps you were here for the Great Hanshin Earthquake, and are filtering what you hear of Tohoku needs through the grid of your personal experiences in 1995.

Do you receive this publication overseas? Perhaps the images you've seen on television, YouTube, or Vimeo seem more like scenes staged for a disaster movie. But those very real memories can still cause nightmares for the multiple thousands of survivors who actually lived through the horror.

Some Japanese have been drawn into God's kingdom through this crisis. But will the spiritual fruit after this disaster be any more plentiful than the fruit that has come after other similar disasters in Japan? There were great hopes after the Great Hanshin Earthquake, and some did choose to follow Christ, but sixteen years later not much has changed in the Kobe/Osaka region in relation to the ratio of Christians to the total population.

But there are hopeful signs in Tohoku:

(1) A multitude of Christian groups are committed to long-term recovery work in the region.

(2) Numerous new Christian relief and recovery organizations have been formed in response to this triple disaster.

(3) Churches with the capability to respond on their own are connecting directly with specific

communities in the disaster areas. Repeated trips to those areas to help in the recovery are also helping churches develop long-term relationships with people who have never had direct contact with a Christian.

(4) Unprecedented cooperation is taking place between Tohoku region churches as they partner in recovery efforts.

(5) Pastoral and church staff members of affected churches are being provided with physical, emotional and spiritual support by the broader Christian community.

(6) Individuals and teams focusing on emotional and spiritual needs are being trained and deployed regularly to minister to survivors.

(7) The Japanese Church is rethinking what it means to “be the Church” for those who have lost everything, and what “church planting” needs to look like in the “new Japan”—especially the devastated areas.

(8) Many JEMA member missions are planning long-term efforts in this spiritually needy region.

What an encouragement to see local Japanese churches, Japanese denominations, JEMA member missions and a wide variety of parachurch organizations talking together. Maximizing resources in the effort to put Tohoku back on its feet while sensitively building bridges for the gospel is an ever-present theme.

What is church planting going to look like in Japan during the next decade as a result of this disaster? Some of my Japanese pastor friends are already talking about “hybrid church.” How will that develop? I can't wait to see the creativity that comes from God's people in response to the needs of Tohoku! JH

Yours for the harvest,



### God's Word, Worth, Works, and Ways

**Ken and Toshiko Reddington are church-planting missionaries in Kochi-ken. Ken, an MK who returned to Japan as a missionary 30+ years ago, is on the Servant-Leader Teams of the Prayer Summit for Western Japan and the Shikoku Prayer Summit. He is also on the executive committees for the Kochi Global Day of Prayer and World Food Day Kochi. He is secretary for the Kochi Citywide Interdenominational Pastors Group.**

*Prayer is not our taking a 'laundry list' to God for him to do our bidding, so he can prove he's God. It is taking our hearts to him, laying them before him and giving up our wills to him, so we can do his bidding, and thus grow more perfectly into his likeness and be conformed more perfectly into his image.*

*Russell Kelfer, Bible teacher for Discipleship Tape Ministries, San Antonio, Texas, USA*

#### The Process of Worship in Prayer

Today we will continue our journey through a chapter in the prayer life of King David as found in II Samuel, chapter 7. When we left David, he had been trying to solve a 'problem' for God. Life was starting to settle down for him. The warfare had stopped and he was now king of all Israel. And he had just built a house of cedar for his palace. As he looked around, he saw that God had been so busy he hadn't had time to build himself a house. He was still living in a tent—the Tabernacle. David had a good heart, so he began to plan to build a permanent house for God. The prophet Nathan came along and urged him to press on with his plans.

But that night, God appeared to Nathan and told him to deliver a message to David. It was a message full of tenderness, but it was also a "No, thank you" from God. God was saying, "I am doing quite well without a house, thank you. I know you mean well, but this is not the time and you are not the man, David, to build me a house. You are not going to build me a house: I am going to build you a house—a house made without hands. It will be an eternal house, a kingdom that will go on and on, long after you are dead. Your son, Solomon, will build my house, not you. But I am going to build for you a kingdom that will never end. It's a promise."

When Nathan faithfully delivered the message the next morning, we saw that David was truly a 'man after God's heart'. His response was to fall on his face before his wonderful God in awe and humility at God's incredible offer. That is the true posture of prayer. David was totally flabbergasted that the God of the universe would choose him. So in a spirit of total unworthiness, he cried out, "*Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?*" (v. 18, NASB)

David responded with awe that the great God of eternity would choose to give the likes of him such a promise as this. He bowed before God in humble submission and saw God for who he was—incomparable, supreme, eternal. And thus he saw himself for who he was—a sinner, undeserving of such great and precious promises. Yet he quietly acknowledged that though undeserved, he was indeed the recipient of God's divine grace.

Having chosen the posture of humility, David continues his prayer. As we read his prayer we find a pattern. This is something we can use in our daily prayer time with God. It is a pattern for acknowledging the wonder of God. In our passage here, and in the Psalms over and over again, we find David praising God for his word, his worth, his works and his ways. That is a pattern that will give us a track to run on as well when we are seeking to worship him. We are to worship God for who he is, for what he has said, for what he has done and for how he has done it—his word, his worth, his works and his ways.

#### Worship Him for His Word (v. 21)

In verse 21, David honors God's Word by saying:



*“For the sake of Your word, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness.” (NASB)*

When we bow before God, especially when receiving his promise, we must first make sure that promise is a clear statement of his perfect Word. Then we should bow and worship God that his Word is perfect. The reason for honoring this promise is not our works, our worth, or our ways, but his Word, that which is infallible, immutable, eternal and applicable.

A good thing to do here might be to meditate on Psalm 119, worshipping God as you come across passage after passage that honors his marvelous Word. In fact, if we were to do that every morning, it would save us the grief that comes from taking his Word for granted or presumptuously trying to ‘twist his arm’ to make him do what we want him to. Perhaps we should start out, before we even begin to open his Word by worshipping him for the miracle of his marvelous Word.

Notice that David is not demanding anything from God. He is just in awe of who God is. David is acknowledging who God is by first acknowledging the perfectness of his Word.

### **Worship Him for His Worth (v. 22)**

In verse 22, David worships God for his worth—for WHO he is. He returns to the humble awe of verse 18 and says:

*“For this reason You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.” (NASB)*

This is a good verse to remember. We worship him because of his worth—only he is worthy to be ‘worth-shipped’. At this point, you might like to take a concordance and look up the word ‘glory’ or ‘give

glory’. Then use those verses to create a chain of worship. Perhaps you might like to start with I Chronicles 16:23-24. This is a psalm of King David when he dedicated the Tabernacle after he moved it to Jerusalem. It is the perfect way to start your day.

Praying properly involves learning to worship the nature of God. When you exalt the Word of God and worship the Worth of God, you are not in a position to demand anything from God. Instead, you are ready to assume the posture David did, one of total wonder and praise.

### **Worship Him for His Works and His Ways (v. 23-24)**

David worships God for what he has done—his works and how he has done it—his ways. He explains it this way:

*“And who is like Your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for Himself, and to make a name for Himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before Your people, whom You redeemed from Egypt? You have established Your people Israel as Your very own forever, and you, O LORD, have become their God.” (NIV)*

In amazement, David lists just a few of the wonderful things God has done for his people. He redeemed Israel as a people for himself. He made a name for himself. He performed great and awesome wonders. How? By taking Israel out of slavery in Egypt and by driving out the nations from the land of Canaan, including their gods. Only God could have done that—and he did! That is why he should be worshipped—because of what he has done and how he did it.

Do you keep a record of the marvelous things your God has

done for you? How often do you simply stop to worship him for what he has done—not just physically, but spiritually, too. He has rescued you from the gates of hell, lifted you up, redeemed you, given you a new name, a new life, a new Spirit, a new future, a new perspective, a new hope, a new set of priorities. He has parted life’s seas for you. He has brought water from life’s rocks for you. He has destroyed your enemies before your very eyes. He has protected you, provided for you, had mercy on you, and enabled you to become increasingly, supernaturally, what you were designed to be. Do you thank him regularly? Do you even remember what he did in that seemingly impossible situation a year ago? (That’s what a diary is good for.) Do you ever stop to worship him for his ways? Thanking him that they are higher than yours? How often do you thank him for unanswered prayers? Prayers that if he had answered your way would have meant certain disaster. In retrospect now, you understand that his ways are higher than yours. At the time you didn’t. Have you gone back to thank Him?

### **To Sum Up**

So David begins by demonstrating awe. Then he acknowledges God for who he is. Before we go to claim his promises or even ask him for things, let us acknowledge his Word, his Worth, his Works, and his Ways. His Word is immutable, his Worth is immeasurable, his Works are innumerable, and his Ways are incredible. They are past finding out, the Scripture says. And now, finally, having wondered, and worshipped, David is ready to claim God’s promises and pray for things, according to God’s will. May we do the same. Oh, what a God we have! Only he is worthy! Let’s tell him so. **JH**

# In the News

*(Christian Shimbun translations by Atsuko Tateishi unless otherwise noted)*

## **Easter Celebrations in Tohoku**

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN – MAY 8, 2011

On April 24, 2011, Tohoku churches celebrated the resurrection of Jesus.

Ishinomaki Christ Church (Brotherhood of Christ) welcomed over 40 new people on Easter Sunday, their first worship service after the calamity.

The tsunami killed one church member and flooded the church building for five days with water one and a half meters deep. Even so, co-pastors Satoshi and Yumiko Ito decided to use the church as a supply center and soup kitchen as soon as possible along with the help of several Christian groups.

The Itos took care that there was no dispute over supplies or meals. They had volunteers talk to people waiting in line. Volunteers also distributed hot drinks to those waiting and listened to their stories. When permission was given, volunteers prayed with community people.

The only advertisement for the Easter Sunday worship service was a piece of paper posted in the church, yet over 40 new people showed up. In his sermon, Pastor Ito shared that immediately after the earthquake he had thought the church was finished. However, when the church prayerfully chose to be a giver of help, he saw the church emerging anew.

For Miyagi Bible Church, Easter also marked their first worship service following the events of March 11. Pastor Tanaka shared in his sermon about his worries during the days immediately following the earthquake. He was concerned about the “heavy rocks” in his church, that is, the water that was not going away; the loss of the Bibles, hymnals, and books; and the mud in the building. When Tanaka resolved to stay and to con-

tinue pastoring the church, however, all these “rocks” were rolled away. The SDF pumped the water away, books were supplied for free, and volunteers cleaned up the mud.

## **Youth Ministry Workers Encouraged to Pass on Their Faith**

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN – JUNE 5, 2011

JEA's sixth youth ministry seminar took place at Okutama Bible Chalet in Ome City, Tokyo on May 16-17, 2011. “Passing on a Biblical Worldview” was the overall theme. Ryuichi Yamazaki, General Secretary of Kirisuto-sha Gakusei Kai, spoke at the opening worship service. He exhorted adult Christians to demonstrate to young people in the church how to be faithful to the biblical worldview throughout the challenges and hardships of real life.

The main speaker, Pastor Makio Kodaira of Nishinomiya Church (Brotherhood of Christ), gave a two-part lecture. He noted the holistic nature of a biblical worldview and warned against separating their faith from work or study. He then urged attendees to consciously begin the process of transitioning their ministries to a successor while they are still active in ministry. Kodaira also pointed out the effectiveness of communities in passing on a biblical worldview from one generation to the next.

Some of Pastor Kodaira's ministry activities have included: (1) “Gathering at Bethel,” a 20-year-old denomination-wide fellowship program among pastors' children; (2) a worship service with the active participation of all generations; and (3) the gradual empowerment of his successor at the church over a period of several years.

Next year, the youth seminar will merge into the first Japan Congress

on Youth Ministries, scheduled for September 17-19, 2012 in the metropolitan Tokyo area under the theme of “Reach the Young!—Share the Vision for Youth Ministries.”

## **Pastor Shares of His Four Day Imprisonment by the Tsunami**

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN – APRIL 24, 2011

In order to remember the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, a monthly interdenominational prayer meeting has been initiated by former members of the Executive Committee of Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Protestant Ministry in Japan. The meetings will occur on the 11th of every month.

