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Forward

- 4** Happenings
- 5** From the Editor
- 6** News



Feature Articles

- 8** Mobilizing workers through vision casting
by Matt Parsley
- 10** The D House internship
by John Edwards
- 12** Working together to reach rural Japan
by Dawn Birkner
- 14** A chance to chat missions
by Jocelyn Williams
- 16** How simple can church be?
by Jef Linscott
- 18** Mobilization tactics
by David Cervenka
- 20** Mobilization: then and now
by Mike McGinty
- 22** Prayer as mobilization
by Christina Winrich
- 24** Short-term mission: one way to raise up long-term workers
by Hoi-Yan Shea
- 26** The power of a good baton
by Andy Meeko
- 28** Mobilization of one woman's soul
by Kari Miyano

Regulars

- 31** Voice of Experience
I attribute it all to the grace of God
by Richard Goodall
- 33** Language & Culture
Listening for echoes of the gospel
by Simon Pleasants
- 34** Church Planting
Become friends with non-Christians
by Seima Aoyagi
- 35** Member Care
Are you thriving?
by Amy Newsome
- 36** Off the Bookshelf
Heading Home / Grit
by Wendy Marshall / Jackie Peveto
- 37** Good Writing
Be unexpected
by Wendy Marshall
- 38** Focus on Prayer
The six spheres of prayer
by Ken Reddington

General Article

- 30** A Japanese pastor's perspective on evangelism in Japan
by Dene Hughes



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November

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November 9-11, 2022

Tsumagoi Resort, Shizuoka

Latest info at: <https://jcpi.net>



February 2023

JEMA Connect

February 27-March 1, 2023

Ochanomizu Christian Center

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

jema.org

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



Japan Harvest

Volume 73 No. 3
Summer 2022

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Japan Harvest Staff

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Managing Editor: Wendy Marshall (wmarshall@jema.org)

Associate Editor: Rachel Hughes

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

News Editor: Peter Swan

Art Director: Karen Ellrick

Advertising Director: Atsuko Tateishi

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Atsuko Tateishi, Mayumi Penner, Michiru Pleasants, Ai Nightingale

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JEMA

2-1 Kanda Surugadai

Chiyoda Ku, Tokyo 101-0062

Tel: 03-3295-1949 Fax: 03-3295-1354

Email: jema-info@jema.org

Website: jema.org

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Mobilization

Japan Harvest isn't my only ministry. I also do mobilisation with my mission. I'm the editor and team manager for OMF Japan's social media (Facebook and Instagram) and also the content we put on our website (<https://omf.org/east-asia/japan>). Our goal is to raise up prayer and workers for Japan.

Six ways to reach God's world

OMF has a great mobilisation framework called "6 ways to reach God's world." It lists six ways that people can become more involved in mission: learn, pray, send, welcome, mobilise, and go. This is helpful to ponder as we engage in mobilisation because just talking about "going" can be overwhelming for many. Not many will be able to go overseas or even to another community in their country, but everyone can be involved in one of the other ways. As we work from the field on mobilisation, our social media team's goal is to move people from where they are right now to greater involvement in mission, however that looks in their current situation. This broadens the scope for mobilisation.

Here are some ways that we can encourage people to grow in involvement in mission:

Learn: This means to learn more about the needs in God's world. It could involve watching videos or reading, following our social media posts, or doing an internship.

Pray: They could sign up to receive prayer updates, join a missionary's prayer support team, join a mission prayer meeting in their local area, look up prayer resources on our website, or take a short-term prayer journey to another country.

Send: They might ask God to show them a missionary to encourage, decide to financially support, or start a small group to support a specific missionary.

Welcome: This means reaching out to international visitors in their country. It could mean they seek out international people in their local area and get to know them, start an English class, or volunteer at a refugee outreach.

Mobilise: There are lots of ways people can get involved in mobilisation—advocate for a people group or a cause, volunteer with a mission organisation, invite a friend to join them on a short-term trip, help bring a global vision course to their church, or serve as a mentor in their church for others going on short-term trips.

Go: This one is the most obvious—go on a short-term trip or contact a mission organisation about what opportunities they might have.

Of course, the theme of mobilisation is larger than just mobilising people to be involved in mission, and the articles we've got for you this issue reflect that. We also have people write about mobilising Japanese people to reach Japan and others who've written about mobilisation of Christians in general.

Let's keep praying for harvesters

As I write this in March, the borders have just reopened for new visa holders. Our mission, along with many others, is scrambling to be ready to receive an influx of new workers, some of whom have waited for over a year for borders to open. Let's praise God that even in the midst of a pandemic, he's raised up new workers to serve here. And let's continue praying that God would raise up even more harvesters for Japan.



Blessings in Christ,
Wendy
Managing Editor

Cover: Artwork in the OMF Hokkaido Center. It combines the Japanese character for person 人 with the concept of mobilization. The art includes plastic cases that contain seeds, also conveying the idea of spreading the gospel. Photo by Roddy Mackay.



The themes for the upcoming issues are:

Autumn 2022: Evangelism in an Honor-Shame Culture

Winter 2023: Arts and Ministry (proposals due by July 31)

Spring 2022: Ministry in an Aging Society (proposals due by October 31)

Summer 2023: Japanese Church History (proposals due by January 31)

When I realized “I didn’t have to strive to be loved”

A testimony by Michiya Tanaka, Night de Light

Christian Shimbun, November 28, 2021 Translated by Grace Koshino

Pastor and drummer of rock band Night de Light Michiya Tanaka always encourages people around him and is full of smiles. After returning from studying in the US 12 years ago, Tanaka opened up his church to young people as a place where they could belong. Through his music he shares the message of hope, and as a pastor he provides a place where youngsters feel they can belong.

“When a teenager loses their trust in one adult, they often lose their trust in all adults. That is why it is important for them to find that one person whom they can trust.”

One Christmas, some of the church middle schoolers put together a skit about ants quarreling over food. What the ants thought was food was in fact insecticide. A human who saw what was happening tried to warn the ants, but the ants didn’t understand her. So the girl became an ant and tried to stop them. Even then, the ants would ignore her. As a final resort, the girl took the “food” and ate it herself and died. It was then that the ants realized the sacrificial love of the girl. This is what Jesus Christ did for us when he became a man to save us.

Dealing with young people can be challenging at times. “Even though we give them our all, we don’t always get a positive response. Sometimes we are met with betrayal or rejection, and

it feels like all was in vain. But that is precisely what reminded me of the love of Jesus.”

His band was starting to take off and one of their songs was even selected as the official supporters’ song for a professional soccer team in Hokkaido, where the band members are based. However, around 2017, all that passion and happiness faded and he felt he was “unworthy.”

Tanaka, known for his positivity and hard work, started feeling down. It was just before the band was due to play a concert of their own, and he felt overwhelmed. “I didn’t have the energy to live, nor did I have

the guts to die. How could someone in that state be worthy of singing songs of hope? This carried on for five months. My family and band mates stayed by my side. Words of hope and gentle sounds are what kept me going. Even though I had given up hope on myself, people around me still believed in me. That took the weight off my chest.”

It was during those dark days that he realized that he “didn’t have to strive to be loved. It is because I am loved that I can carry on.”

Based upon Tanaka’s own experience and conversation with over 2,000 youngsters, he put together a book titled いいんだよ、昨日までのこと全部。心が軽くなる31のアンサー (approximately—*Don’t Worry About the*

Past—31 Answers to Lighten Your Heart, published by Word of Life Press Ministries). The book has been distributed to schools across Japan. He continues to send messages of hope through various media. ■

Masahiro Watanabe, painter of Paris scenery for 39 years

Christian Shimbun, November 7, 2021 Translated by Atsuko Tateishi

Having lived in Paris for 39 years and devoted himself to painting its scenery, Christian painter Masahiro Watanabe returned to Japan during the pandemic. During an exhibition of his paintings at Ginza Kousin Gallery in October 2021, *Christian Shimbun* interviewed him.

Watanabe was born in Yamagata Prefecture. Upon graduating from college there, he moved to Tokyo to work as a schoolteacher while waiting for an opportunity to move to Paris. He had a strong desire to see with his own eyes the cityscape painted by Yuzo Saeki. Watanabe has also been inspired by the writing of Arimasa Mori (Mori lived in Paris for many years). It was his mother’s death that led Watanabe to read the Bible and to eventually be baptized in March 1982, just a little before moving to Paris. He was 33.

He began his life in Paris as a student at art school. During this time, he would occasionally win an award sponsored by a



uest News

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

local art gallery. But after five years he became unable to paint at all. Looking back, Watanabe believes that it was time needed for his sense of space to shift. He had to adjust his senses to the Paris scenery, which was entirely different from what he had grown up with. After three difficult years, having been encouraged by his wife’s affirmation that he was a painter before anything else, he took up his paintbrush again, this time with a new sense of mission as a Christian painter.

Watanabe believes he has a two-fold mission. He must commit himself to God’s plan through honing his God-given art skills. He must also perform his societal responsibility through producing art for spiritual empowerment. Both faith and art can touch and inspire people at a deep spiritual level, Watanabe believes, and he stands at the juncture of the two.

The French began to appreciate and purchase his works twenty years ago. But he only became able to make a living solely through painting ten years ago. After decades of experiments and training, Watanabe now feels that he is finally able to express in his paintings what he senses and sees. He plans to paint Japanese scenery from now on. He believes that, as an artist who has become aware that he’s approaching the end of his life, it is his responsibility to tackle the scenery of his home country. ■



Watanabe at Ginza Kousin Gallery

Hope for women with unexpected pregnancies

*Christian Shimbun, January 2/9, 2022
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi*

Chiisana Inochi no Doa (Door for a Little Life or DFLL) opens its doors 24 hours a day, seven days a week for women experiencing difficulty with an unexpected pregnancy or raising a baby. Founded in September 2018 in Kobe City by Ikuko Nagahara, a maternity nurse from Manna Maternity Clinic, and Yoriko Nishio, a public health nurse, DFLL has received over 22,000 requests for assistance.

It all started when a suggestion was made to Nagahara to set up a place where women could anonymously leave their baby if they became unable to take care of it. When this idea did not take off, Nagahara went to Germany where the concept of a ‘baby hatch’ is common—a discrete hatch on the side of a care facility where parents can leave their babies as a last resort. She learned that women in Hamburg don’t actually leave their babies at the hatch, but simply enter the main door carrying their baby and ask for consultation. This opened Nagahara’s eyes. She could address the well-being of both a baby and its mother with a specialized facility.

Thus DFLL began. No medical or consultation fee is charged and secrecy is strictly protected. DFLL is for women who are afraid during their pregnancy, who are pregnant but have no one

Maternity home Musubi



to consult with, and who are experiencing difficulty raising their baby.

In 2020, they opened a maternity home called Musubi, adjacent to Nagahara’s maternity clinic. Musubi is where women can stay, deliver, and nurse the baby until they leave and start a new life. Ten staff and volunteers support the home’s operation. When a woman enters the door of DFLL for the first

time, an on-duty member greets her with thanks for her courage in coming to them.

Nagahara hopes that facilities like DFLL will multiply within Japan. She has also been arguing for the law to provide pregnant women and newborn babies with greater protection. Securing employment for women with babies

is another challenge that she hopes to tackle. Nagahara has seen many women enter the door of DFLL in tears. She feels happy when she sees them off at the end of their stay with a smile. You can read more about DFLL in a book published in 2021.¹ ■

1. Nagahara Ikuko 永原郁子, and Nishio Yoriko 西尾和子, *小さないのちのドアを開けて 思いがけない妊娠をめぐる6人の選択* [Open the door for a little life: choices by six women with unexpected pregnancies] (Tokyo: Word of Life Press Ministries, 2021).

All photos submitted by *Christian Shimbun*

Mobilizing workers through vision casting

*Just like the gospel, vision needs to be passed on.
But not just any vision—God’s vision!*

By Matt Parsley

Jesus was a masterful vision caster. He powerfully communicated the heart and vision of the Father as he invited everyone into the story of God’s kingdom. Jesus made clear his mission and our role in that mission. The final words of Jesus must have penetrated to the very hearts of the disciples as he gave them his promises and authority to join him in this great global mission.

By following the example of Jesus, perhaps we, too, can become effective vision casters. If we want to see more kingdom workers pursuing the Japanese people, we must see more people pursuing the extraordinary vision that is God’s heart. Christians need to hear the truth about the desperate need for the gospel, globally and among the Japanese, and that the time for the harvest is now. So let’s explore the task of casting vision to mobilize laborers among the Japanese by passionately sharing God’s *vision*, God’s *mission*, God’s *patience*, and God’s *promise*.

God’s vision

We must catch God’s big vision for the world and pass it on to every follower of Jesus we meet. From Genesis to Revelation, God is pursuing all the peoples of the earth. Those from every nation, tribe, people, and language gathered around the Lamb, giving praise and honor to him—this is the end vision. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Eleven disciples. All nations. That’s a big ask! The word “nations” in this verse is the Greek word *ethne*. So rather than focusing on geographic boundaries, Jesus’s command is aimed at all ethnic people

groups. That makes the task even bigger.

What difference does it make if our vision is smaller than God’s vision? If our vision is small, we might think it can be accomplished in our own power. If my vision is to reach five people this year or plant three churches by the time I retire, that’s something I could realistically accomplish. But when God’s vision becomes my vision, I begin to aim higher. I long to see every people group reached, sooner rather than later, so I work urgently towards that vision every day. It’s a God-sized vision that can never be attained without the powerful moving of God’s spirit and a complete dependence on him. And that’s the point!

Though adopting God’s vision for reaching all people could certainly feel overwhelming, it places us at a point of complete and utter dependence on God, right from the starting gate. A vision for reaching all Japanese leads to an urgency in reaching entire Japanese communities . . . and so forth.

As we share about the need for workers among the Japanese, we need to be looking for those who catch a vision far beyond all that we could ask or imagine. Let’s cast out a God-sized, impossible-for-us vision and see who we catch.

God’s mission

God doesn’t just have a big vision; he has a plan to see it fulfilled. And this plan involves every follower of Jesus. The plan is spelled out succinctly in Jesus’s last words to his disciples before he returned to heaven: “Go and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20 NET).

It’s usually assumed that this Great Commission is applicable for all believers throughout all time. But why is that true? Jesus said that making disciples includes going, baptizing, and teaching to obey. In obeying Jesus’s command, the disciples would have taught those who were baptized to obey all of Jesus’s commands—including this command to “make disciples of all nations.” As those new disciples obeyed, they would teach others to obey the command to make disciples. As those disciples obeyed . . . well, you see where I’m going with this.

Every believer of Jesus needs to understand that they have received salvation because someone obeyed Jesus’s command to make disciples. And this obedience is meant to pass through all





and all-encompassing nature of Jesus's Great Commission. Even in our weaknesses, we've all been called, qualified, and empowered to fulfill his mission!

God's patience

I used to think that the patience of God expressed in 2 Peter 3:9 was directed solely at those who did not know Jesus. It's true; God is patient with those who have yet to believe, with the aim of salvation (3:15). But here, Peter directly addresses believers when he says that God is "being patient toward *you*, because he does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (3:9, author's emphasis). The Lord is not slow, but is being patient with us—the church—as we labor to get the gospel to the ends of the earth.

I think it's important for the church to hear the hard truths concerning the unreached. In the book *24:14—A Testimony to All Peoples*, Justin Long shares the following "brutal" facts:

- In the year 1900, 33% of the world identified as Christian. In 2000, the number remained around 33%. And, unless something changes, in 2050 it will still be at 33%.
- There are 7,000 remaining unreached people groups (UPGs) in the world, consisting of 3.15 billion people, representing 42% of the world.
- Only 3% of cross-cultural missionaries serve among UPGs, and only 0.37% of all full-time Christian workers serve the unreached.¹

Clearly, we are not making much progress towards making disciples of all people groups. There could be many reasons why this is true, but the last statistic above must certainly be part of it. The Japanese are the second largest unreached people group on the planet.² As we make the global church aware of the vast lostness among the Japanese, perhaps more resources will be directed Japan's way. And as ordinary followers of Jesus, dependent on God's strength and empowered by the Holy Spirit, engage in the task of making disciples among the unreached Japanese,

perhaps many more church members around the world will be emboldened to join the rescue mission!

God's promise

The slow engagement and progress of the gospel among the Japanese and other UPGs is discouraging, hopefully motivating, but definitely not the final word. It's important we communicate to our brothers and sisters the hope of God's promise for the Japanese. Jesus said to his disciples, "Don't you say, 'There are four more months and then comes the harvest?' I tell you, look up and see that the fields are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35). The time for harvest among the Japanese is now. Not later. Not someday. Now! The only thing missing is workers! "The harvest is plentiful," Jesus said, "but the workers are few" (Matt. 9:37). As more disciples enter the field of Japan, the ready harvest will be brought in!

The present church isn't the only pool from which to find more laborers. An army of God stands ready to be mobilized from the harvest itself. It's critical that we begin sharing God's big vision with those we are engaging, even before they come to Christ. They need to know they are a part of a bigger story. In this way, the DNA of God's vision will be passed from person to person, family to family, and church to church.

God wants us to share his same big vision—the pursuit of all people. He's invited us into his plan to make disciples and fulfill this vision. The facts regarding the lost in our world are staggering, but we thank God for his patience as we mobilize to reach the unreached. We can be confident in God's promise that there will be a harvest among the Japanese. And the time is now! Let's go spread the word! **JH**

1. Justin Long, "Brutal Facts" in *24:14 - A Testimony to All Peoples*, eds. Dave Coles and Stan Parks (Spring, TX: 24:14, 2019), Chap. 21.

2. Joshua Project, "Unreached: 100 Largest," <https://joshuaproject.net/unreached/?s=Population&co=desc> (accessed April 18, 2022).

Matt Parsley is a Movement Catalyst with Beyond. He and his family are from the US and currently live in Malaysia, where they strive to make disciples among the Japanese diaspora there and throughout Southeast Asia.

of us. Full-time participation in the mission of God was never intended to be limited to the so-called experts or the "specially-called" ones. Every disciple of Jesus is commanded to make disciples, who make more disciples, who make more disciples.

"I could never do what you do." "I don't know enough about the Bible to make other disciples." "My faith is too weak." Perhaps you've heard excuses like these when inviting others into God's mission. One of the verses that often gets overlooked in the Great Commission passage is—"When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted" (Matt. 28: 17). Jesus looked right at those who doubted him and, without blinking an eye, gave them the same grand mission of God as those with greater faith. Go, you doubters, and make disciples of all nations! Let's make sure to communicate to our brothers and sisters the inclusive

The D House internship

Preparing future missionaries to thrive long-term in Japan through hands-on learning and exposure

By John Edwards

“I’d like you to start an internship program here in Japan. We will call it D House. ‘D’ stands for ‘Discipleship,’” said Paul Suzuki. “You and Susan design it and give the Japan Council a proposal.” With those words, the leadership of SEND Japan began to establish an internship program that would lead to an increase in new missionaries to Japan.

My wife, Susan, and I looked back on our own experiences as short-term missionaries in Japan, as leaders of short-term teams, and as long-term missionaries entering Japan in 1993. We decided to narrow our focus to English-speaking applicants who are seriously considering Japan for long-term missionary service. With wise input from others, we decided to limit this internship to less than 90 days. That way we could have three sessions each year with a month in between to recuperate and prepare for the next group of interns. It also meant we would not need to apply for visas from most countries we expected interns to come from. Finally, we decided that interns would live with us. It has long been my conviction that much more is caught than taught. Interns would learn more about life and ministry in Japan by observing us daily than by hearing us merely teach on those subjects.

We had four goals with the D House internship. First, to give our interns a realistic missionary experience in Japan so that they could better determine how the Lord might be leading them. Second, to give SEND missionaries exposure to potential incoming missionaries so we could better understand how to best serve new missionaries. Third, to positively contribute to ministry being done in Japan. And fourth, to give interns a chance to bet-

ter understand SEND’s organization and culture.

Susan and I focused on five broad areas with our interns.