The first meeting was held on April 11 in Tokyo at Yodobashi Church of the Wesleyan Holiness Church. Tokio Tanaka, Pastor of Miyagi Bible Church, Christ Seikyodan, Higashi Matsushima City, spoke about his firsthand experience of the disaster. He and his wife were at home when the earthquake hit. Being aware of the danger of a tsunami, immediately after the quake he called on neighboring houses one by one and urged the inhabitants to flee. As he returned to the parsonage, his wife called down from upstairs, shouting, “The tsunami is coming! Run!” He managed to let himself in, locked the entry, and scrambled upstairs. The tsunami totally inundated the first floor, but the Tanakas and their pet dog survived on the second floor.

The water stayed however, and they were stuck in the house. Two days later, on Sunday morning, Tanaka was suddenly overwhelmed by a profound sense of loss. He felt as if he had lost everything, including the fruit of his 30-year ministry in Miyagi and their retirement plans. Then, God showed

him Job 1:21, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (NRSV) Tanaka took comfort from the passage.

Soon afterward, his wife surprised him by reminding him it was Sunday and asking him to preach as usual. Tanaka obliged, but cannot remember what he preached. He appreciated his wife’s resilience, though.

The Japan Self Defense Force (SDF) finally found and rescued the Tanakas and their dog by boat on the fourth day after the disaster. As of April 11, two church members had not yet been located. The Tanakas are now based in their branch church in Sendai City, and commute the one hour to and from Higashi Matsushima City. The Tanakas have resolved to stay and to pastor for as long as God the Comforter lets them.

### **Retreats Held for Pastors in Disaster Areas**

*Report by John Houlette*

On June 13-14 a pastor’s retreat was held in at the Zuiho Hotel in the Akiyu hot springs area of Sendai. On June 16-17 an identical retreat was held at the Mori no Kaze Hotel on the outskirts of Morioka in Iwateken. A total of over seventy people attended the retreats including pastors and retreat staff.

Both retreats were 24-hour events built around small group sharing of personal experiences and talks by Dr. John Dorlus, president of STEP Seminary in Haiti, who brought insights from his experiences in the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and Thomas Kim, Executive Director of Churches Helping Churches (CHC). Sessions were facilitated by Nobuyoshi Nagai of Kakudai Institute, Takeshi Takazawa of Asian Access, and John Houlette, Pastor Care Team Leader with CRASH Japan. A relaxed schedule, great meals, and time spent in hot springs enhanced the honest and open sharing.

The retreats were organized by

Churches Helping Churches and co-sponsored by Alpha Japan, Asian Access, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, CRASH Japan, the Japan Church Growth Institute, Kakudai Institute for Missions and Three Stream Ministries. They were the first of several planned monthly retreats.

The unity shown at these initial retreats helped pastors relax in a neutral setting after dealing with non-stop relief ministry. Responses to a survey at the Sendai retreat revealed that pastors would like help in self-care areas and counseling.

One strategic goal for the series of retreats is to unify sponsoring groups by building trust and ensuring the provision of consistent and appropriate care for pastors and their families.

### **CRASH Japan Offers Survivor Care for Children**

CRASH Japan is offering a five-day Survivor Care Program for children called OperationSAFE. Training seminars for potential staff began in May, and the actual program is being conducted in various locations in Japan from the end of July.

The OperationSAFE program is an adaptation of the widely used SAFER(R) crisis intervention model (Stabilization, Affirmation, Facilitation, Encouragement, and Recovery or Referral).

Presented in a way that is appealing to children, the OperationSAFE curriculum is helps children who have been through trauma learn how to cope with difficult emotions. Over a five-day period, children get to know a penguin who has been separated from his family when an ice shelf has broken off from Antarctica. Each day the penguin meets new friends who teach him how to be SAFER(R).

Through colorful characters, games, songs, and activities children learn they are in a (S)afe place, they are (A)ccepted, and they can have hope for the (F)uture. They are (E)ncouraged to be brave and ask for

help, they are (R)eminded that they are loved, and they are given (R)e-sources to get more help if needed.

Volunteers are still needed to help the thousands of children dealing with trauma from the March 11 disaster. Due to the nature of the program, volunteers must have a native level of spoken Japanese. For more information please contact Rie Wilson at [operation-safe@crashjapan.com](mailto:operation-safe@crashjapan.com).

### **Japan Church of God Leader Enters God’s Presence**

*Translated by Tomoko Kato*

CHRISTIAN SHIMBUN – APRIL 17, 2011

On March 30, 2011, at the age of 70, Pastor Kazumoto Yatsuzuka of Tokyo Lighthouse Church passed away from pancreatic cancer. Yatsuzuka preached at Tokyo Lighthouse for almost 35 years, while successively holding important posts with a number of Christian organizations, including the Japan Church of God (COG), Japan Pentecostal Fellowship, Japan Pentecostal Committee (JPC), and the Nippon Revival Association (NRA).

While a student at Kyoto University, Yatsuzuka became disillusioned with life and was discipled by Pastor Kunio Fujibayashi, who had revived Kyoto Gospel Church. Yatsuzuka left the university and entered Yokohama Bible Institute (COG) in order to follow God’s calling.

In 1962, he entered the ministry at Sakainotani Pentecostal Church in Yokohama with his wife, Akemi. In 1966 they began serving at Shimomaruko Zion Church, where Pastor Yatsuzuka dedicated himself to various outreach ministries. The chapel building was repeatedly expanded until 2002, when a new chapel was built. At that time, the name of the church was changed to Tokyo Lighthouse Church. Pastor Yatsuzuka had not been well since 2008 and had been fighting his cancer since February 2010. JH

# Now or Never: Opportunities and Dangers in Northern Japan

by Andy Meeko

*(Editor's note: This article was written in early May, two months after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Since that time, there has been much greater awareness in the Christian community of the need to protect and help Japanese churches and staff in the disaster region. Although the training and sending of Japanese-speaking volunteers for emotional care ministry is a primary need, there are many avenues in which non-Japanese speaking volunteers can serve as well. Properly placed, volunteers with a wide variety of skills will be a great help in the recovery and in the spread of the gospel for a long time into the future.)*

It's late.

Have to be up early tomorrow to take teams north, train them, and provide emotional care—where emotional needs are off the charts. I'm not ready. But this is typical. I haven't been ready for close to two months now. I guess that can be expected in an incident of this magnitude.

There have been encouragements. We have some solid infrastructure in place for the long haul. We have developed exceptional training and tools. We have seen lives changed and salvation decisions. But I wonder, how much stamina have I got? How much can my family take? How much of life can I continue to neglect? But then, the need up north is still beyond reckoning...

So it's from this frail position I hope to offer a few pointers, knowing that either you, or I, or anyone, could fall flat despite the need for every one of us in this task; a task of not just rebuilding, but rebirthing.

## From Rebuilding to Rebirthing

It's late there, too.

Late in that we needed hundreds (or thousands) doing emotional care weeks ago. And yet there are indications that the numbers of volunteers are actually waning, as though the mindset is that the task has been accomplished. In reality the task is

just beginning.

During the past two weeks I have been in Fukushima Prefecture, where the dominant problem is radioactive contamination. Thousands have been evacuated and lost not just their homes, but their complete hometowns. Many have been relocated to places like Fukushima and Koriyama, the biggest cities in the prefecture. But as I write, these cities also are still getting inordinate amounts of radiation. Meanwhile the government is avoiding responsibility for these areas and people are stuck with devalued homes and mortgages to pay, their children exposed to health hazards.

## Stress and Frustration

One of our emotional care volunteers did ten hand massages and noted that two of the people had slit wrists—suicide attempts from when times were much easier. In Fukushima the stress and frustration continues to build and is piled on the grief of so many losses. Where

will all of this lead?

This week I took a team to the small town of Ofunato in Iwate, one of so many places hit hard by the tsunami. We easily got into four evacuation centers. The survivors sincerely appreciated our care and smiled a lot, but under their stalwart surface loomed serious issues. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) was not uncommon and the makings of mass depression was well on its way. Most sobering was the sheer number of evacuation centers. They are scattered everywhere. Perhaps there were a dozen in that little town—but how few of these have Christians entering to offer emotional care. Meanwhile, evacuees are being relocated to temporary housing situations where they will be nearly impossible to find, and by then most won't want to be found. The need is great, but as emotional issues are neglected the need gets more complicated. Doubtless, people will become less accessible and their issues get deeper rooted. Hopelessness is gaining a massive foothold in Tohoku, where suicide is already high.

### Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder

Still, survivors are not the only ones in danger. Those aiming to aid them are in significant danger as well. As I have seen a variety of people and teams going north I have noticed many coming back traumatized. One Tokyo pastor visited the north and then came to me severely disturbed by the devastation he saw in Miyagi. He was having trouble releasing his sorrow and even distressed with flashbacks.

This raises a serious concern. Many have headed north without adequate training in personal care for disaster settings, and likely some missions don't have standards established to help prevent STSD (Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder). And what about burnout or compassion fatigue? Anyone giving

significant time to the relief effort struggles with how much to give and how much to hold back. Emotionally attaching and then separating from survivors is an advanced therapeutic skill in which even professionals falter, yet I have seen emotionally unfit individuals, and even children, going on trips to the disaster areas when bodies were still being retrieved from the debris.

### Care for Caregivers

Pastors in the disaster region are in particular danger. Some began faltering just weeks after the event, burdened with their own grief and stress (and in some cases guilt for having survived). Often they have been inundated with offers for help that are not helpful. Pastor Iwatsuka of Miyako, Iwate told the *Christian Shimbun* with a deep sigh, "There are nonstop calls and visitations of relief offers from organizations both inside and outside of Japan. I cannot take any rest or even do what we planned to do." When asked about his long-term plan for relief activities, he replied with a troubled face, "It is very hard to answer. I am listening to the requests of the victims day after day to the best of my ability. I cannot have a long perspective. I have no idea how long this situation will even last."

### Plans for the Future

So what needs to happen from here? Having viewed the process of relief since day one, and having taken trips for intervention to many regions, I offer a few suggestions, although I feel inadequate (and perhaps it's a good thing to realize that!).

First, we need long-term commitment. We need people to continue investing in this effort for this first year. Suicide rates in the north will likely surge come March 11, 2012, and Japan already has the highest suicide rate in Asia as well as the most hospitalized psychiat-

ric patients in the world. We need people to commit a couple of weeks or a month to help run things in the field and also back in the office.

Second, I would say that 90% of the kind of people we need are Japanese speakers who can compassionately "counsel." Not professional counselors, but Christians who get some practical training. Our emotional care training only takes half a day and is proving quite adequate.

Third, we need to protect the pastors (and church members) in the disaster areas. Presently we have many organizations both in country and out, calling and visiting pastors. They cannot take this pressure. As one pastor in Rifu told me, "Don't send fifty volunteers from America for a week, sponsor one Japanese Christian to commit full-time for fifty weeks."

Many believed when this crisis came that people would start flooding into the churches in the disaster region for spiritual help, and we all pray that this will be the case. However, it was not so in the Osaka/Kobe earthquake. The chance was missed last time. With Godspeed and wisdom, let's not let this one slip by wasted. Far too many and far too much is at stake.

Visit: [www.crashjapan.com](http://www.crashjapan.com) and volunteer for a stint. 卍

*Andy Meeko is a second-generation missionary whose family arrived in war-devastated Tokyo in 1947. He is the director of Tokorozawa Community Care Center for the prevention and reversal of depression, the director of Survivor Care for CRASH Japan, and a former resident of Tohoku. He holds a Doctorate of Ministry • Counseling • Spiritual Formation from George Fox University in Portland, Oregon.*

# Spotlight on Rural Japan: Part 1

## *The Unengaged Hidden in Our Midst*

by Dawn Birkner



Today the gospel light has spread to all larger population centers in Japan—of that we can celebrate! Yet, after 150 years of Protestant missions, a majority of communities in Japan (mainly rural) still have no church and remain unengaged despite being only twenty minutes to two hours from existing churches. There is still Kingdom work to do in cities that already have many

churches. But from that foundation, the capacity now exists to establish a lasting witness in the rural communities in Japan still without their first church. This potential remains largely unrealized, however. For example, Tohoku is the least church region of Japan. The majority of communities in Fukushima, Miyagi, and especially Iwate-ken have never had a church. This is as

heart rending as the triple tragedy of March 11. Showing God’s love concretely by meeting physical and psychological needs and helping with long-term recovery is critical. It is also important that long-term seed sowing and church planting grow out of meeting immediate needs so that those efforts address the spiritual needs of Tohoku—and all of rural Japan.

**Table A - Relative Concentration of Missionary Efforts in Each Segment**

	Number of communities	Population	Number of churches per community	Percentage of population Christian	Number of missionaries	How many live in this segment?
Mega Cities (Segment 1)	12	> 1 million	Hundreds of churches	1-2%	Many missionaries	27 million
Urban Areas (Segment 2)	442	50,000 – 1 million	1-10 churches	0.3-1%	Many missionaries	66 million
Rural Areas (Segment 3)	2,448	3,000 – 50,000	0-1 churches	<0.1%	Most have no missionaries	34 million
Isolated Areas (Segment 4)	336	Under 3,000	11 churches in total.	Almost no Christians	No missionaries	600, 000

This is the first of three articles on Japan's next mission frontier. Reaching rural Japan depends on more people serving in rural areas and on partnerships with those in urban ministry. Whether you work in rural or urban Japan; are a leader in an agency or advise on placements; are involved in relief efforts in largely rural Tohoku or are considering a new ministry—you need to be aware of the issues covered in this series.

### The Unmet Spiritual Needs in a City Near You

Japan's least reached segment may now be in a city near you. The least reached segment is actually rural Japan, but rural Japan, statistically and governmentally, is now "hidden in the city." Between 1999 and 2011, the government merged most towns and villages with large cities; or amalgamated them with unrelated settlements into new entities. As a result, in just a few years, despite a lack of church plants in these areas, the number of unchurched towns and villages in Japan as reported in Church Information Services (CIS) data and the 2005 Operation Japan has dramatically declined (from 1800 to 600). However, despite being legally merged with other communities, these rural communities remain functionally, geographically, and relationally distinct. They are just as much in need of a church as before—but most are now "hidden" inside of church cities.

Rural Japan, however, is not out of God's sight. Years after God brought me to start a church in rural unengaged Ayauta, a Japanese called from the U.S. to share her surprise and gratitude to God for not forgetting her family but sending a church planter "even to her hometown." Her mother was saved before she died, her niece is in Sunday School, and her hometown has a church plant. But millions of Japanese grandmothers, fathers, children are

still waiting to hear the gospel where they live.

### The State of the Church in Rural Japan

The merger situation necessitates finding a new way to preserve and update information on churches in rural Japan. Rural Japan Church Planting Network (RJCPN) has resurrected information on the presence or absence of a church in each pre-merger community in Japan and compiled it in a database. This was in part due to hard copy pre-merger data provided by CIS. RJCPN will seek to keep this information updated and current. Each community was identified in the database as being in one of four segments, dividing Japanese unreached people groups based on missiological differences.

#### Table A

Table A shows the characteristics of different communities in Japan. Mega Cities and Urban Areas are where the missionary effort is currently concentrated. Rural areas

(Segment 3) are the focus of this article. Included among the 34 million people in Segment 3 are 14 million in 1,514 largely unengaged areas that will be called Unchurched Rural Areas (URA). Segment 4 is comprised of 336 small isolated communities. These are unengaged (except for 11 with churches) and logistically infeasible to target with common outreach alternatives. They only receive sporadic outreach in the form of tract or New Testament distribution, or by megaphone evangelism.

#### Table B

Table B and the map (on the next page) are based on RJCPN's database and RJCPN's pre-merger community delineations. They give an overview of the presence and absence of churches in Japan. Table B gives the ratio of the number of URAs to the total number of communities in segments 1, 2, and 3 combined. Segment 4 is included on the map, but not in the table, as its inclusion in the ratios would

### Rural Japan Church Planting Network (RJCPN)

Thirty-four million people live in rural Japan, including more than 14 million in 1,514 unchurched rural areas (3,000 to 50,000 population). The Rural Japan Church Planting Network's purpose is to increase awareness and engagement of these areas. In a country that as a whole is still unreached, these areas are especially neglected.

**Vision:** The presence of a lasting local gospel witness in each of the unchurched rural areas throughout Japan so that the maximum number of rural Japanese now and in future generations have a meaningful opportunity to come into relationship and continue to walk with God in this life and for all eternity as disciples of Jesus.

**Mission:** To facilitate the reaching of Japan's unchurched rural areas via prayer mobilization, worker mobilization, awareness building, data research and sharing, idea exchange, mutual equipping and encouragement, and collaboration in an environment that honors diverse approaches (whether traditional, non-traditional, or blended).

This series introduces the Rural Japan Church Planting Network (to launch in November at CPI). This first article focuses on the unengaged hidden in our midst. The second article will focus on unique aspects of rural Japan church planting, including case studies. The third will discuss partnering to engage rural Japan.

**Table B Ratio of Unchurched Rural Areas to Total Number of Communities in UPG Segments 1-3\* (By Prefecture)**

Tohoku	Kanto	Chubu	Kansai	Chugoku	Kyushu	Other
Aomori 42:60	Ibaraki 32:84	Niigata 72:105	Mie 45:66	Tottori 24:37	Fukuoka 45:93	<b>Shikoku</b>
Iwate 36:59	Tochigi 21:48	Toyama 13:27	Shiga 25:49	Shimane 28:47	Saga 34:46	Tokushima 24:40
Miyagi 37:69	Gunma 34:63	Ishikawa 22:37	Kyoto 20:43	Okayama 36:65	Nagasaki 55:72	Kagawa 18:43
Akita 50:69	Saitama 25:89	Fukui 19:31	Osaka 6:44	Hiroshima 41:67	Kumamoto 60:84	Ehime 22:56
Yamagata 27:44	Chiba 27:80	Yamanashi 27:51	Hyogo 42:90	Yamaguchi 25:50	Oita 28:46	Kochi 22:41
Fukushima 47:83	Tokyo 1:35	Nagano 46:89	Nara 15:36		Miyazaki 24:38	<b>Okinawa</b> 14:42
	Kanagawa 6:37	Gifu 47:75	Wakayama 21:45		Kagoshima 55:86	<b>Hokkaido</b> 85:183
		Shizuoka 23:73				
		Aichi 36:85				

\*UPG 4 (<3,000 population) is excluded from the table.

**Red—Church; Segment 1**

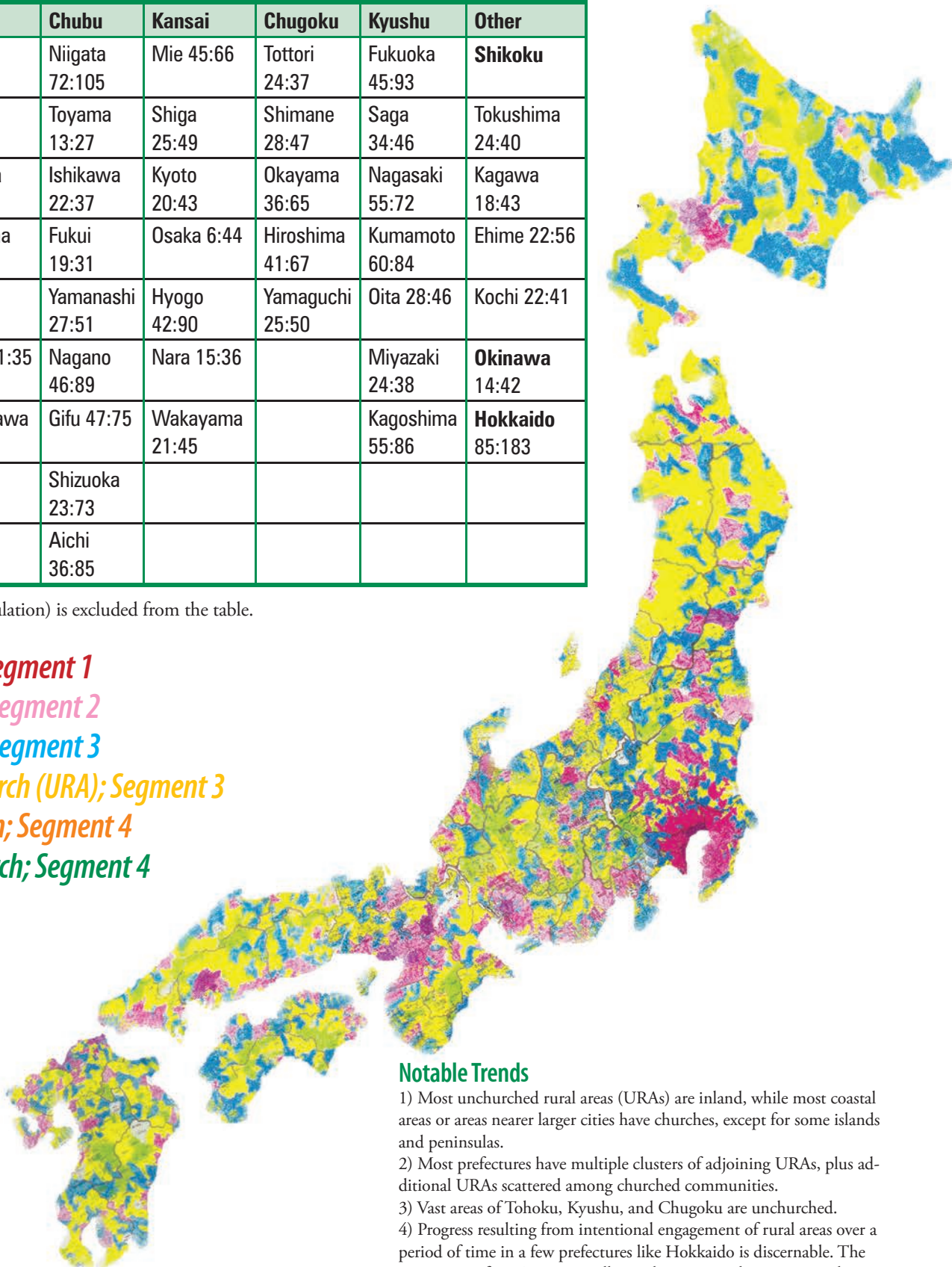
**Pink—Church; Segment 2**

**Blue—Church; Segment 3**

**Yellow—No Church (URA); Segment 3**

**Orange—Church; Segment 4**

**Green—No Church; Segment 4**



### Notable Trends

- 1) Most unchurched rural areas (URAs) are inland, while most coastal areas or areas nearer larger cities have churches, except for some islands and peninsulas.
- 2) Most prefectures have multiple clusters of adjoining URAs, plus additional URAs scattered among church communities.
- 3) Vast areas of Tohoku, Kyushu, and Chugoku are unchurched.
- 4) Progress resulting from intentional engagement of rural areas over a period of time in a few prefectures like Hokkaido is discernable. The percentage of URAs is, generally speaking, inversely proportional to concentrations of missionaries. There are:

1130 missionaries in the 7 prefectures having a total of only 75 URAs

743 missionaries in the 21 prefectures having a total of 706 URAs

148 missionaries in the 19 least church prefectures having a total of 733 URAs

Most of these missionaries are not working in a URA in their prefecture.



preclude meaningful direct comparison of ratios across prefectures. For example, in Aomori there are 42 unchurched rural areas out of a total of 60 Segment 1, 2, and 3 communities, therefore it appears as 42:60. Thus, Aomori-ken is less reached than Hokkaido with a ratio of 85:183 or than Kagawa with a ratio of 18:43.

The map on the facing page (also based on the database) is an overview of church distribution in Japan. RJCPN's focus is on unchurched rural areas in Segment 3. These 1,514 areas are shown on the map in yellow.