1. Living skills

When we were short-term missionaries in the 1980s, we did not shop for our own food or cook our own meals. As a result, when we arrived in Japan as new full-time missionaries and the veteran missionaries took us to our cabin at TEAM Center in Karuizawa for language school, we had little knowledge of how to identify foods in the grocery store or how to prepare meals in Japan. Susan and I aim to have our interns be able to shop for and prepare several meals on their own. Our interns help us with food shopping, meal preparation, and cleaning up.

Additionally, Susan and I teach them how to get around on public transportation, use Japanese money, and speak basic Japanese. We do some language teaching, but we also look for opportunities for our interns to learn from Japanese people themselves.

We give interns money to use for eating out, charging their SUICA card, and buying snacks. They keep track of expenses and account for it before we give them additional money. “Try to get lost” is one of my encouragements to interns. I want them to explore on their own and find their way home. Once we lost two interns on the same day. One got on the wrong train going in the opposite direction. He got off, explored a new area on his own, and found his way back. Another intern went for a walk around our neighborhood and found himself lost. He, too, eventually found his way home. (We give interns prepaid phones to call us if they need to.)



2. Cultural understanding

To live in Japan and communicate the gospel so that it will be heard requires some level of cultural knowledge. Through cultural experiences, conversations, and reading, we attempt to introduce interns to some distinctives of Japanese culture.

We go to a few Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. We visit historical sites. When possible, we participate in school festivals, tea ceremonies, and other events. One day two interns walked with me through a park during *hanami* season. A young man saw us and invited us to join his group. We talked with these university students for an hour.

Until this year, our D House has been on the outskirts of Sendai. We always send our interns to Tokyo for a week to see how life and ministry looks in an urban context. This spring Susan and I moved to a city in rural Yamagata Prefecture. Our internship will expose interns to a rural context, and we will continue to send them to Tokyo and probably to Sendai to see other subcultures within Japan.

3. Engaging the unreached

Susan and I have become increasingly aware of the high “wall” around local churches that make it difficult for Japanese unbelievers to be in a position to hear the gospel from a believer. With that in mind, we intentionally get involved in the community so we can meet and build relationships with unbelievers outside the church building. Volunteering, English conversation



Scenes of a few of the D House interns in action

groups, tours, and just greeting people we meet in our daily lives are ways we meet new people. Of course, we also assist in church ministry and practice hospitality in our home.

We visited a local *jidōkan* (community center for children) one day with two interns. One of them saw a guitar and asked if he could play it. He sat on a small chair and started singing a praise song. Probably without understanding the words, several staff sat around him and clapped along. Soon afterward, we began volunteering weekly at this after-school program.

Three interns began building a relationship with a young woman at a hat shop. Through apps and limited common language, they learned about each other. Before these interns left Japan, they bought a Christian book for this new friend.

4. Staying healthy

We explore how to stay healthy physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. What resources are available to take care of yourself? How might you incorporate Sabbath rest into your life in a culture that doesn't rest? How do you connect with others? How do you feed yourself spiritually when you may be involved in a church where

your understanding of song lyrics and sermons might be very limited? Long-term missionary service requires intentionality in taking care of ourselves in every way. We all have different ways of taking care of ourselves. We discuss ways our interns might keep themselves healthy if they were to return to Japan long-term.

5. Understanding missionary organizations

SEND International is an organization of its own. We want our internship program to allow and even encourage interns to meet many other missionaries. We want them to know that missionaries are very different from each other. Our personalities, gifts, lifestyles, and organizations can vary substantially. We want our interns to not just hear but to see that. Of course, they will be most exposed to SEND missionaries, but they will also meet missionaries from other organizations.

Since 2014, we have hosted 23 interns in our home in Sendai. We've had as few as one and as many as five at a time. We've found three or maybe four to be our comfortable limit.

This spring two former interns returned to Japan as fully supported long-term SEND missionaries. Another intern is returning to Japan with his denomination's mission organization. Another intern moved to a different city in his home country to be involved in ministry to the Japanese there. Some former interns determined that living abroad is not for them. Others returned home to continue their education and are praying about returning to Japan.

Several other missionaries within the SEND International world have adopted the principles of D House and adapted it to their ministry context. As my wife and I enter what is likely our last decade of missionary service in Japan, it gives me great hope and joy to be involved in the lives of future missionaries and prepare them for success in life and ministry in Japan. **JH**

Photos submitted by author

John Edwards and his wife Susan (US) have been in Japan since 1993 and are currently with SEND International. They live in Yamagata Prefecture, cooperating with Shion Christ Church in evangelism in Obanazawa city.



How can we reach Japan's remaining unengaged, unchurched areas? Let's rethink mobilization, priorities, and collaboration between agencies to reach Japan's last spiritual frontier.

Working together to reach rural Japan

By Dawn Birkner

The heart of the Great Commission is to bring lasting gospel presence to the ends of the earth. Japan has been open to missionaries for 160 years, but half its municipalities (1,640) lack their first church and remain untargeted. For the purposes of this article, I will call them “unchurched.” All these are rural (used in this article for a city or town under 50,000 in population). More than 90% of missionaries serve in the half that already have churches.¹

Increasing awareness recently of the great need has led to more interest in and prayer for rural areas that lack their first church, as well as more openness among missionary candidates to rural service. Yet these things alone cannot surmount the entrenched systemic barriers to getting workers to rural Japan that arose due to a several decade gap in church planting initiatives in towns and villages in many regions of Japan. So, despite a greater awareness, the missionary distribution among prefectures and between churched and unchurched areas of each prefecture continues to remain imbalanced.

The majority of mission agencies have no efforts underway in rural areas, nor long-range church-planting plans or internal pathways for new workers to serve there. Yet all unchurched areas in Japan are in rural areas. Even among the few agencies with rural ministry,

urban-developed policies can unwittingly make the pathway more difficult or hinder prospective workers. The worker shortage in rural Japan is primarily due to dynamics that perpetuate an overconcentration of missionaries in some areas and absence in others.

Ultimately, to reach the remaining unchurched areas of Japan will require more rural church planters. However, the solution is not more mobilization, but

- 1) a new way of thinking about mobilization, placement, policies, and on-field support;
- 2) more agencies adopting rural church planting as an explicit part of their goals and openings; and
- 3) collaborating between agencies in selection and timing of target areas for church plants.

This last point will enable missionaries to be mobilized and placed into nearby areas in sufficient numbers and close timing to make rural service a more desirable, attainable, and sustainable option for new workers.

Ways to address the worker shortage

We need prioritization and concrete pathways. Below are some ideas about how we can achieve this.

Inform prospective missionaries that Japan has rural areas and needs missionaries in them.

Mobilizers could focus more on people from rural settings, those comfortable with highly diversified roles (i.e., not specialists), and middle-aged singles and couples who don't have children aged 9 to 18.

Agencies, churches (in Japan and overseas), and seminaries could partner with rural ministries and routinely send them interns for one portion of the total internship duration. This increases manpower for the host ministry and exposes more prospective future workers to rural needs.

Each agency can make a difference by adding rural church planting as one of the main categories of placement possibilities offered to new missionaries. An agency without experienced rural workers could place a first-term missionary with a rural church plant of another agency, so that, in time, the first agency also would come to have rural workers in-house. To assist them, the Rural Japan Church Planting Network keeps a database of rural placements seeking additional team members.

Clear pathways should be provided to prepare missionaries in their first term to lead a rural church plant in an untargeted unchurched area in their second term. There is a need for a softer landing place for first-term missionaries and Japanese workers to learn the ropes of church planting in a rural setting at the same time and place with peers. In response, the Rural Japan Church Planter Training Center has been started to prepare mission-

aries with Reaching Japan Together Association or any cooperating church or agency, to lead a rural church plant with their own agency in their second term (see sidebar).

Change policies to lessen barriers

Consider the circumstances of available workers and rural settings. Then work to accommodate real-world situations, even if it requires flexibility in policies.

Ensure workers bond with rural Japan from the outset by allowing an option to study Japanese online from a rural area instead of at an urban language school. Living in an urban situation in one's first term tends to lead to lifetime urban service. It's now viable to study Japanese anywhere in rural Japan in a structured group class taught by certified professionals.

Allow each team to choose any blend of church planting models based on their unique team and setting. Some models that work in urban Japan can be counterproductive in rural Japan and/or create unrealistic expectations that set workers up for attrition. Mobilization emphasizing just one model could screen out those best suited to rural ministry.

Retain or regain a role as a mission agency in initiating church plants in unchurched municipalities, even if, in church areas, the agency limits its activities to requests from the Japanese church.

Let pioneers pioneer—steer them to rural Japan, which is at an earlier missiological stage. Foreigners are still needed to lead pioneer church plants in unchurched areas, as long as they are committed for the long haul. This role in rural Japan should not be limited only to Japanese at this stage.

Equip workers for isolated settings, and, when possible, introduce prospective team members. But don't mandate serving on teams after their first term, as doing so will nearly ensure unchurched areas stay unengaged. Prospective rural workers must be free to work alone at times.

Be open to interagency teams, which may be one of the only ways workers will be able to serve in a rural church plant alongside others.

Allow a first-termer to work in a rural ministry, even if it is outside an agency's geographical focus area, to equip them to plant a church in an unchurched rural area within the focus area in their second term.

Prepare workers to be resilient in the face of unavoidable challenges rather than discourage rural service to avoid them. But also work to remove unnecessary ones (e.g., be flexible about home assignment, social security issues, minimal support levels required, etc.).

Interagency collaboration in target selection

If the coals are too far apart, a fire soon dies out. If limited rural workers are scattered across a broad area too quickly, needed synergy cannot emerge. But if they are too concentrated, not enough areas are reached.

Multiple agencies cooperating to field multiple teams simultaneously in separate unchurched municipalities of the same prefecture could be a game-changer. This would allow new church plants to emerge in close enough proximity for workers serving on separate teams to provide spiritual, social, and logistical support to one another through a peer network. As a result, rural service would be more viable while also permitting agencies and teams to each retain their distinctiveness.