### Why Engage Rural Japan?

God desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth. That's reason enough. But here are a few others:

God calls us to be the aroma of life and death. He wants all to have the opportunity to hear. Few in rural Japan have ever been meaningfully engaged with the gospel even

once. Hoping it trickles down from the cities is not enough. Nor is it realistic given a largely one-way flow pattern between Japan's countryside and cities. Many people living in

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Win rural Japan,  
and maybe heart barriers  
all over Japan  
will begin to fall

---

unchurched rural areas are unlikely to encounter the gospel due to little interaction with people in church cities. A lasting gospel lighthouse (church of multiplying disciples) is needed so they can encounter the gospel in their own community.

God cares about the one enough to leave the ninety-nine. Fourteen million in unchurched rural areas have not yet heard of His love though 2,000 missionaries and

8,000 churches are less than two hours from them.

It gives an opportunity to break down enemy footholds. Although ancestor worship and allegiance to temples and shrines is centered in the countryside, this added challenge is also an opportunity. Such footholds make it hard to come to Christ in rural areas and hard for city Christians to be willing to share the gospel when they do go to the countryside for a visit. But if adult eldest sons, widely present in rural Japan, do turn to Christ, it will help free the rest of the Japanese from societal pressures that hinder them from turning to Christ and that hinder many believers in cities from living for Jesus. Will the 1% barrier to the gospel be overcome? Win rural Japan, and maybe heart barriers all over Japan will begin to fall.

We can pioneer new ground and hold past ground. Rural Japan is in the pioneering stage so its soil requires more tilling, seed sowing,

## Rural Japan Church Planting Network Rollout

### In Place

- Prayer groups in U.S., Canada, Australia, China, and Africa who have each adopted a prefecture's unchurched rural areas (URAs) for prayer; prayer bulletins (four per year)
- A database of all pre-merger communities in Japan, including which UPG segment, the presence/absence of churches, population, etc. Includes list of all unreached rural areas by prefecture. Color-coded maps.
- Some advisory group members and volunteers.
- Vision/Mission Statement

### Coming Soon (2011)

- A proposal for a long-term collaborative church planting initiative in Iwate-ken.
- Two more Japan Harvest articles
- Seeking to involve rural Japan workers and key persons in missionary/Japanese ministry communities
- Launch at CPI (idea exchange meeting, elective, Iwate-ken collaboration discussion)
- Website (online database, idea exchange forum, rural ministry opportunities). After September 1, please check it out at <http://www.rjcpn.upg-japan-missions.com>.
- Rural Japan Internships (currently in Kagawa, likely Iwate, and perhaps elsewhere)

### Coming 2011/2012 (gradually as post 3/11 resources permit)

- Research into ID church plants/outreaches in unreached rural areas
- Database and map enhancements
- Adopt-a-prefecture prayer groups in Japan (Japanese churches, pastor's associations, etc.)
- Identification of 47 key prefectural point persons (Japanese or missionary) to provide prayer requests for unreached rural areas; contribute to research/updates, etc.

fertilizing, and watering to see a harvest. Urban Japan is in a different stage after 150 years of seed sowing. Long ago when rural Japan was more intentionally engaged, it seemed more open. There is little time left to harvest seeds sown back then, before those who were influenced are gone. Aging, limited outreach, and a pastor shortage are eroding historical gains.

Men are more reachable. They are less busy, and make up a higher percentage of seekers than in the city.

There are strong extended family and relational networks. The possibility to network via extended families and other relational webs seems higher.

### Greater Engagement of Rural Japan Needed

It has been a long time since I literally wept for the lost. But I was recently moved to tears as an elderly Japanese pastor spoke at an interdenominational gathering of pastors. He reported efforts of a handful trying to re-evangelize a few rural areas with once thriving churches now on the brink of extinction. Unlike this lone pastor, much of his denomination (once a leader in rural outreach) had lost its heart for outreach decades past. Surely God is calling some not only to leave homeland, but also urban Japan, to go to them. At present disproportionately few missionaries or Japanese full-time Christian workers are pioneering in unchurched areas of rural Japan. Not all are called to full time work in rural Japan. Yet all believers, urban and rural, could play a part in the gospel light penetrating to the ends of rural Japan. The question is who will, when, and how? Given the pioneer setting, the great need, and the scarcity of workers, a sufficient number of new church plants by those already laboring in rural Japan is unlikely to occur. More resources are needed. These include deploying new long-term workers, moving a subset of seasoned

### Please contact Rural Japan Church Planting Network – [RJCPN@hotmail.com](mailto:RJCPN@hotmail.com)

- If you or someone you know would like information about a collaborative long-term church planting initiative under consideration in unchurched tsunami-impacted areas of Iwate-ken.
- If you know of any church plants planned or begun in recent years in any of the pre-merger towns/villages that didn't yet have an established church.
- If you or someone you know is a key player in rural Japan ministry (whether just in their prefecture or Japan-wide).
- To refer a Japanese group (church, pastor's association, or other) that is potentially open to praying regularly for unchurched rural areas in their prefecture.
- If you are or know of someone broadly aware of outreaches or church planting efforts underway in a prefecture, or are well-networked with those who are.
- To refer a potential Prefectural Point Person (Japanese or foreigner).
- To volunteer to help in RJCPN's development and ongoing support in areas of translation (written, spoken), writing, administrative and research support, web design, database support, graphics, coordination, or communications liaison.
- To recommend someone (Japanese or foreigner) for the RJCPN Advisory Council
- If you are interested in possible "inner core" level of involvement in RJCPN (Note: Public launch for typical involvement is November).

missionaries/pastors from urban to rural ministry, and developing better equipped "laity" (urban, rural, returnees). Even if such occurs, it may be insufficient. Yet I am hopeful.

### It is Possible to Reach Rural Japan

I am hopeful because God is great. And because the latent potential to establish churches in all unchurched rural areas within our ministry lifetimes already exists if the potential of partnerships among church planters in unchurched rural areas and Japanese churches/missionaries in churched (mainly urban) areas can also be tapped. For some, that may mean becoming a fulltime worker in rural Japan. For others, it may mean using a portion of their time to assist church plants in rural Japan while focusing the bulk of their time on pastoring an established church, serving in urban missions, or continuing in secular work.

Japan has 1394 localities with 8,000 churches and pastors; 2,000 missionaries; and 1 million believers

spread among them. As previously mentioned, all of these are within twenty minutes to two hours from the remaining unchurched rural areas. If five established churches were to team together with one lead church planter to plant a church in the URA nearest them, total resources would be sufficient to allow churches to be planted in all 1,500 of the URAs in Japan. The potential is there to plant 1514 disciple-making churches in 20 years. It is possible—even if a sweeping church multiplication movement does not happen. However that potential won't be realized at current levels of awareness and inclination. Little of rural Japan has been engaged with the gospel during most of the post-war era. That can change only if more of us see the hidden unengaged among us and play a part.

### Coming up in the Autumn 2011 Japan Harvest

Rural Japan is a different world than the one most missionaries in Japan know. It requires doing

ministry in ways that take into account the unique realities of rural Japan. The next article will explore this and will also include some mini case studies from rural church planting missionaries.

## References

Many sources of data were used to compile this article, but the primary ones include:

- a) Church Information Service (CIS) hard copy data (2000) for:
  - Churches in Japan (2000)
  - Communities in *guns* pre-merger (e.g., places with lower populations—does not include *shis*)
  - Communities above 20,000 people that are unchurched
- b) *Operation Japan* and other sources

of information on unchurched areas of 20,000 or more population pre-merger.

- c) Multiple websites that provided more recent updates on the status of outreach in cities above 20,000 population that had been listed as unchurched in *Operation Japan 2000*
- e) Japan census population data (2000). Some figures were supplemented by prefectural websites.
- f) An online spreadsheet showing all pre- and post-merger town/city/village names. (Cross-checked with a separate map showing pre- and post-merger communities).
- g) JEMA directory (2008).
- h) Individuals with firsthand

knowledge for a few prefectural updates.

Population figures of 3,000 and 50,000 were adopted as the most missiologically relevant “break points” for defining UPG segment 3 in consultation with several missionaries experienced either in rural Japan ministry or church planting. 14

*Dawn Birkner (CTEN missionary, International Ministerial Fellowship-ordained pastor, Kagawa Pastor's Association) moved to Japan in her 30s, and has since led Shikoku rural church plants for 10 years (www.upg-japan-missions.com). She also leads the Rural Japan Church Planting Network (www.rjcpn.upg-japan-missions.com).*



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# Hallelujah Gospel Family Choir Network (Part Two)

**Personal Testimonies of the  
Power of God's Working**

*by Gary Fujino*

Surprises.” “Easy.” “Faith in Christ.” “Momentum.” “Overwhelming.” Words used by choir directors, pastors and missionaries in Japan to describe the effects of gospel music helping them both reach and build communities for our Lord Jesus. Continuing on from the article printed in the Fall 2010 edition of the Japan Harvest, this article gives personal testimonies of the power of God’s working through gospel choirs, specifically, the Hallelujah Gospel Family (HGF) network. God is using HGF to create new and multiplying communities of faith in Japan today.

HGF is based upon three core principles:

### Building Communities

The goal is not to start a choir but *to start a new community*. The choir does not revolve around the director, but is run by and for its members. This is what causes growth!

### Developing Relationships

*Relationships are emphasized over the event itself.* Non-Christians come to faith even as believers naturally share their lives and the gospel with others.

### Celebrating

Competition is discouraged; rather, *celebration is the core*.

Pastors and committed laypersons of congregations organize and facilitate all aspects of the local choir ministry. This makes HGF thoroughly indigenous, with mostly “homegrown” Japanese leaders standing upfront. Also, “not-yet-Christians” make up nearly 90% of most choirs, so opportunities for evangelism, counseling and “loving on people” are myriad. These singing groups

often are grown naturally through choir member relationships, with friends and family coming too. These and other factors (see the Fall 2010 JH) have contributed to HGF’s growth from one choir to more than fifty in just eleven years. Some communities of faith still continue to thrive and increase. Last September, Ken and Bola Taylor, the founders and leaders of HGF, were awarded the highly prestigious 2010 eXcelerate Award for innovation in mission by The Mission Exchange (see sidebar).



Even though most HGF members are “not-yet-Christians,” prayer for hurting members is a vital ministry at every rehearsal and performance.

In order to gain a wide perspective on the HGF network, I interviewed eight people from a variety of backgrounds, locations and denominations. (See references at the end for the list of interviewees.)

### 1. How did you begin “trying out” gospel choirs for your ministry? Did you have a goal? What/who influenced you?

We weren’t sure how this was going to work . . . but had seen the power of music as a draw for unbelievers. There was little to risk, and a whole lot of potential gain, by testing it out. Gospel music turned out to be a way to meet an unbeliever’s felt need, while helping us introduce them to their underlying spiritual need in a non-threatening way.<sup>1</sup>

“Gospel” was an attempt to get children to come to Sunday School. After the [1995 Aum Shinrikyo] incident, attendance of non-church children had dropped off until we were down to our one church elementary student . . . We decided to try a children’s gospel choir for just three months. We put an ad in a local paper, and immediately had 19 kids in Sunday School each week—with moms sitting in the back!<sup>2</sup>

### 2. How long have you been doing it? Was it easy, difficult or “normal” in trying to get things started? What kind of help did you get or need, especially at the beginning? What were some challenges you faced?

We’ve been doing it about five years, working with HGF for two years. . . The foundation for what we did came out of a gospel music workshop I participated in. We were helped greatly by workshops, resources, etc. One difficulty was how

to tie together those in the gospel choir with church members in fellowship.<sup>3</sup>

About three years. It was difficult getting started. I prayed for over a year for a choir director . . . She turned out to be a very good gospel choir director even though she is not a Christian.<sup>4</sup>

About nine years. It was too expensive at first for young mothers to come . . . but then we changed the speaker and had it done on a voluntary basis. When we made the cost one-third of the original we gained three times as many members as previously.<sup>5</sup>

With the momentum of the concert less than three months earlier, it was easy to gather an initial group of about 15 participants. . . One

# ゴスペル・チャリティ・コンサート Gospel Charity Concert

Hallelujah Gospel Familyに所属する50のクワイヤが、東京・ルネ小平に集結!!  
総勢300人のハーモニーが一つになって天に届く時、ゴスペルの力ー愛・希望・喜びが、あなたの心に解き放たれる!

Main Director



Ken Taylor

Guest Artists



Linda Taylor



Ray Sidney



John Lucas



Gregory Hooper



Ruth Hooper

日時: 6月18日(土) 午後6時開場 6時半開演  
場所: ルネ小平 西武新宿線小平駅前(南口下車徒歩3分)  
※ルネ小平には駐車場がございませんのでご注意ください。

入場無料: チャリティ募金あり  
募金は、災害支援ボランティア団体CRASHの東日本大震災の復興支援活動に寄付されます。

Front Act: HGF Kids Choir, Joyful & KCC Choir, Manna & Aguarachar Choir, Workshop Choir-Ray Sidney, Gregory & Ruth Hooper  
コラボレーション: 祭座(和太鼓)

主催: ハレルヤ・ゴスペル・ファミリー Hallelujah Gospel Family

<http://hgfjapan.com>

携帯サイト <http://ccnonline.jp/hgf>



Main Act: HGF合同クワイヤ

Big Wave GC, J's Choir, J's Branch IZUMI, J's Branch MIYAGINO, Grace Impact Choir, Mito GC, Spring of Grace GC, Gospel Jukebox, Hope佐野, Takasaki Gospel Choir, STUDIO Can! GC, Ichikawa GC, Prince of Peace GC, Tsudanuma GC, Shisui GC, With Hope Choir, BLT, Immanuel GC, Alliance GC, Tokorozawa GC, ICCS GC, Grace Harmony, 聖山ヶ丘ゴスペルクワイヤ, Humming Birds, One Voice, Shiki Grace GC, Harigaya Grapevine GC, ハッピー・ゴスペル・さかどり, こひつじゴスペルクワイヤ, Olive GC, 響けアガペー, Voices of Hope, Voices of Joy, Nakahara GC, Tears and Soul Singers, Tokyo Metro GC, Nakano Glory Choir, Amazing Grace!, KCC GC, Joyful GC, Mitaka Hope GC, Tsurukawada! Gospel Mommies, Kawasaki Voices of Grace, Green Leaf GC, 名古屋Grace GC, Grace4U, Cross Love, ゴスペルグループアジョイス, Hope(ひばり), Hope(ひとよし) \*GC: Gospel Choir

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<http://www.kurume-church.jp/>



## This year the Hallelujah Gospel Family's annual charity concert raised over 500,000 yen toward disaster recovery in northern Japan.

difficulty we experienced was that none of our existing church attendees was interested in gospel music, either as a genre or a ministry. That meant starting from scratch in building a new community.<sup>6</sup>

We were surprised at how many people wanted to learn gospel music, and at how quickly relationships formed in this new community. Sharing the same challenge of learning to sing, sing in harmony, and sing in a foreign language breaks down barriers . . . one of our challenges continues to be drawing men and helping them stick to the

group. After eight years of doing this, we also sense a struggle in getting newcomers integrated into this established community. The veteran gospel members are almost too comfortable with each other and the group can become ingrown.<sup>1</sup>

This year will be my third year directing gospel choirs, but my eleventh year of directing choirs. . . My challenge in doing these choirs is language. But, I have lots of help and input from my choir members who understand my bad Japanese and occasionally correct me when I'm saying something awful. . . The

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other easy thing about gospel is that it's three part harmony rather than the traditional four or more parts.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. How are you currently using gospel choir communities in your ministry?

We focused on different groups for evenings and for daytime. The evening choir had many working women with a few men. But their shared need for something like gospel helped to change the atmosphere. They wanted something that would impact their lives, I think. The daytime group was one hundred percent young mothers, so we taught about marriage and child-raising as the draw. This naturally increased contact of non-Christians with Christians in our church so we could invite them to other events and share spiritual things with them over tea.<sup>5</sup>

Every semester . . . we would have “sandwich luncheons” at the end of one of the rehearsals. After every semester finished we were able to use church events as a way of presenting gospel music performances. In almost all the events there was a short message where the gospel was spoken. We also had good opportunities for church members to naturally have contact with choir members during the sessions.<sup>8</sup>



When a concert combines gospel music with a traditional Japanese taiko (drum) team, the atmosphere is electric!

We're not just having them sing gospel, we want them to have deep fellowship, too. So, we have them help in bazaars, children's meetings, etc. For evangelistic services we have them sing special music.<sup>3</sup>

These choirs are very much about evangelism, and church members are challenged to share their faith. At the same time, Christians and non-Christians who will be Christians in the future alike are being trained to worship—to enjoy their relationship with God.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. Now that you've been doing it awhile, what similarities and differences do you see between HGF's core values and focus and your other ministry experiences?

I see the HGF core values are different in that they include non-believers in . . . the group and are

basically music-centered, while in Sunday worship we try to remain Christ centered. This ministry is like English classes, which are English-centered while trying to reach out with the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

From the perspective of a local church, it was wonderful. We're thankful that because the roles and responsibilities of the director and HGF are clearly defined, it made it easy for the church to take the initiative regarding spiritual matters.<sup>5</sup>

Gospel music . . . provides a natural way to share the gospel. We love teaching English. But, there is still always a bit of a transition in English outreach. With “gospel,” there is **no** transition. They came [expressly] to sing “gospel,” so they naturally have an interest (i.e. curios-

### How Our Church Plant Uses Gospel Choirs

We advertise in the community twice a year and gather as many as we can for a free trial lesson led by Ken at the beginning of each season. A few people just come for the free lesson and we're glad to have this opportunity to connect with them. But most return and sign up for the choir season, which runs February to June or September to December.

During the choir season we meet on Saturday afternoons for two-hour rehearsals. We use a community centre music room that we are able to use for free. We start off each practice with a ten-minute ice-breaker designed to build community and deepen relationships within the choir. Then in the middle of the practice, there is a short break followed by an evangelistic devotional based on themes of one of the two

songs we are singing that day. After the practice, we regularly introduce our church ministries and events, and also provide a monthly “Gospel English” time where we spend half an hour on basic conversation, half an hour covering the pronunciation and language of a gospel song we are working on, and then have a half an hour Japanese evangelistic Bible study.

Toward the end of the season we go to a restaurant for a dinner party. In addition to the final concert, we typically have a Gospel Celebration service or the choir participates in our Christmas service. Following that, there is a two to three month break before the start of the next season. I use this time to invite choir members to meet with me for an introduction to the Bible.

—Paul Sadler (World Venture)



## Gospel Choir Outreach Receives eXcelerate Award

In 2009, The Mission Exchange announced a new annual award to highlight examples of excellence, in-

novation or partnership in mission within the Great Commission community in the US and Canada. From the final list of fifty nominees for the 2010 eXcelerate award, TME selected the ministry of World Venture missionaries Ken and Bola Taylor who are using black gospel choir music as a tool for outreach in Japan. Ken and Bola were nominated by several different organizations in our membership in the category of innovation in mission.

The unique work of the Taylors reminds us that innovation often takes place at the edges of ministry away from centralized structures and close to the point of contact with the people being served. It also defies the widely believed misconception that ministries operating on limited budgets without large research and development operations should not expect breakthrough ideas. Ken and Bola remind us if you want to reach people no one else is reaching, you have to be willing to do things no one else is doing. The 2010 eXcelerate Award was presented on September 24, 2010 at the North American Mission Leaders Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina.

—Steve Moore, President and CEO, The Mission Exchange (formerly EFMA)

ity) in the meaning. That does not mean that everyone is a seeker, but it is completely natural to explain the meaning of the songs. I also believe God created music to connect with the heart in a special way.<sup>7</sup>

Almost everything in this experience was new to me so I can't compare with others. But I felt that HGF matched with the catch phrase theme our church is promoting, "a church where you can breathe easily."<sup>8</sup>

One of the things that make working with HGF easy is the fit between our core values. Most of our ministries have the dual goal of developing community and sharing Christ. HGF is not director-based and because of this we feel a lot of freedom in developing the ministry to suit our community and our ministry goals.<sup>6</sup>

In gospel choir workshops I participated in before, it definitely felt like the director was at the center of those meetings. So, the best thing is that community and relationships are stressed. The fact that the church is the base for the choir pulls everything together.<sup>3</sup>

Our missionary team's thrust is church planting and revitalization. HGF really has those goals in mind. One of the core values, building community, really fits Japanese culture, but also fits the culture of the church . . .<sup>7</sup>

### 5. Was doing gospel choir a "risk" or an experimental ministry from the perspective of your mission/denomination (or, for yourself)?

#### Are others in your group now interested and wanting to try it, too?

I know there are some of our supporting churches who sing black gospel music style but I have had to keep a "low profile."<sup>4</sup>

Gospel choirs seem to be spreading broadly through our denomination. I think people are deciding that there are more merits to having them, even with the risks involved. Some of these include the need for more choir directors. Also, in the relationship between choir members and the church there have been not a few "complicated" cases so, in asking the question, "how do we use this ministry in our church?" if there isn't strong, clear leadership then the church will also suffer.<sup>5</sup>

It was no risk for us. Our mission—and many others, I think—are pushing us to anything different. (That's the American HQ).<sup>2</sup>

One person who'd experienced gospel choirs warned me that there would be many difficulties and that it was taking a huge risk: "if you do this at a church, 'some don't get along with the choir director,' 'it's hard to get people to come,' 'the church's policy might differ from you as choir director,'" etc. Thankfully, we got past all of that and the

blessings have been more than I could have imagined.<sup>8</sup>

I have an interest in this as a ministry but whether or not the pastor himself has an interest in gospel music makes a big difference (in getting them started in the first place).<sup>3</sup>

Our mission is willing to try anything that will help us share the gospel. We've all been continually surprised at how easy it is to share the gospel with people because they're already interested in gospel music. We're not approaching them with a foreign concept . . . through an unknown medium. . . .<sup>7</sup>

### 6. What are some success stories you have experienced?

We had a woman who got saved through our gospel choir and became a member at our church. She also served in ministries of the church and found her "mission" through gospel music. Under her leadership the daytime group started up again and through her influence many heard the gospel, some were saved. Eventually, because of a job transfer, she went to Nagoya where she joined another choir that was a part of the HGF network. Now, in a choir where there are few Christians she is continuously exerting spiritual influence and is now serving as its director. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Mrs. T joined another HGF choir



(which has since ceased to meet) and was saved there. She came just for the music, but one of the songs was written “just for her” and she was saved and baptized. She had broken off all contact with her parents about 8 years before that, but after accepting Christ, she went back and God restored those relationships. . . . She started coming to our church shortly after she was saved because the church where she was saved was English and she didn’t speak any. She wanted to understand more. My wife was doing a playgroup for toddlers at the time and she started to come to help out. Before long, she had shared her story with another lady there. We saw them both standing off in the corner talking and crying. . . . When they were done, the non-Christian came over and asked if she could come to our house to talk. She (wanted to know) . . . if it is true that there is a God who forgives and who restores relationships. She too had broken off all contact with her parents. But after hearing Mrs. T’s testimony, she wanted to meet Mrs. T’s God. The next day this lady gave her life to the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

I don’t think there is a magic pill in Japan for evangelism. . . . I think that using gospel music has its advantages over some other ways to spread the good news and particularly that it provides a good opportunity for this time in Japan.<sup>2</sup>

There are no short cuts to ministry here. Gospel music is not the silver bullet of evangelism and church growth. But we have been thoroughly encouraged with how God has worked in this ministry over the last several years.<sup>6</sup>

Through gospel music, the (non-Christian) participants in our choir have felt closer to Christians and the church. And I think they are more receptive to messages and prayer. And some participants have come to church more frequently.<sup>3</sup>

Christians . . . building relationships with non-Christians . . . Baptisms of those who had been