Such collaboration in targeting is important, but the benefits depend on not targeting too many prefectures at once. No agency alone can reach 1,640 unchurched areas, but with cross-agency collaboration in target selection and timing, small and large agencies alike can be part of the solution, yielding sufficient critical synergy to reach rural Japan.

Other ways to reduce challenges:

- Organizing a pool of retired Japan missionaries for home assignment relief.
- Sharing mid-term workers (e.g., those with a three-month to three-year term) by splitting their term between urban and rural ministry partners.
- Locating successors for those who need to retire before a church plant can reach full completion.
- Options for rural MKs (e.g., home schooling/social co-ops, internationally-recognized distance learning, dorms near international schools).
- Organizing cross-agency prefectural missionary gatherings for fellowship.

Taking action

It will take much greater intentionality, interagency collaboration, and rethinking mobilization and on-field support paradigms to reach Japan's last spiritual frontier in our generation. This article is to stimulate reflection and action, not be prescriptive.

How can you as an individual and your agency prioritize rural ministry and make it a more viable choice so that permanent gospel presence is established in each of Japan's remaining unchurched areas? **JH**

1. Author's considered estimate based on various sources, including the JEMA directory and communication with other experienced rural church planters.

Dawn Birkner, planting rural Japan churches for 20+ years, pastors Kita Sanriku Christ Church, led tsunamil typhoon relief work, and leads Reaching Japan Together (reachingjapan.org) and Rural Japan Church Planting Network (ruraljapanchurch.com).

A new opportunity

The new Rural Japan Church Planter Training Center in Iwate prepares first-term missionaries to lead rural church plants from their second term. It offers two- and four-year programs. Participants learn Japanese, gain in-depth rural church planting experience in a group setting locally, and have broad exposure via short-term mission trips to other rural Japan ministries. The training center was custom designed as a concrete avenue to bridge the gap between the theoretical desire of a pre-field prospective missionary to serve in an unchurched area of Japan and the reality of doing so.



A chance to chat missions

By Jocelyn Williams

Raising up young people for mission

I want others to share my passion for mission. My interest in overseas missions began around the age of 10 when I started to read lots of missionary biographies found on the bookshelves at home (my father was a pastor and children's ministry worker). In high school, this interest was developed by monthly mission prayer meetings before evening church. At university, I attended various mission events in my local area. In 2000, I went to theological college with a view to going overseas for university student work or Bible translation, but instead I married and became a minister's wife doing mission in churches in Australia.

Promote a passion for mission

I was the missions coordinator at my church on the Gold Coast for nearly seven years. When I first took on the role, little was known about the missionaries our church supported. To promote a passion for mission amongst our church members, I organised regular PowerPoint prayer updates in church services, prayer evenings, and an annual May missions month. Whenever our mission partners were on home assignment, I invited them to run a prayer and information evening. At these events, I had conversations with several different young people from our church who expressed an interest and desire to serve God in either short- or long-term overseas missions. I decided to gather these young people together and the Chance to Chat Missions Group was formed.

Gather those interested

The purpose of the Chance to Chat Missions group was for young people to share their short-term experiences and vision for overseas missions and to pray for and support each other. I also

encouraged the group to see themselves as missionaries in their familiar Australian context, always seeking opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus with others.

At the first meeting in 2015, we had six young adults. We met four times that year. By the end of the year, we had 20 young adults meeting in our home to chat about missions.

I aimed to expose them to different aspects of overseas missions and give opportunities for them to meet past and current missionaries firsthand. The meetings were open forum, to share and ask questions. I wanted to challenge them to think through what it means to serve overseas.

At our first meeting, people shared their experiences of short-term mission (trips with schools or medical student placements) and expressed their interest and desire to serve overseas, and we prayed for each other. A retired missionary who attended our church came and gave valuable insight into her experience of organizing short-term teams in China.

At the second meeting, our mission partners from Central Asia were on home assignment after 10 years on the field. It was a fantastic opportunity for the group to get to know this missionary family better and to ask a range of questions about long-term mission work. Some of the questions asked were:

- How do you balance family life with mission work?
- What is it like to work with people of different theological backgrounds/church persuasions?
- What if your desire to work overseas conflicts with your parents/family?

Our mission partners answered these questions and many more. It was exciting to see young people thinking seriously through the issues

involved in committing to long-term missionary service.

Short-term mission trip

Several in the Chance to Chat Missions group were interested in going on a short-term mission trip, so I invited Sam McGeown (former missionary in Japan) to share at our third meeting. Sam shared the possibility of forming a Go Explore Missions team—short-term mission exploration trips run by the local branch of the Church Mission Society (CMS)—to visit our partner missionaries in Japan, Dene and Rachel Hughes. The group was excited by this prospect, so I sounded out this idea with the Hughes to see if it was viable to send a short-term team from our church. The Hughes were keen to do it, so I decided to organise a team.

At our final meeting of 2015, Dene Hughes was on home assignment, so he came and shared the ups and downs of life in another culture, the difficulties of Japanese language learning, and his experiences working with KGK (Japanese university student movement). Dene's frankness and honesty about his experience helped the group to realize that long-term mission service is hard work but very valuable in sharing the gospel. The Chance to Chat Missions group decided to form a Go Explore Missions team to visit Japan for two weeks at the end of 2016. Seven young adults committed to join the team. Those who couldn't go agreed to encourage, support, and pray for the team.

Prepare the short-term team well

As I had young kids to care for, I sadly couldn't go, so I asked Sam McGeown to be the team leader. He agreed, and I would help with the team preparation.

In 2016, the Chance to Chat Missions group started meeting monthly as we prepared the team for their short-term mission trip. There were four aspects to the training meetings:

1. Six Bible studies on the biblical theology of mission.
2. CMS "Go Explore Manual" for short-term mission trip preparation.
3. Discovering and sharing about Japan and its culture—each

team member prepared a short presentation.

4. Practical aspects of the short-term trip.

Part of this last practical aspect of the training was to teach the Go Explore team how to engage with the rest of our church in raising support for the short-term mission trip.

To do this, we had members of the Go Explore team speak at Sunday services. We developed a support brochure for the team to hand out to church members, family, and friends. We also gave out envelopes to the church for financial gifts.

Involve the whole church

We organised a Go Explore Japan prayer night for the whole church. The team made sushi to raise funds. We gathered prayer points from the team members and shared an update, photos, and prayer points from the Hughes family, and prayed in small groups. About 60–70 people from church came to support the team. The team subsequently ran a car wash and a bake sale to raise funds. These fundraisers were multipurpose. Not only did they raise finances for the team but they also engaged the rest of the church in learning more about Japanese culture and were a source of encouragement to the team.

Before departure, we set up a private Facebook group so people at church could receive daily prayer requests while the team was in Japan; many people signed up. It was exciting to see the whole church getting behind the team to encourage and support them financially and prayerfully as they prepared to Go Explore Japan.

When the team returned from Japan, they shared their experiences in church services, and many people were encouraged by their stories. Sam and I also held a debriefing session for the team to help them think through their short-term experience and the cultural differences they encountered and to encourage them to keep thinking about long-term missions.

What the Chance to Chat Missions achieved

The biblical and cross-cultural training and preparation was really helpful

for the Go Explore Japan team and equipped them well for their short-term mission trip. It was also fantastic to see the whole church supporting the team and our partner missionaries in Japan more as a result. The Chance to Chat Missions group achieved my purpose in inspiring young people to think seriously about overseas missions and develop a greater passion for mission in the whole church. I hope that you might be able to use these ideas to inspire your supporting churches, or even the churches you work with in Japan, to get their young and not-so-young people to consider their involvement in mission.

Where they are now

I recently contacted the 2016 Go Explore team to see what they are currently thinking about overseas missions. Of the seven members:


One is studying part-time at a theological college, working in music production, and starting a ministry apprenticeship at his church. He, with his wife, are still considering overseas missions.

Two got married; he works as a ministry apprentice with overseas students for AFES (Australian university student movement) at Griffith University, Gold Coast, and she is a Japanese and English teacher at a high school. They are considering overseas mission.

One works as an occupational therapist, considering long-term missions with her husband.

Another one is also an occupational therapist, and though health issues may prevent overseas missions, she is active in local mission in a regional Australian town.

One is studying to be a primary teacher after completing a linguistics/Japanese language degree. He is considering long-term missions with his wife.

One is working as a theme park/entertainment precinct designer, planning an internship with Quizworks (an Australian Christian puppetry evangelism outreach for children), and after that maybe attending Bible college. 

Jocelyn Williams is missions coordinator of Redlands & Shore Hope Presbyterian Church. She and her husband Russell, a minister, live near Brisbane, Australia with their four children. She is part of the Japan Harvest team and is learning Japanese.

How simple can church be?

Can simple church and disciple making movement concepts that have been successful in many other countries take root in Japan?

By Jef Linscott

Worldwide, the most successful efforts in training and organizing Christians to carry out the Great Commission continue to focus on disciple making and “simple churches”. These are called disciple making movements, or DMM. Currently the church in Iran is said to be the fastest-growing church in the world, with no buildings and no central leadership.¹ Can these concepts be used and take root in Japan?

Simple church is not new; it’s a return to how Jesus and the early believers interacted with one another through one-on-one discipleship, and nurturing simple communities of believers.² Through existing relationships, believers actively make disciples of those who want to know Jesus. Safe families of faith are established through deep commitment, and each person is built up as part of the body, in the Holy Spirit.

OK, that’s the ideal! But is this going to work in Japan?

Many missionaries try DMM tools without significant breakthroughs. However, I am convinced that these biblically sound methodologies, which take time to establish, will yield a huge crop in the harvest.

Here are some general concepts of disciple making and simple church, with an emphasis on tools that you can implement in your discipleship relationships.

Connect deeply

“They devoted themselves to . . . fellowship . . . They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:42, 46 NIV).

Japan can be an isolating culture. The act of coming together—for fellowship, asking good questions, listening, and giving feed-



back—can be invaluable. Small-talk and conversation can set the scene for people to share deeper, more personal stories, and build trust.

Worship together passionately

“Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19 ICB).

Worshiping together takes a discipleship relationship to another realm. However, we often feel limited due to our location or our musical ability. Worshiping together by reading and praying the Psalms can be done in a public place, online, in a group, or alone.