**Bola Taylor was a professional entertainer in Southeast Asia before becoming a Christian in the '80's, emigrating to the US, and coming to Japan in 1997 as a missionary with her husband, Ken.**

in Bible studies for years. Singing gospel music simply helped them connect their head knowledge with their hearts. . . . Christians who have left church fellowship have come back to church.<sup>7</sup>

### **7. Looking ahead, what kind of future do you foresee in the role of gospel choirs and what you are trying to achieve for your ministry?**

We’d love to see Christians take even more initiative to love people with the message of the gospel.<sup>7</sup>

We are aiming at building new communities using gospel music for church planting. Our church vision is to develop 100 “Koinonias.” Gospel music will be one tool for pioneering cell churches. . . .<sup>5</sup>

We would love to see talented people from our choir come to Christ and be trained as directors and leaders. In addition to more lay-involvement in the actual running of the choir, we would like to see cell groups hosted by members. . . . [we] see a deepening of relationships and community within the choir and far more natural opportunities for member-to-member witness within the group.<sup>6</sup>

Through singing gospel music, because it can become a place where many have their hearts opened and

where they can feel the joy of making harmony, the choir itself will be an opportunity for even more people to be touched by the gospel through these choirs becoming communities of faith.<sup>3</sup> JH

### **Interviewees**

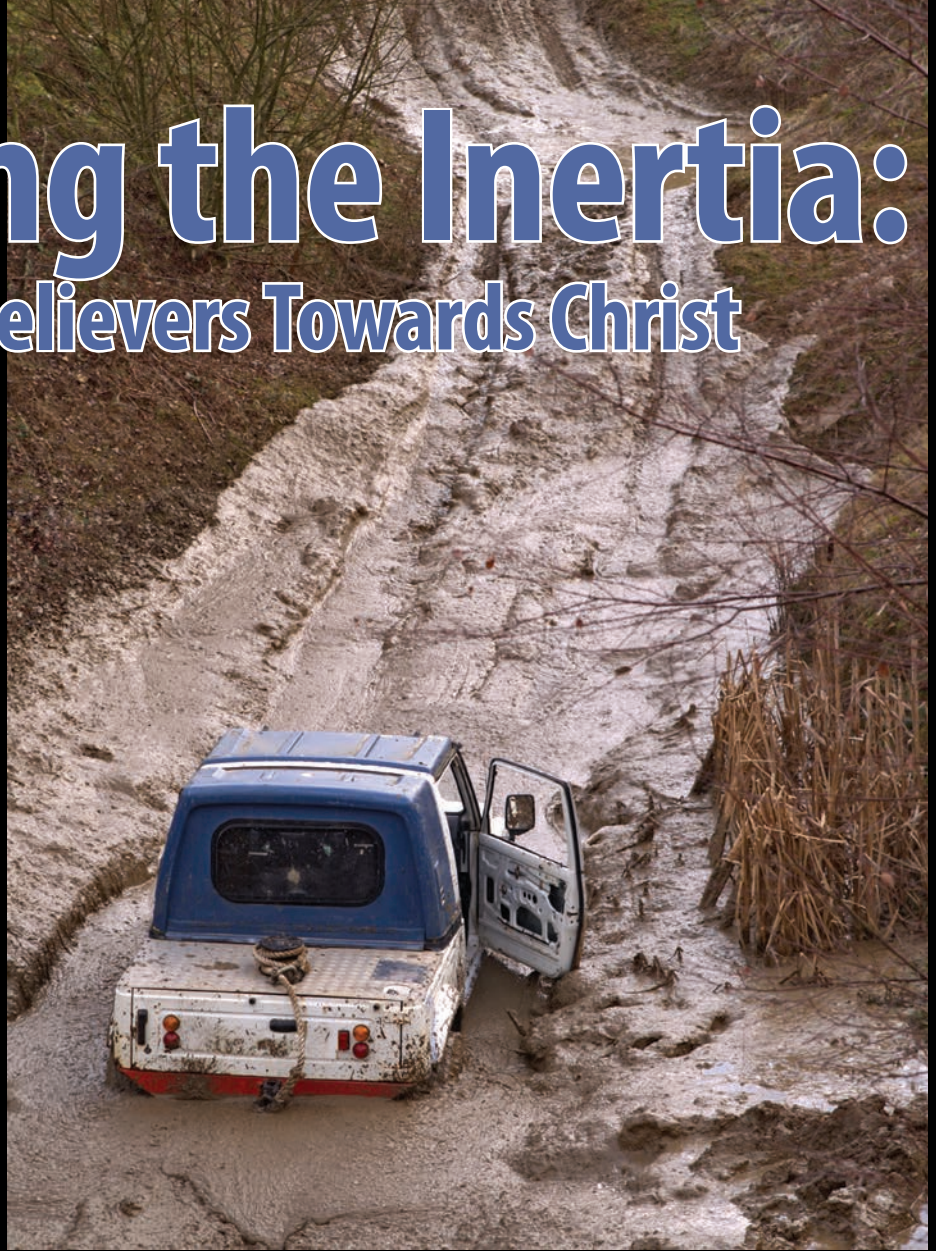
1. Kevin Laverman, World Venture, Kanagawa
2. David Kindervater, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Saitama
3. Toshio Miura, Pastor, Uniting Church of Christ in Japan, Kanagawa
4. Anonymous
5. Yoshiya Hari, Pastor, Conservative Baptist, Saitama
6. Paul Sadler, World Venture, Ibaraki
7. Tom Wilson, Mission to the World (PCA), Nagoya
8. Yumi Kanda, HGF choir director, Japan Presbyterian Church, Chiba

*Gary Fujino has been an urban church planting missionary with the Japan Baptist Mission (IMB/SBC) in the Greater Tokyo area since 1996. His primary assignment is to the Japanese global diaspora, both in Japan and abroad. He and his wife, Lynn, have two college-aged children and two still at the Christian Academy in Japan.*



# Breaking the Inertia: Moving Non-Believers Towards Christ

by Sue Takamoto



Do any of these scenarios sound like people you've experienced in your ministry?

- Nobuko was interested in learning more about who Jesus is, but said she couldn't believe in someone she can't see.
- Mrs. Takahashi\* and her husband have become like grandparents to our children. One time when we were at lunch, we talked at length about Jesus. She thinks he was a great man, but not the only way to God. She isn't interested in further study.
- The Ueda\* family across the street have been wonderful neighbors. Mrs. Ueda came to one of our fellowship gatherings, but besides that we haven't sensed spiritual interest.

How do we help people in each of these categories move toward Jesus? Or do we? During my early years in Japan as a single missionary, I was advised by a veteran missionary couple: "If you spend time with Japanese who do not seem interested in the gospel, stop investing in them and move on to others who are more likely to produce fruit." Really? Do I stop investing in Mrs. Takahashi and in our lovely neighbors because they aren't showing interest?

I would like to suggest a different approach that recognizes the invisible work of God in each and every relationship we make in Japan.

## Helping People Move Closer to Jesus

Our role, as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, is not to determine where people are in their relationship with

God, but rather to work with the Holy Spirit in moving people (believers and non-believers) towards Jesus. Wherever people are in their relationship with God, whether near or far away, we can be his assistants in helping them move closer to their Savior.

To identify what the appropriate "next steps" might be, Ralph Neighbour, one of the founders of the modern cell-church movement, described two categories of non-believers; Type A and Type B.

Type A people already have spiritual ears to hear the gospel but they need teaching (e.g., the example of Nobuko).

Type B people are more resistant to Christianity and the Church, but they are open to a friendly messenger (e.g., Mrs. Takahashi and the Ueda family).

With both types of non-believers, someone needs to help them take steps that demonstrate the reality of God in their life.

One morning I was out walking our dog and Mrs. Takahashi was trimming her bushes. I stopped to chat, and she began to tell me all the reasons why it was a bad thing that her daughter was getting married.

This was my chance.

“Mrs. Takahashi, I know how much you love your daughter. But I really believe God loves her even more. Would it be okay if we asked him right now to stop this wedding somehow if it’s not the best thing for her?”

She readily agreed, taking off her garden hat and bowing her head. I prayed a simple prayer.

Five days before the wedding, her daughter called us from the train station, crying, and asked if she could come over. She sat in our living room and shared why she needed to call off the wedding. We called her parents and our two families stayed up late into the night figuring out the best plan of action. When we finished, they asked my husband Eric to pray for God to bless these plans. All three witnessed the powerful love of God.

### The Small Invitation

Masumi Toyotome, in his insightful book, *Personal Enjoyable Evangelism*, writes about the idea of “the small invitation.” We wish our Japanese friends would all quickly decide to make the “big” decision and follow Jesus immediately, but this is not the usual scenario. Toyotome suggests that when our friends are not ready for this, we can help by choosing an appropriate small invitation.

Using one example of a friend he challenged to read the Gospels, he writes:

Of course, this does not make him a Christian. He has a long way to go before he could be

## What are some practical steps that we can take to help break the inertia and move non-believers towards Christ?

### Type A Non-believers:

- Give them a Bible; challenge them to read a portion of one of the Gospels each day.
- Pray with them that they will see the reality of Jesus in their own lives, and watch for it to happen.
- Set up a weekly Bible study.
- Share informally over coffee your own real testimonies of God’s work in your life.
- Invite them over with a believer friend to hear the testimony of God’s work.
- Pray with them for a real need in their life.
- Invite them to participate in an Alpha Course or another evangelistic type of study.
- Be ready to share the hope that is within you! Have a brief testimony prepared in Japanese. Memorize a few of the essential Bible verses in Japanese. Have one tract available all the time that you know well and are ready to use.

### Type B Non-believers:

- Pray with them (not just for them) when you see real needs in their lives.
- Model a godly life in which the fruit of the Spirit is evident.
- Engage in intercessory prayer to remove strongholds that might be blocking the way.
- Consider starting a non-threatening group to deepen relationships, such as a playgroup, a parenting or marriage class, an English conversation class.
- Share short testimonies of personal experiences that show God’s grace and reality in your own life.

*Some of these ideas are from a presentation given by Michael Wilson, Asian Access missionary.*

considered a Christian. But the important point is that he is no longer indifferent to Christ, no longer at the zero level of relationship to Christ. He has taken one step, albeit a small one, toward Jesus Christ . . . *One of the assumptions on which we operate is that Jesus Christ is irresistible and will win to Himself anyone who exposes himself steadily to His magnetism* (p. 73, italics mine).

Jesus Christ is irresistible when people are able to “taste and see that the Lord is good” Psalm 34:8 (NIV). Often we feel sad that our Japanese friends are missing out on all the good that could come if they followed Jesus. But the problem may be that they have not had a chance to taste and see his love. In any relationship with God, a person not moving

will not be aware of the workings of God in their life. But if we can help to break the inertia, even through a small step in the right direction (Toyotome, p. 74), it is much more likely that they will continue to move forward and find themselves drawn into the compelling love of Jesus.

With Nobuko, I challenged her to read part of Luke each evening. I also shared the frozen lake analogy—you can look at the lake and think it is frozen, but the only way to know for sure is to step out on it. So it is with our faith in Jesus. You need to make that step onto the lake in faith to know for sure. One month later, Nobuko shared with me that after finishing the book of Luke she knew she had to walk on the ice. Nobuko is now in full-time ministry, sharing with many others her love for the Savior.

Many believers in Japan hope that bringing a non-believing friend to church will somehow make that person want to be a Christian. Once in a while this is successful, especially if it is a Type A friend who is already interested. Our expectations may be unfair, however, if we presume that someone from this group-oriented society can walk into a room where they are the outsider and find they can fit in and want to join.

It seems much more effective for us to enter the world of Type B non-believers instead, and allow Jesus to show himself there. Our friends are much more likely to move towards Jesus if it is in the context of their world.

And isn't this what Jesus did? He went into non-believers' homes, got into their boats, met them along the road where they were sitting. Jesus

had a relationship with them first in their own context. After they had an experience with the living God they were more ready to move out of their comfort zone.

With all non-believing relationships, we need to focus on building genuine friendships. Be real. Let them see Christ in our lives. Have fun. Create shared experiences. Let's not make them feel their friendship with us is dependent on them becoming a Christian.