In our ministry we use a tool called *kan-kan-gan* to help believers interact with the Word of God in a prayerful and worshipful way. Choose a psalm and have each person read one verse. Like a game of volleyball, take turns giving thanks (感謝 *kansha*), praise (感動 *kandō*), or present requests (願望 *ganbō*) to God in prayer. Keep it short and simple to model prayer for new believers.³ *Kan-kan-gan* can also help believers develop their prayer life and Bible reading as they express their hearts to the Lord in a conversational way.



Check in with each other lovingly

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2 NIV).

As the discipleship relationship is established, God will speak to and lead each believer daily. Sharing the stories of how God leads and guides us is essential both to build faith, and also to establish

vulnerability that is not focussed on works or performance. Love develops amongst us when things don’t go the way we expect!

When people share weaknesses, failures, and setbacks without feeling judged or condemned, trust is nurtured. When people know that we are there to walk with them, hope is restored.

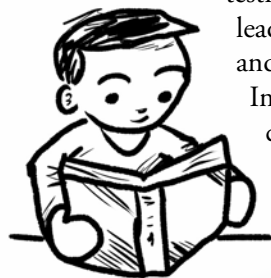
Discover God’s word intentionally

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16 NIV1984).

The Discovery Bible Study method (DB or DBS) is a simple and effective way to ground believers in their own faith, develop lifestyles of obedience, and equip them to reach their own communities with the gospel. The outline of the DBS is: read the Word, understand the Word, obey the Word, share the Word. (There are many DBS resources available free online.)

DBS says that each believer is connected directly to God through the Holy Spirit and can hear, understand, and obey the Word of God for themselves. Transformation happens when believers put into practice the specific things that God is speaking to them.

In a group, sharing insights and testimonies of God’s leading builds faith and community. Imbalance and incorrect doctrine are avoided through a system of loving feedback and maintaining a spiritually passionate culture; those who don’t want to obey the Word



of God will grow disinterested and probably leave. These groups thrive on the intensity and commitment of each person to pursue God wholeheartedly. Often pre-believers are a part of these groups, and want to learn about faith and hear God for themselves.

It takes determination, patience, and perseverance to see this tool established in a believer's life and a community of believers, but it's worth the effort.

Train in a safe place

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13 NIV).

Jesus was the master of on-the-job discipleship training. How can we follow his example and do this in our busy and fragmented society? There are many training resources available. Choose things that are simple and practical. As training is implemented within the community of believers, relationships will be built. As we see with Jesus and the disciples, these things are caught, not just taught. The preaching of the Word, demonstration of the kingdom in power, sending out to obey the Word—all happened within a small group of relationships and within a short time frame.

Some suggestions for developing your training:

- Think holistically: upward (to God), inward (to self and the family of faith), and outward (towards the world), and aim for a balance of training in each area.
- Ask what areas are lacking in your church community.
- Avoid just head knowledge; everything we train in should be practical and measurable.
- Consider if the training leads individual believers to be more passionate and devoted to God. Do they become more free, walking in love and forgiveness in relationships and community? Do members become more active in reaching their own

families and communities with the gospel?

Developing in these areas is long-term and dependent on where God is leading you and the community you're a part of. Be patient; together ask God to guide you.

Set goals

It often helps to articulate a goal—be it overcoming a sin issue, prayer-walking, restoring a relationship, or sharing the gospel with a family member. Share it with your brothers and sisters in Christ and follow up as you work it out. Be careful not to create a culture of performance where achieving goals gets confused with maturity, or failure to achieve a goal leads to dependency or condemnation. A healthy culture, where God-inspired goals are encouraged and shared, builds expectation and faith.

Pray and send each other out

"Jesus said: 'As the Father sent me, I am sending you'" (John 20:21 NIV).

Perhaps the most subtle yet profound core value of simple church culture is the understanding that church is only one means by which the kingdom comes to earth. A church gathering is not the goal and ministry is not primarily for the family of believers. Ministry happens when each believer is equipped to go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to impact their environments.

This understanding can be established through DBS, training, and then simply praying as we send each other out to be representatives of the king. If you pray for each other and stay in touch over social media you can fan the flames of this "go" mentality.

Final thoughts

Keep it simple—remember the early Christians seldom had access to a written Bible. But they had the Holy Spirit and a community of believers committed to God and to each other.



Think of the persecuted church: often no buildings, set meetings, or leadership structure. Keep persevering. Nurture your "first love" and persevere in prayer and worship; try new

things—adjust—change—improve. And keep moving forward. Don't let your heart carry burdens that you were never meant to bear. Remember, his yoke is light!

Past failures or disappointments can mean we hesitate to try new things. Go easy on yourself. God is more interested in the process of how you steward your heart towards him and others than the visible results of your ministry; he's not nearly as stressed out as we are! Keep loving, learning, and laughing—and enjoying the journey! **JH**

I'm no specialist, but if you have questions regarding DMM or simple church, please contact me.

Check out Simple Church 3X3 guide - Online and PDFs for download: <https://onfire.jp/en/3x3/> in Japanese and English. To purchase a print copy please contact us at: mail@onfire.jp



1. Mark Ellis, "Fastest-growing church' has no buildings, no central leadership, and is mostly led by women," *The Christian Post*, September 23, 2019, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/fastest-growing-church-has-no-buildings-no-central-leadership-and-is-mostly-led-by-women.html>
2. Two books you might like to check out on this topic are David Watson, *Contagious Disciple Making: Leading Others on a Journey of Discovery* (Thomas Nelson, 2014) and Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (Jossey-Bass, 2005).
3. Simple Japanese guide to kan-kan-gan: <https://onfire.jp/kkg/>

Illustrations: Tom Wilcox

Jef Linscott came from NZ in 1992. He and his wife, Aya, are independent missionaries working in discipleship, publishing, and encouragement to prepare the church in Japan for harvest: <https://onfire.jp> Contact Jef at jeflinscott@gmail.com.

Mobilization tactics

Are you looking for some practical handles to begin mobilizing workers for evangelism and discipleship in Japan?

By David Cervenka

The mobilization of laborers appears to have been a strong priority for Jesus in his earthly ministry. From the beginning to the very end of his ministry, he called people to spread the message about him and his kingdom. In my opinion, training and sending Japanese laypeople is one of the greatest needs of the hour.

I serve in a coalition of believers called #NoPlaceLeft. In the last few years, my partners and I have seen entire Japanese families choose to follow the Lord and to be baptized. We have seen new Japanese believers immediately turn around and lead others to faith and begin teaching them what they know about following Jesus. We have seen a variety of churches come alive as believers in the congregation were stirred to pass on their faith to others. There are Japanese believers all over the country who are ready and willing to partner with the Lord in his desire to reach more. We are even beginning to see this lead to the multiplication of churches.

We are still very much in the learning phase. I have been doing this for about 10 years, but I am profoundly aware that I do not have it all figured out. However, we have seen enough fruit that I am more convinced than ever that mobilizing Japanese laborers is a crucial piece to seeing this nation reached. In this article I will share a few principles to guide us as we train Japanese Christians to reach their nation.

Continually point to Christ

We are only attempting to reach this nation because it was first the Lord's idea. This is all only possible because it is Christ at work in us. And knowing him is the greatest prize. It's so important to keep these things at the forefront of mobilization.

Our teams begin training (groups or individuals, informally or formally) by looking at Scriptures about the Lord's heart for the nations and the biblical pattern of his desire to save whole families. We explain the necessity of abiding in Christ and walking with him in order to let him work through us. We also do our best to articulate clearly what this looks like and provide space to do so. One simple way to emphasize this principle is to begin by mobilizing people to pray. It is important to have people begin to pray for those in their relational network who are lost. Another helpful activity to learn at this stage is to prayer walk neighborhoods and city centers. Often we begin to see the Lord stir people's hearts or give us opportunities to share. As this starts to happen, the rest of the training simply provides clarity for the way forward. For example, the trainees will know how to articulate the gospel as their friends demonstrate interest, as well as how to begin to disciple those who express a desire to follow Jesus. Stepping into the works of God and walking in his commandments are an essential part of abiding in him (John 14:23, 15:9–17; Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 15:10). We have so many stories of seeing believers light up in their walk with the Lord as they began taking steps of faith. However, it is very important to continue to emphasize that Christ is our greatest prize.

Provide a clear path

Another important piece is to provide a clear path for those who express a desire to make disciples. Ideally, it will be clear enough that any believer can understand, follow, and even pass it on to others. We need to do our best to help them answer the question "What's next?" at each stage. For example, How

do I start a spiritual conversation with someone? If they seem interested in this topic, what do I share next? How do I articulate the gospel story? What if they want to learn more? If they choose to believe, what do I do?

The more believers understand the path, the more likely they will be to walk it. The Lord made the process very clear on multiple occasions. If we lay out the path and even repeat it over and over, people will walk it. Some will run the path. And everyone who understands will know what to do when the Lord puts opportunities in front of them to move forward.

Use straightforward tools

It is also important to use simple tools that are easy for training and use. Having a biblical, yet simple, gospel tool is essential. It's so important to get the gospel right. This is the power of God for salvation. This is the message by which we are saved. For the sake of this article, I want to emphasize, however, that although the gospel is deep, complex, and powerful, it can also be summarized in a few sentences (see 1 Cor. 15:3–5, Rom. 1:1–4, Mark 1:14–15). A large majority of Japanese will likely need more explanation. However, we are finding that there is a significant percentage of people in Japan who have some sort of base understanding. Some have attended Christian schools. Others have taken part in English classes given at churches. Some have believing family members. Some only need to hear the big picture come together in an understandable way.

I have used a handful of gospel tools in Japan over the years. There are several great options to choose from. With this in mind, a few years back, I chose to experiment with one that

could be shared in under two minutes. What happened at that time was that more people used it. And because more people used it, we saw more people come to Christ. If your gospel tool is too complex, people will not feel competent to use it.

The reality in Japan is that often people will not believe when they first hear. For most, it will take time to believe. Another very important tool for believers is to have a simple Bible study that they can lead with a friend who responds with interest in the gospel. And it's incredibly helpful to have a path that these interested seekers can join with their believing friends in order to move forward.

Aim for existing relationships

The gospel flows and takes root best in the context of relationships. The vast majority of Japanese believers are connected in some form or fashion with people who do not yet believe, and it's important to orient them toward this crowd. This can be as simple as helping people create a list of those that they have a relationship with who do not yet know Christ. However, it can be a big challenge for anyone to share the gospel with friends and family. Practic-

ing initiative evangelism can cultivate the boldness needed for this work.

Provide modeling and opportunities to practice

Successful mobilization usually requires a plentiful amount of modeling and practice. If you are teaching people to share the gospel, you should provide as many opportunities as you can for them to see you doing it. Real-time conversations with people who do not know Jesus are best. We can easily see this in the life of Jesus. Before he called and trained the twelve to go out in pairs, they had all seen him do what he was teaching them to do. Having each person immediately practice the tools you share is also vital. We often take time after we share a tool to turn to our neighbor and practice it. Sharing the gospel is a skill that can be developed. And along with any other skill, practice is essential to mastery. Practice during training sessions yields learners who are more confident and more likely to share.

Develop ongoing learning communities

Many people learn this best in the context of community. If there are a few in your church or ministry who

want to do this, it is helpful to gather them in a community that meets regularly to share their positive and negative experiences, pray for one another, and spur one another on. Ideally, this group could meet at least twice a month. Utilizing online platforms like Zoom can open up more time slots to choose from. As people continue to show an interest and take steps forward, it is important to continue to gather for this purpose.

Many of my greatest joys on the field in Japan have been to see Japanese brothers and sisters of all ages encounter Christ in life-changing ways as they took steps of faith to reach out with the gospel. And even more importantly, we are seeing many Japanese come to faith. The field is ripe. I pray that many more of our Japanese brethren would encounter this great joy of doing the will of their heavenly Father and that the gospel would gloriously spread through this precious people group. **JH**

Photo submitted by author

David Cervenka (US) lives with his family in Fuchu, Tokyo, and serves as a strategy coordinator with No Place Left Japan, an extension of the No Place Left global movement. (david.cervenka@reliant.org)



Mr. Obata (far right) and Mrs. Obata (second from left, next to the author) are leaders in the church in Fuchu pastored by Yoji Horii (second from right). They daily pray-walk the Tama River and are taking bold steps to reach out to friends and neighbors with the gospel.

Mobilization: then and now

By Mike McGinty

Who should step up to the mic in Japan?

Anyone who has ever participated in a karaoke gathering soon learns one cardinal rule: not everyone should be given a microphone and encouraged to sing. Bad things can happen. Painful memories and inerasable sounds in such circumstances have the potential to linger forever. Bad karaoke is often used as a topic for comedy skits, but if you have actually endured such a musical travesty, it is not an experience you would readily choose to repeat.

Sadly, the same can be said for some well-intended people who are encouraged to become missionaries. Those who have considerable experience on both the receiving and sending side of this equation have painfully learned that not everyone should be given a microphone. Not everyone should become a missionary.

I don't say that to sound unkind or arrogant. It is a known reality that not everyone sings well, but they may have plenty of other skills and giftings that are manifested in different avenues and useful for God's kingdom work. Likewise, there are a myriad of reasons why some people shouldn't become missionaries. They include unsuitable temperament, poor health, lack of education, inadequate ministry experience, dysfunctional relationships, improper motivation, addictive behaviors, discordant people skills, character deficiencies, and incompatible ministry objectives. If they are given a mic and placed on a stage, bad things can happen.

Like a person lacking vocal abilities, shortcomings may not be readily apparent, so it can be hard to know when or if to extend a microphone to a potential missionary. There is no scientific, one-size-fits-all process for determining such matters. Therefore, mobilization and screening procedures continue to evolve as one generation gives way to

another, shaped by differing values, circumstances, and objectives.

Nowhere is this more evident than how home side and field side mobilization responsibilities have changed. The lines between these two major facets of mission organization used to be much clearer and fixed. Just a few decades ago, it was primarily the home side's responsibility to mobilize and screen new missionaries, and the field's responsibility was to train and deploy these new workers in meaningful ministries. However, these once sharply drawn lines have become much fuzzier.

An ever-shrinking world

This blurring of mobilization lines probably began with the availability of cheaper and faster forms of travel and advances in communication that have

delegation of roles became clunky and, increasingly, inadequate to serve rapidly changing circumstances. One of the main objectives in mobilization for missions has traditionally been to identify and send out qualified workers for God's harvest, and this remains relatively unchanged. However, the means for accomplishing this goal has gone through a number of transitions.

Increase in short-term ministry

The intentional implementation of short-term ministry opportunities was a key factor in escalating these changes. At first, such trips seemed incidental and somewhat an aberration to existing strategies, but at some point, they became a significant means to recruit, identify, and train potential long-term workers.

We were all designed by our Creator to sing his song of salvation to the nations, but we don't all sing from the same playlist in the same way on the same stage.

served to shrink the world. Unlike our missionary forebearers who needed months to travel to the mission field or waited months for letters bearing important information to arrive, our current context is radically different. Such previous gaps in time are now reduced to hours in travel and seconds in communication. As a consequence, the traditional home-side/field-side

As a result, mission organizations started to devote more resources to this form of mobilization, which was accompanied by an increase in communication with field leaders to maximize the efforts of these new ministry and mobilization paradigms. It soon became a rarity for someone to become a career missionary without some kind of prior short-term minis-

try experience. This change enhanced the challenging process of screening potential new workers and in addition, it prompted others to consider a missionary career through an initial limited commitment.

Discernment in screening

This evolvement in mobilization took another giant leap forward with the many advances in communication forms and the rise of social media platforms. The internet, email, Skype, websites, Facebook, Instagram, and now Zoom virtual meetings have shrunk the world even further and, in turn, have involved the field in mobilization to an even greater degree.

Although much has changed in our methodologies of mobilization, the screening of potential individual candidates continues to involve a lot of hands-on work, demanding significant time investment and a great deal of discernment from mobilizers on both the home and field side.

All of this has been going on in the background while Japan, in recent years, has become the cool, trendy destination spot for many considering the call

of missions. For many of these people, their interest in Japan began somewhat shallowly with a love for anime or other cultural singularities. While these may serve as a valid starting point for many missionary prospects, it is insufficient for the many demands placed upon future gospel workers. Who should be given a mic is a difficult question I wrestle with daily in my present role of mobilizing the next generation of missionaries for the land and people I have grown to love.

Trusting God with the mic

Faced with this question, I try to bear in mind that someone once handed me, an unknown quantity, a microphone. This happened literally on a stage near Hakodate at a Rotary Club meeting in 1996, and somehow, members of that ill-fated audience survived my musical debut in Japan. But I was also entrusted with a differ-

ent kind of microphone several years earlier when my family stepped out in faith to answer God's call as missionaries. What did those people see in me forty years ago that gave them the confidence to encourage me to "sing for Jesus" in Japan? Was it character? A particular set of ministry experiences? Educational background? Of course these are matters that I will not ever know with certainty, but I suspect it was these and several other factors that led the leaders at that time to trust me with a microphone.

It is good to keep these lessons in mind as others are now waiting in the wings to serve God's purposes in Japan. We were all designed by our Creator to sing his song of salvation to the nations, but we don't all sing from the same playlist in the same way on the same stage. May God grant us all much wisdom and grace for these eternal matters. **JH**

Mike McGinty served with OMF Japan for 34 years as a church planter and in various field leadership positions. He and Rowena have three children and nine grandchildren. They're now in Texas, mobilizing and equipping new workers for Japan.



Prayer as mobilization

By Christina Winrich

*Through a rich prayer life,
the Spirit can mobilize us into evangelism*

What do you think of when you hear the word “mobilization”? I’m guessing “prayer” is not the first word that comes to mind. Yet prayer is truly the foundation of all our work, including mobilization. I believe there are two main aspects to this: our private prayer life, where we deepen our relationship with God, and intercessory prayer life, where we join with Jesus in lifting up the needs of others. It is through prayer that people are mobilized by the Holy Spirit to go out and share the good news in all its fullness with their neighbors.

Private prayer

How is your prayer life? This is a question I think we could talk about more in the local church. Asking ourselves this question is a good opportunity to reflect on our own prayer prac-

tice and to remind ourselves of some core truths. Why do we pray? How do we pray? To whom are we praying? What can we learn from different styles of prayer?

For example, I’ve noticed I often pray differently in Japanese than I do in English, and I don’t just mean the sudden increase in grammar mistakes. In Japanese, I can spend a lot of time reflecting on and verbalizing some of God’s amazing attributes and glorious names because of the more formal structure of Japanese prayer. This has greatly encouraged my own faith and reminded me of the importance of simply proclaiming the truth of who God is.

As we spend unhurried time with Jesus in prayer, we find that our hearts and wills are changed to be more and more like His. We may find that our

hearts are softened and made larger, even before we get to intercessory prayer. This will lead us to care more about the things that Jesus cares about, including loving our neighbor. To put this in the context of mobilization, many Christians may feel duty bound to share the gospel with their non-believing family, friends, and colleagues. How much more beautiful is it when we naturally share the love and truth of Jesus—the gospel in all its fullness—because we are just caring about the things that Jesus cares about? This moves evangelism from something we have to do to something we find impossible not to do.

Intercessory prayer

A key part of being mobilized by the Holy Spirit is being mobilized into intercessory prayer. This includes so many



aspects of life, from praying about our own relationships and people we know to praying for people we have never met. As we pray, we are joining in the prayers that Jesus is offering right now for these very same people (Rom. 8:34).

One way to pray regularly and deeply for others is to prayer walk. This can be a weekly walk around your neighborhood or church, a monthly walk in a strategic part of your community (such as a local shrine, red-light district, hospital, or university campus), a daily walk through a park, or on your way to the grocery store. The possibilities are endless. Prayer walking can be a wonderful addition to our own private time with Jesus, but it can also be a time of focused intercessory prayer, in which we intentionally pray for people who are living, visiting, or working in the area we are walking through.