Last November, just as we were stuffing our Costco turkey into our Japanese oven, we heard the ambulance coming. Our neighbor Mr. Ueda had had a heart attack. My husband Eric went across the street and was there as they brought Mr. Ueda down the stairs, on a gurney. He was conscious. Eric asked if he could pray briefly and Mr. Ueda

nodded yes. Eric prayed a short prayer for God to heal him and touch his life.

Two weeks later when he was discharged from the hospital, Mr. Ueda for the first time ever came into our home. He came to thank Eric for praying; the doctors said he had a remarkable recovery. A first step toward physical healing, and a first step towards Jesus who loves him. 卍

\*Names have been changed

*Sue has been serving with Asian Access for twenty-one years as missionary, trainer, and seminary teacher. Her joy is incarnational ministry, partnering with her husband Eric and four children ages eight and under. She blogs at [www.takameter.wordpress.com](http://www.takameter.wordpress.com).*

## God's Comfort for Hurting Japanese



### Love Japan: Through a Broken Heart (Love Japan: Kokoro no Kizu o Tohshite)

By Yuri Mori

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This is an easily understood, everyday language paraphrase of the New Testament portion of the Bible. It is especially a "first step Bible" for Japanese who have not read the Bible before. This revision of the *Japanese Living Bible* avoids childish expressions and excessive honorific formalism and opts for everyday conversational style of Japanese language easily accessible to jr. high students and the man and woman on the street. Any unusual words have pronunciation markings and an explanation in parentheses. OT quotations also have the reference in parentheses. Includes maps and book introductions. B6\* size, 656 pp. ISBN 978-4-264-8206-0289-7 **(69600) ¥1,470**



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# Breaking the Inertia: The Rain Woman

by Sue Takamoto



It was a hot, humid Thursday in Sanda when Natsuko dropped by to see me. She said she was dreading going camping that weekend with the Tanaka\* family.

“It’s going to rain again and it’ll be all my fault!”

She went on to explain: “I’m known as ‘rain woman’ (雨女). Wherever I go, it rains. I ruined my eighth-grade graduation picnic because I was there and it rained. People don’t like to invite me to things because they know if I show up it will probably rain. Every time we go camping with the Tanaka family, it rains. They know I’m a rain woman. I’m dreading this weekend!”

I sucked in air. I knew this was the chance I had been praying for—the opportunity to let Jesus get involved in something that really mattered to her. Up until now, her family had shown no interest in spiritual things.

“Natsuko, I think Jesus really cares about how you feel about being known as ‘rain woman.’ And I don’t believe you really are—God is the creator of the weather, not you. Would it be all right if we prayed together and asked God to take care of the weather?”

She nodded. I prayed a simple prayer, asking God, the Creator and Controller of all things, to show

Natsuko his love by taking care of the weather that weekend. When I said “Amen,” she had tears running down her cheeks.

The next day, the weather forecast was no better for the weekend. That night, the prediction was still a one hundred percent chance of rain for the next day! Before going to bed, I got down on my knees to pray about all of this. And as I started praying, I realized I didn’t really believe God could change the weather! Maybe if the forecast was a little more promising I could believe, but not at one hundred percent.

This was an important faith lesson for me. I knew I needed to one hundred percent believe that God could change the weather. As I prayed, I recalled the many times I have seen God’s miracles in my life. The many answers to prayer. And I remembered real stories from the past—people in the Bible who experienced way-more-huge miracles than God changing the weather! And suddenly a flood of faith filled my heart—I knew beyond a doubt that God could absolutely change the next day’s weather, even with all the odds against it. I went to bed with great peace and expectation.

Saturday morning it was dismal outside. I wasn’t sure whether to

try calling Natsuko, so I waited. Around noon, she called me from her cell phone. “Sue-chan, guess what? We were packing up the car in the rain. We drove to the campsite in the rain—about an hour away. And suddenly, when we arrived, the sun came up! It’s beautiful here. Thank you so much for praying. Now we can enjoy camping because God answered your prayers!”

On Monday morning, I had biked two of our children to *yōchien*. Natsuko’s camping friend, Mrs. Tanaka, came running across the playground. “Sue! Thank you so much! We were sitting around the campfire on Saturday night and Natsuko told us how you prayed and the rain stopped. Thank you for praying! God is amazing!”

A simple prayer was the beginning for Natsuko (and everyone around that campfire) to experience the power and love of Jesus Christ.

Since that time, Natsuko and I have had several opportunities to study the Bible and pray together. This faith challenge—for both of us!—taught my fearful heart an important lesson and broke the inertia for Natsuko, beginning her movement toward Jesus. 卍

\*Not their real name.

# JEMA Women in Ministry Invites You!

**Fall 2011 Day of Prayer: September 29, 2011**  
**Spring Retreat: March 7-9, 2012**

Photos from WIM Retreat 2011 - "Grace Points" with Jane Rubietta, speaker.



**WIM Retreat**  
**March 7-9, 2012**

Speaker:  
**Dr. Jan Hansen**

**BEARING  
FRUIT**

John 16:33

Location:  
**Okutama Bible  
Chalet**

**Join us for Fall Day of Prayer PLUS**

**Sept. 29, 2011 held in Ome at**

**ROSE TOWN**

**(Home of Edie Town)**

The day will include a morning of prayer and worship,  
lunch at Okutama Bible Chalet (¥700),  
a walk along the river, and afternoon tea.  
Plan to spend the day or come for a portion as you are able.

**Check out [www.jema.org](http://www.jema.org) for more information.**

Okutama Bible Chalet is located in the  
beautiful Tama River Valley.



**WIM exists for the purpose of equipping,  
encouraging, and enhancing missionary  
women in their ministry roles**



*Faith De La Cour, Human Resource Development Coordinator for Asian Access, serves as the chair of the JEMA Member Care Committee.*

*Faith and the JEMA Member Care Committee welcome your feedback at [membercare@jema.org](mailto:membercare@jema.org)*

### *Taking Care of Yourself*

What differences have you seen in yourself since the triple disasters in March?

In the spring issue of Japan Harvest (pp. 35-37), Eileen Nielson introduced us to the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and some effective coping strategies. If you were in Japan on March 11, how are you doing now, several months later?

Do you see differences continuing in yourself physically (ongoing fatigue, increased numbers of headaches, nightmares, difficulty relaxing, hyper-vigilance, loss of appetite, overeating)?

What about emotionally (feeling depressed, having a quicker temper, mood swings, tearfulness, a sense of helplessness or being overwhelmed, anxiety, a loss of a sense of humor)?

Have you noticed behavioral changes in

yourself (withdrawal or excess dependency on others, irritability, cynicism, critical attitudes, working longer hours than before, poor productivity, unhealthy activities for stress reduction such as smoking, use of alcohol or drugs, promiscuity, or Internet addictions)?

How is your spiritual condition (spiritual dryness, lack of forgiveness or increasing bitterness, feeling far from God)?

Many of the above symptoms should decrease as we get further away from the events of March, but it would be beneficial for all of us to stop and create adequate time this summer to be refreshed and renewed. If you have been involved in relief efforts, it's highly recommended that you get away to another area for a break.

Take time to talk with a good listening friend about what you're experiencing.



*Michael B. Essenburg (Christian Reformed Japan Mission) serves as a coach, consultant, and trainer at Christian Academy in Japan. Time permitting, Michael works with missions.*

### *Leaders, Pursue Excellence*

**You're grateful for what God has done for you.** So, you want to serve God, in part by pursuing excellence for Him. As a ministry leader, you know that one type of excellence you want to pursue is organizational excellence. Good.

**What can you do to pursue organizational excellence?** Here are 4 things you can do:

**(1) Make sure staff are cared for.** To care for staff on a personal level, demonstrate interest in them, have fun together, and provide life coaching to help staff balance

work/home. To care for staff on a professional level, demonstrate interest in their ministry, encourage them to reflect, and provide support, encouragement and accountability.

**(2) Make sure staff participate in professional development.** Professional development that addresses current job responsibilities and helps individual staff members achieve their annual growth goals. Be sure it involves staff in reflection and follow-up and helps them do ministry more effectively.



Sometimes the process of verbalizing our thoughts and feelings helps us to figure out how to move to the next step in our return to strength and resilience. Spend time in prayer with each another, seeking God's healing touch in each of the areas you find yourself struggling.

If these symptoms continue for much longer, it is important that you begin to get some help to sort them out. Perhaps your mission has member care personnel that could provide you with resources to assist in this time of renewal. It may be that there is a counselor that would be willing to meet with you via an online connection such as Skype. There are missionary counseling centers outside of Japan where you

could go to get help for you and your family. The JEMA website has a list of these in the Member Care Counseling links.

From time to time, counselors come to Japan to offer their services to the mission community. We make every effort to send out emails from JEMA Member Care to notify our constituency of their availability.

In November, JEMA Member Care will again be staffing a Personal Discovery and Consultation Center at the National Church Planters Conference (CPI). We have counselors who have experience in Japan, including some who are bilingual (English/Japanese) who donate their time to be available to meet with missionaries and Japanese church

planters attending CPI. Come the day before the conference begins if you need some extra time to focus on team dynamics, or special issues in your family. It is best if you make an appointment ahead of time. Watch the web for more information at <<http://jcpi.net/national-conference-2011>> over the next few months for more details, or contact me at [jemamembercare@gmail.com](mailto:jemamembercare@gmail.com). JH

**(3) Make sure staff meetings target mission achievement.** Make sure each meeting's purpose is documented, targets mission achievement, and is used as the filter for what gets on the agenda. Have those attending the meeting collaboratively develop meeting guidelines that define desired meeting dynamics. Schedule separate meetings to address tactics, strategy, and vision.

**(4) Make sure staff understand, are involved in, and are focused on organizational improvement.**

Explain organizational improvement, encourage ownership, involve staff in developing improvement plans, and provide the support and accountability staff needed to carry out the plans. Here's the acid test: if ministry leadership dropped off the planet, would the plans still get implemented? If so, then you have an effective organizational improvement plan.

**Bottom line: Pursue excellence.**

### **How Can You Help Others Pursue Excellence?**

By asking questions like:

1. What's excellence?
2. What's satisfying/unsatisfying about pursuing organizational excellence?
3. For your ministry, what does organizational excellence look like?
4. What can you do to pursue organizational excellence?
5. What will you do? JH



*The Missionary Geek*

### *Where Ya Gonna Keep It All?*

We had a major hard disk crash at our house around New Years. A laptop drive just died . . . No warning, just died. I took the drive out, tried all the tricks I could think of, but we were never able to get it going again or get any files off. Most everything was backed up, but because our backup drive was too full, we hadn't backed up the music files. Well, all the music is still on the iPhone, you'd think it would be simple to just sync the phone and put the music back on the computer. Nope! When you sync, all your music disappears off the iPhone. (What are you thinking Apple?)

This points out a common problem though—how and where are we going to keep all the growing amounts of data that are important to us? Photos, videos, and music all take up large amounts of disk space. You probably have an external drive you use for backup. I bet it's full like ours was. Now external drives have come down in price and gotten much larger. I just saw a two terabyte external drive for less than ¥10,000. But even a drive of that size fills up pretty fast, especially if you keep home videos on it. (And where else are you going to store video files since there are hardly any cameras that still use tape?)

I've been trying out saving files to Blu-ray disks. I bought an external Blu-ray disk drive (IO Data) for about ¥15,000. The disks are either single layer (capacity 25 GB) or dual layer (capacity 50 GB). The smaller disks are about ¥150 each and the larger ones are about ¥700. But I'm finding out that for me at least, Blu-ray is not without problems. First of all, not all programs will support saving files to a Blu-ray drive. My drive came with a newish version of Nero, so it'll work. (Also, Nero will install in either English or Japanese!) However, I've been using Acronis to make images of key computers when they are freshly set up. When you finish loading all the software to a new computer, set up the printers, get your e-mail set up,

etc., you can create an image file so that if you replace a hard disk, you can restore it already set up. However, the Blu-ray image I created before Christmas for our office computer wouldn't work when I tried to restore it. (What are you thinking Acronis?) Even though the image appeared to create successfully, it wouldn't restore at all. Going onto the Acronis web site later, I found, "We are aware of some issues with Blu-ray disks."