Why go on a prayer walk when we can pray perfectly well in our own living room or church? Prayer walking isn't magic—it isn't better or more effective than praying in other places—but it does have some unique blessings. As we walk, we are proclaiming who

God is and worshiping Him in that specific geographic area, something very spiritually significant (Eph. 6:12). As we walk, what we see, hear, and smell can inform our prayers, leading us to pray in ways we might not have had we stayed at home. Setting aside time to prayer walk a specific area can help us intentionally pray for that area and remain focused as we pray. Finally, as we walk outside, we become available to actually talk with our neighbors. God may bring people into our path and give us a chance to greet them and have a conversation, something that wouldn't happen if we had prayed at home.

Over my years in Japan, the few Japanese believers I've met who have heard of prayer walking tended to think it was something wild and crazy, like someone walking around the neighborhood waving their hands and shouting, "Hallelujah!" To demystify prayer walking and make it more accessible to local believers, I designed a workshop for use in churches. This introduces the basic what, why, and how of prayer walking and gives people a chance to

try it out. If you're interested in having me run a workshop at your church, please contact me. As one local friend told me after her first prayer walk, "I've lived in this neighborhood for over 20 years, but today is the first time I've ever prayed for my neighbors." Prayer walking became a key component to this friend's mobilization.

Some concrete ideas to try out

Here are more ideas to mobilize yourself and others to pray.

Personal prayer:

- The next time you're with a Christian friend, ask them, "How is your prayer life?" Then spend some time sharing, learning from, and encouraging each other.
- Meet regularly with a friend for extended, personal times of prayer. This could be combined with sharing about your current Bible reading. Then tell others in the church that you're doing it. It may encourage them to start their own prayer partnering.
- Prayer walk! Try doing it regularly. Invite your family or a friend to join you. Journey to different areas of your city, town, or prefecture. Do a little research on the history,

As we spend unhurried time with Jesus in prayer, we find that our hearts and wills are changed to be more and more like His.



economy, or main issues of these different areas and “pray on site with insight.”¹

Corporate prayer:

- In your church or small group, reflect together: “What are we praying for, and how are we praying for this?” You may be surprised to find that you often pray the big prayers (“Please save this person”) but rarely pray concrete, specific prayers. Rosalind Rinker compares this to trying to reach the top of a staircase by jumping up in one leap, rather than climbing one step at a time.² So instead of only praying blanket salvation prayers,

you might encourage one another to pray for something specific and “faith-sized.” Here’s an example: “Give me one opportunity this week to talk with this person about Jesus.”

- Do you have a regular prayer meeting at your church? If so, consider rotating leaders for this. People who have never led a prayer meeting before may want help with different ways to facilitate prayer, but they (and you) may be surprised by how the Lord leads them to bring something new to the table.
- For group prayer meetings, send prayer requests ahead of time so

that when you are gathered, there is less need to share and more time for prayer.

Learning about prayer:

- Read a book or listen to a podcast about prayer. Better still, do it with a friend and discuss what you’re learning or trying. Try new rhythms or ways of praying.
- Do a Bible study about prayer. What kinds of prayer do you find in the Bible? What things did people pray for, how did they pray, and what kinds of physical postures and words did they use? Again, do this with a friend and see what you can learn!

Short-term mission: one way to raise up long-term workers

It’s also a way to disciple

“Oh, Japan is a hard mission field.” This was the overwhelming response, usually given with a grave expression and a knowing look, when, as a university student, I began inquiring about long-term mission in Japan. People were trying to help by giving me realistic expectations, but this nearly snuffed out my interest. It certainly dampened my enthusiasm and stirred up many doubts and uncertainties. *I don’t know that I’ve got what it takes. Maybe I’ll go somewhere else.* However, I’ve now been working as a long-term missionary in Japan since 2012. “What happened?” you may ask.

It started with short-term mission

Experience was key for me. After university, in my first year working as a teacher, I had the opportunity to go on

a short-term mission to Japan with a team and work with Ruth and Martin Ghent, who are church planters in Aomori Prefecture. During our three-week mission, we did not see anyone come to Christ. However, as I did life with the local people and got to know their stories, they became more than names and statistics. Through relationships, God gave me a love and burden for the Japanese people.

As we baked cakes and cookies late into the night to prepare for Christmas events or as we enjoyed a relaxing bath in the hot springs, Ruth shared many stories about some people who had come to faith and some who were on their way. The Ghents’ example of a life of sacrifice and love challenged me about how I was to live my life. Their stories showed me what it takes—faith-

ful labour over the long haul, and the mercy and power of God.

Short-term mission: is it worth it?

There are many attitudes about short-term missions. Some people are short-term mission junkies who go again and again. Some long-term missionaries are more sceptical and question the benefits. Is it worth the hours of preparation and great financial cost? Others welcome short-termers to offset their workload.

Short-term mission trips are hard work to organize and an added load for long-term missionaries who are already



- Discuss specific challenges to having a rich, deep prayer life with a friend, small group, or whole church community. Consider different types of people and the challenges they face (e.g., parents with young children; full-time workers in stressful, long-hour jobs; people living with non-Christian family members). By sharing challenges and possible solutions, the whole church may be encouraged and strengthened in their ability to pray.

As we—foreign and local believers together—grow in our prayer lives, we may be surprised at how God opens

doors of opportunity for us to share His love and truth in concrete ways. In other words, we may find ourselves mobilized off our couches and into the neighborhood! Let's pray and see what God will do. **JH**

1. Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, *Prayer Walking: Praying On Site with Insight* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1996).
2. Rosalind Rinker, *Prayer: How to Have a Conversation with God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), p. 105, chap. 10, Kindle.

Christina Winrich (US) serves with OMF in Sapporo, teaching English and working with a church planting team at Café COEN. At other times she can be found wandering outside or with her nose in a good book.

Resource:

プレイヤー・ウォーキング ワークショップ

This is a 2–3 hour Japanese-language workshop designed for churches or small groups (in-person or via Zoom). Introduces some basics of prayer walking (what, why, how), and includes time for each participant to prayer walk with a partner followed by whole-group feedback and sharing. Please contact Christina Winrich for more information: christina.winrich@omfmail.com



By Hoi-Yan Shea

weighed down with local ministry. It is an expensive way for people to experience mission. Having organized multiple short-term missions and made many mistakes, I think these trips are not always effective and beneficial. However, if organized well, they can make a positive and lasting impact on both the long-term work and the short-term worker. Nothing beats firsthand experience, and increasingly the trend seems to be for people go on short-term mission before committing to long-term service.

The biblical model for mobilisation

My short-term mission trip to Japan was instrumental to my becoming a long-term missionary. The Ghents

made an impression on my life, yet what they did was nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, it is what Jesus did with his disciples. Jesus taught the disciples about mission by modelling and teaching. He gave them opportunities to experience mission. He involved them in feeding the crowds and casting out demons, and he sent them out to preach and to heal. Mobilisation is essentially discipling.

As a missionary, I now have the privilege and joy of journeying with others as they consider long-term mission and grapple with the questions and doubts I once grappled with.

Morgan said, “What you said to me at the sushi restaurant during my short-term mission was instrumental in me coming back to Japan.” She is now serving for three years as a medium-term missionary and preparing to be a long-term missionary.

Gloria said, “Your sharing and prayer letters have been incredibly humbling and thought-provoking to see how you serve him and share his gospel with others despite personal cost, struggles, and challenges. It’s been a great help to me to understand that gospel workers are also just weak normal Christians whom God uses in his power to proclaim his name and build up his church for his glory.” She is currently doing a ministry training apprenticeship in Sydney and open to serving God overseas long term.

Mobilisation is making disciples who make disciples. As we share our stories and create opportunities for others to experience mission, God can open eyes to the needs and possibilities and stir hearts to go. Sometimes God shows us glimpses of the fruit of seeds we have sown in others’ lives. But even if we never know the result, we are called to faithfully and lovingly sow into their lives even as we prayerfully plead with God to raise up workers for the harvest field. **JH**

Photo: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japan_Airlines,_B767-300,_JA8986_\(25455194740\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japan_Airlines,_B767-300,_JA8986_(25455194740).jpg)

Hoi-Yan Shea serves with OMF. She was born in Japan and grew up in Japan/Australia. She is currently in Sydney for home assignment and will return this year to Yahaba (Iwate Prefecture) to continue church planting.

The power of a good baton

By Andy Meeko

Mobilizing Japanese to reach Japan

This is a very special year. Exactly 50 years ago, I arrived at Haneda, a bedazzled blond kid from California. This was the land of Ultraman, ramen, and manga—what could be better! A very different Japan than when my parents first arrived, exactly 75 years ago, to a land that was burned, beaten, and barely beginning its blast upward. It has been a lot of years to see, to learn, to fail and succeed, and to galvanize a few convictions, and, for the record, I am over-the-top optimistic about what is coming!

Believe me, I know all about the headaches of ministry in Japan. I have banged my head on countless concrete walls. I have also seen such outlandish stuff that made me literally pinch myself to check if was real. And I grew up seeing one of the most fruitful works in Japan Protestantism. In my parents' 16 years here, they planted 17 traditional churches, something that's not supposed to happen. One of the Sunday schools in Yamagata even had an enrollment of 500 kids. And although my father has been gone 40 years now, the work my parents began continues to multiply.

Japanese reaching Japan

So getting back to those galvanized convictions . . . first, although I have seen terrific mission works here, I believe, quite simply, that Japan will only and ultimately be reached by Japanese. Certainly, foreign support can be helpful, but only when Japanese believers enter their real identity and call will Japan be reached. Why? First, because that is their God-given privilege . . . and no one else's. Second, because they can do a better job at reaching Japan than anyone else.

The logical conclusion for anyone coming to Japan then should be not how to reach the Japanese, but how to help Japanese reach Japanese. How well is that happening right now? Not very well. My estimate is that 1.26 million people die each year in Japan without Jesus. In pre-Covid years, we were seeing about 8,000 baptisms in Japan each year. That's a mere one baptism per church. And this includes missionary efforts. I am sure that you, like me, are not okay with that. It's like a boat sinking in Tokyo Bay with 158 people on board and in all of our efforts, we rescue only 1. That

number for any rescue organization is totally unthinkable.