Next, I've found that some disks work better than others. I bought some cheap no brand disks that simply do not work as well as some more expensive Maxell disks that I bought. Also, the dual layer disks seem more finicky than the single layer disks. (What are you thinking Blu-ray disk manufacturers?)

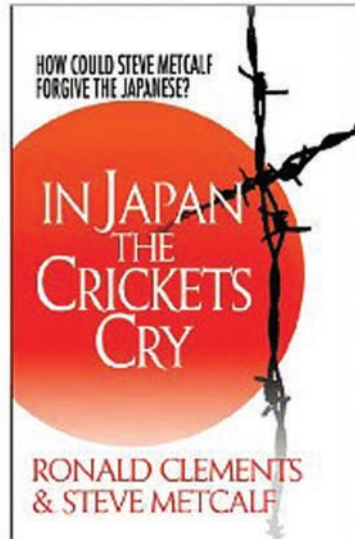
I'm always amazed at how long it takes to set up a computer from scratch—even if you have the original disks that will "restore your computer to the state it was in when you first purchased it." If you're like me, you have several hours of work ahead of you. First you have to delete all the junk that comes installed that you don't want. Companies pay computer makers to include their software, so you have to uninstall all the offers from AOL, Earthlink, etc. Then you have to install all the programs you use: Acrobat Reader, Picasa photo editor, Skype, your printers, your web cam, your scanner, your anti-virus software, iTunes, your word processor, then setting up all your e-mail accounts, restoring all the data files from your backup, disk burning software, etc., etc. And then to add insult to injury, Microsoft will be installing updates for the next three to four days (no joke). Couldn't they just let you download everything at once? (What are you thinking Microsoft?)

Well that's enough ranting for this time. Send questions and suggestions to [missionarygeek@yahoo.com](mailto:missionarygeek@yahoo.com) JH



### *In Japan the Crickets Cry*

**Reviewer:**  
*Wendy Marshall and her husband David have served in Japan with OMF International since 2000. She is kept busy looking after their three boys and various other roles, including Associate Editor of Japan Harvest.*



*In Japan the Crickets Cry*  
Ronald Clements and Steve Metcalf,  
Monarch Books, 2011, 224 pages

History is a subject many avoid. They remember it as boring lists of names and dates from their school years. Yet, as missionaries, we can learn much from the history of the country where we serve.

This is no boring recollection of a life; Steve Metcalf has lived through extraordinary times. His story starts in China where he lived as a child with his missionary parents. It tells of his internment as a Japanese prisoner of war (POW) during his teenage years and how, after his release, he discovered freedom and

Christ in Australia. During his internment he met Eric Liddell, the champion runner from Britain who turned his back on fame to become a missionary in China. Liddell died in the camp, but not before he challenged Steve to pray for the Japanese, his captors.

This challenge began the process that led Steve to serve in Japan with OMF International for nearly fifty years. His experience enabled him to bring a message of forgiveness and reconciliation to Japan, reconciliation with God and with their enemies.

Steve is open about his own failures, misgivings and emotions. His several romantic missteps along the way kept me turning pages. He tells of his early frustrations and failures with the language and culture. He even reflects on bad judgments by the mission in those early years.

It is well written with short chapters and few irrelevant details. Anyone with an interest in Japan will enjoy this book. Indeed anyone who is interested in seeing how God can work out something terrible, like four years as a prisoner of war, and turn it to good, will be encouraged when they read this book.

Available from [www.amazon.co.jp](http://www.amazon.co.jp) for ¥1256 yen. JH



*Roger Lowther is a professional musician working in Tokyo with Grace City Church Tokyo, a new church plant in central Tokyo led by Rev. Makoto Fukuda. Grace City Church seeks to reach young professionals working in and around Marunouchi and meets for worship in a rented space in Ginza. Roger and his wife Abi have been in Japan since 2005 with Mission to the World. He graduated from the Juilliard School with a Masters in Organ Performance. Both Roger and Abi have a passion to see artists use their talents to spread the message of the gospel in ways that engage and challenge the culture of Japan and the world. Please feel free to contact him by email: [rogerlowther@gmail.com](mailto:rogerlowther@gmail.com)*

### *Music in Disaster Relief: The Aroma of Beauty*

We drove into a gravel lot that was fairly clear of debris and started unloading the supplies to hand out. Others started making meat-and-veggie stew on large propane burners. It was hard not to stare at the devastation surrounding us or flinch at the stench of the decaying fish and squid washed in by the tsunami.

Then something magical happened. The pleasant aromas of the cooking soup began to drift through the air, a smell almost forgotten in the memories of the survivors who began to line up. They had not been able to cook for over a month. It awakened a hunger . . . an appetite . . . for delicious hot food—but also for life. It felt as if hope itself was actually wafting through the air.

Bruce Huebner, graduate of Tokyo University of the Arts, walked up and down the lines of waiting people playing his shakuhachi bamboo flute. The tunes gently carried stories of both pain and peace. It awakened a joy for life that had been forgotten. It



was not a way to distract people from the boredom of waiting in line. It was not mere entertainment. It was the delicious odor of a soup of a different kind, but one nonetheless real and meaningful. It pointed to a source of beauty that will always satisfy and never fade away. Our spirits heard it and remembered...

What part does music play in disaster relief? It was not a question I immediately tried to answer as everyone was over-





whelmed by the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters. But as it so happened, the very first shelter to which I brought supplies had an old electronic keyboard in the corner. When I mentioned that I was a musician to the shelter manager, everyone started to set up chairs and gather around the keyboard. Once I started playing, they didn't want me to stop.

Almost 100,000 people still reside in shelters three months after the earthquake, grief stricken and unable to move forward with their lives. People need love, and music opens doors for us to be in the shelters and show that love long after the need for material supplies has ended. The most important part of musical relief trips seems to be the building of relationships. After hearing us play, people are willing to open up to us with their lives and their stories.

We have witnessed dramatic changes in the mood at a shelter during the course of a concert. Festive shouts of "Bravo!" and "Wonderful!" ring through the air. Children come up to play with us. People repeatedly break down in tears as some deal with their grief for the very first time. One energetic 84-year-old gentleman sang songs from his youth as a thank you, bringing cheers from everyone in the shelter. For a little while, one broken-down community center was transformed into an elegant concert hall as the music transcend-

ed the surroundings.

The most dramatic response occurred at the Onagawa nuclear power plant's shelter following a moment of silence observed upon the two-month anniversary of the tsunami. The mood was incredibly somber, and we realized the usual upbeat beginning to a concert was far from appropriate. Bruce Huebner came up with the brilliant idea to call out a melody from one side of the gymnasium on his shakuhachi. Steve Sacks echoed a varied response from the other side of the room on his saxophone. Calls and responses of comforting melodies crisscrossed the room, mesmerizing us with their healing power by the end of the concert. As we were leaving, one of the junior high girls got up the courage to start playing her flute. Bruce and Steve quickly joined in and before long a whole group of adults were joyfully dancing in their celebration of life! You can see a short video clip of this amazing moment on my blog: <http://rogerlowther.blogspot.com>.

So far I've led 23 concerts in shelters with other Tokyo-based professional musicians. We have played in schools, hotels, sports complexes, community centers, and even outdoors. The set-up of my portable digital organ never fails to draw crowds and comments, but nothing compares to the reactions when I start to play. "Wow! You've turned our gymnasium into a beautiful cathedral," one shelter manager

told me. People always send us away with "Please come back, and play longer next time!"

Ten Christians from The Juilliard School came with me to Watanoha Elementary School shelter to help in musical relief work in the beginning of June (part of 14 concerts they gave in 12 days!). As the afternoon light began to wane, refugees began to pull out their flashlights and lanterns so that we could all see the music. The howling winds of the typhoon knocked out the power and created an eerie atmosphere inside the gymnasium full of people. Lakes of standing water surrounded the area from torrential downpours of rain. Yet the music allowed us all to relax and feel that everything was going to be okay.

At the International Arts Movement conference in New York City, Jeremy Begbie spoke of music coming into our broken world in such a way that encapsulates the importance of music in disaster relief. He said, "In a world that is so obviously not as it ought to be, it is the calling of artists to be agents of a new world, a redeemed world. Whenever we start to believe that nothing can ever be different, that our homes, relationships, careers are basically stuck in a groove and can never change and never will change... whenever we start to believe that the horrors of the world just have to be: the emaciated child compelled to beg at a road side, or the prostitute forced to the streets to feed her drug addiction... whenever we start to believe that there can never be anything new under the sun—it's the artist's calling to make us believe things can be different, that life can be new, that a new world is possible, a world that ought to be."

Do you also have great stories of the role of the arts in disaster relief? I would love to hear about them! Please write me an email: [rogerlowther@gmail.com](mailto:rogerlowther@gmail.com). JH



*Eileen Nielsen has served as a church planter with her husband Jim in Aichi for the last 20 years and has a masters in counseling. She is presently working in Tohoku with CRASH Japan as a base camp leader. She is available to do counseling by Skype (contact: eileenpielsen@gmail.com). Eileen loves writing and her three kids.*

## *Haragei: Implicit Communication in Japan*

Once our local CPI (Church Planting Institute) group read the book *The Japanese Mind* as the basis for discussion in our monthly meetings. One chapter was titled “Haragei: an implicit way of communicating in Japan”. The chapter contained some helpful and insightful information for those of us who live cross-culturally.

Haragei is made up of the Japanese word hara meaning stomach and gei meaning “art”. In the Japanese dictionary, this is described as a “way of exchanging feelings and thoughts in an implicit way”, implicit meaning implied or unspoken. It can be used both positively and negatively in communication. Positively, one is “expected” to understand what others are thinking. And though for Westerners this seems to lead to misunderstanding, for the Japanese, it’s a way of avoiding conflict, an important value in Japanese culture. Negatively, Japanese are careful to “hide” what they are really thinking, especially when it works to their advantage in a business or political setting. For Westerners, this appears to be deceitful.

The reason it is effective in Japan, and not Western cultures, is related to the difference in the cultures. Japanese culture is considered a “high-context” culture, where many Western cultures are “low-context”. “High-context” cultures value silence, and are not apt to ask questions. They don’t mind vagueness, and often have little information contained in a verbal communication. It is important in low context cultures to have excellent listening and observational

skills. People from high-context cultures like Japan tend to be indirect and formal communicators.

Low-context cultures encourage people to ask questions to make things clear and aren’t comfortable with ambiguous communication. Ambiguity can lead to frustration and misunderstanding. They prefer explicit conversation, where words convey “the bulk

of if not the entire message”. It isn’t a problem for low-context people to communicate in written form, since the non-verbal isn’t an important part of the message. People from low-context cultures tend to be direct and informal communicators.

The high-context Japanese are comfortable with long silences and consider it part of the conversation. Japanese believe they can understand each other without words. They interpret the silence, giving it meaning depending on the context. In “haragei”, the listener is intentionally trying to understand an unspoken message.

How very different this style is from the Western way, which one business website described as “robust” and “direct”. Miscommunication is seen as negative. Another website, which teaches communication skills, points to directness and clarity as the two most important aspects of good communication, and lively debate is considered an important part of the process.

Considering how different the two styles of communication are, it is no surprise that there is often misunderstanding and miscommunication on both sides. 卍

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“High-context” cultures

value silence,

and are not apt

to ask questions

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He reached down  
from on high and  
took hold of me; he  
drew me out of deep  
waters.  
Psalm 18:16

主は、いと高き所から  
御手を伸べて私を捕らえ、  
私を大水から引き上げられた。  
詩篇18篇16節

**PRAY:**

*For the recovery efforts  
in northern Japan...*

*For endurance for Japanese  
pastors and church staff*

*For cooperation in ministry  
among multiple organizations*

*For a continued flow  
of volunteer workers*

*For new Christian congregations  
where none have been before*

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