Meanwhile, too many believers and leaders here are accustomed to those kinds of numbers. Year after year the dreary trend continues, the sense of urgency lies limp, and with the church here in decline, we are flatly in a crisis. Japanese believers have not taken up their call or their identity. But when they do, when it finally happens, everything will change.

How do we help that happen?

Personally, I think the solution is quite simple. We need a baton. This baton can be passed from person to person with ease and hopefully without getting dropped. And this baton should contain only the most vital elements, nothing extra to weigh it down or complicate it. This baton will ensure that everyone is practicing Kingdom-expansion basics. And then we want the baton passed swiftly because there are another 1.26 million dying this year without Jesus!

So about six years ago, I began crafting a baton, not having a clue where the journey would lead. Admittedly, I

The NewDayToDay system (newdaytoday.net) makes each of those activities easy for anyone. Everyone can testify using My Miracle (mymiracle.jp), everyone can share using GospelShare (ゴスペルシェア | NewDayToDay), and everyone can disciple using GospelVenture (or Treasure Hunt Venture GospelVenture). The real beauty is that if you use this simple system, you are modeling a Japanese way for Japanese to reach Japan, for them to really enter their identity and call, and when that happens, then things may really happen . . . *janai?*



have a doctorate in spiritual formation, which basically means I probably know how to make things too complicated. But deep down I felt we needed to make things as simple as possible. Of course I examined what was available globally, but in the end, everything was made in Japan (and hopefully better than?). Everything was field-tested in Japan and involved copious local power and smarts. The baton took an interesting shape.

My father came up with a baton years ago, a symbol for the multiplication of churches. He used a strawberry. The plant that, before it begins fruiting, sends off runners to start new little plants. His reasoning: at its inception, a church must be moving to birth daughter churches—before it has everything stable and running itself. That model is still going, and today, churches with that focus continue to flourish.

Testify, share, disciple

My baton is a clover—a symbol of what every believer has been called to do. If you see one clover, before you know it, there is a meadow-full. As such, clover is a great symbol of personal multiplication. And if you look at the three-leaf clover, you will notice there are three little hearts. Each heart symbolizes the most basic Kingdom-expansion directives Jesus gave us. In

love (heart) we *testify*, in love we *share* the gospel, and in love we *disciple* others. Testify. Share. Disciple. If we do these three simple things, God's love multiplies and God's Kingdom expands.

But how do you testify? Share? Disciple? It seems complicated. Actually, it is. But think of this: how complicated is the Japanese language . . . you know, the kanji part? It stumps most missionaries, and yet Japan is over 99% literate? How does it happen? They don't expect kids to figure it out themselves or each parent to do it; they designed a systematic and comprehensive plan.

Pardon the bluntness, but a good system is a no-brainer, and yet for some reason, in Christian circles we expect every believer to figure things out on their own. Years ago, I was training believers at a church in Kanto to craft their testimonies. An elderly woman who had attended church for 50 years was thrilled and exclaimed now she would finally have something to testify with at her funeral. But I pondered, what if she had been testifying for the last 50 years? Voilà. She had been expected to figure it out herself.

I'm afraid that if anyone from outside the church looked at things, they



would marvel at how sloppy we are. For decades I was doing half-baked discipleship; it was neither systematic nor comprehensive. So some years ago, I went back to where I ministered in Hawaii and apologized to all the men I had supposedly “discipled.” Astonishingly, they are all doing good, but what if I had done better? How much more good might there be? Frankly, discipleship in this country—even half-baked discipleship—is probably a rarity.

Look all around Japan and it's clear: systematic methods work. They're part of so many institutions—from business, to education, to sports, and on and on. But what about Christendom? What if we employed a system to ensure everyone got kingdom basics and passed the baton?

The clover is simple. Everybody testify, everybody share, and everybody disciple in God's love, and God's kingdom multiplies naturally—maybe that's as basic and biblical as you can get. **JH**

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

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Japan Harvest Reader Survey

Every five years or so, we conduct a survey of *Japan Harvest* readers to help us gauge reader interest and engagement. This time, the survey will be conducted entirely online. To access the survey please go to <https://forms.gle/MaiD2qLQbBA7ZAzQ8> or use this QR code. The survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete (longer if you provide detailed responses). Please take the time to complete it, as it will help us to serve you better in future issues.



Mobilization of one woman's soul

By Kari Miyano

How God gave me a fresh sense of his deep love for me and for Japan

Like a baby chick waiting to break out of her shell, I've felt like I had been in an incubator these past two years. My husband and I are "open nesters," and it's been very quiet at home as our children are living overseas and we've had few visitors. I had not traveled by bullet train nor been to any camps or retreats. I was waiting for the time that my shell would crack open so I could get out again. Realizing my great need for in-person fellowship, I decided to step out in faith and attend the JEMA Women in Ministry retreat, held in early March of this year.

Refreshed along the way

As long as I was going to be traveling from Osaka to Tokyo, I decided to visit some friends along the way. My first stop was Nagoya, where I stayed overnight with a Zoom prayer friend. How refreshing it was to be in a home with children again! We played a game, did lots of talking, and ate freshly baked cookies. The laughter of a large family brought healing to my soul and made the food taste extra good. Ah, life was coming back into me.

The next day I continued on to Mishima in Shizuoka Prefecture, where I visited another Zoom friend. How excellent it was to meet in person for the first time. She took me to a small park, where the plum blossoms were in full bloom. Mt. Fuji was in the background and again I was refreshed as our heavenly Father was mobilizing me back to life. I realized not only the importance but also the beauty of Hebrews 10:24–25, which reads "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching" (NIV).

How I thanked God for beginning to mobilize me back into society and fel-

lowship. I continued on to the retreat. I knew about Okutama Bible Chalet (OBC), as my children had participated in different camps there, but this was the first time for me—the mom—to experience it for myself. Again, my heart was thrilled by the blooming, light pink plum blossoms as I pulled my suitcase across the wooden walkway bridge over the Tama River, en route to OBC. Not only was winter over and spring was coming, but this also symbolized the "winter of my soul" ending and the spring of new life returning!

A place to come to be restored

I learned that the location of this camp had been discovered by an American missionary, Clarence Swanson. He was assigned to find a place for such a camp to be built and SEND established it in 1960. I realized that God has been doing many great things in Japan for many years, and, even from long ago, pioneer missionaries have been "laying the tracks" for those like us, who would come after them. How blessed I felt to attend a camp that had been planned and established years ago. Even then God knew how much we would need a place like this where people could come to be refreshed and restored.

Meeting women from a variety of locations, missions, and nationalities, I

was in awe of the glorious and diverse ways that these sisters were serving Christ throughout Japan. I had an epiphany that God had been mobilizing his army in Japan for a long time, and I was just getting a little glimpse of it. Faith was being transfused into my heart as I no longer felt isolated and alone, after staying home for two years. Hope was rising up in me as I made new friends and bonded with old ones. I felt the Father's deep love for Japan. This feeling was amplified when I joined JEMA and saw the many facets of this ministry. As I skimmed through the directory I was delighted to see over one thousand members throughout Japan.

Certainly God knows the plans he has for us, plans to prosper us and not to harm us, plans to give us a hope and a future. I received a fresh sense of this through my week of travel. How I thank him for pouring his love into my heart and mobilizing me back into in-person fellowship and for the many people along the way whom he used to make this happen! **JH**

Photo of WIM retreat submitted by author

Kari Miyano, from St. Paul, Minnesota, partners with Moms in Prayer International. She and her husband have three adult children. Her interests include tennis and adventures.

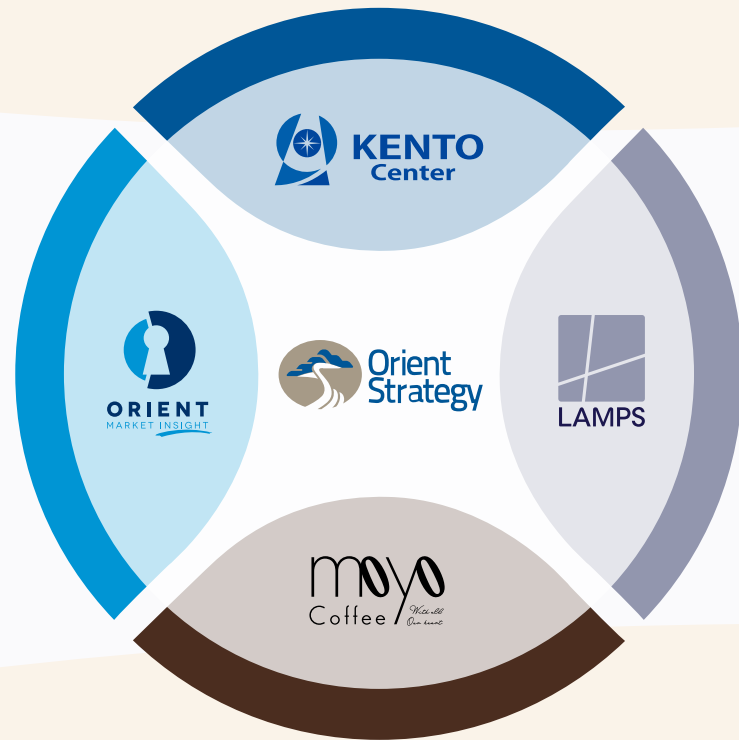


Live Your Faith Be Excellent at Work

Who are we?

Orient Strategy exists to impact the work culture of Japan with the Gospel. Our aim is to model Biblical values through demonstrating both grace and professional excellence. Our vision is to “plant” other companies that share this same basic DNA, transforming Japan one startup at a time. Through our work with business partners and clients we are able to live out our faith in a practical way and in the process develop organizational culture that is healthy, vibrant and balanced. While not expressly “Christian” in the products that we provide, our companies seek to earn the right to speak about who we are by providing high quality professional services that meet people’s specific needs, regardless of their beliefs, background or situation.

オリент・ストラテジー株式会社は、聖書の価値観を基盤とした企業として、恵みとプロフェッショナルリズムのバランスを取ることで、日本の社会や働き方に福音を届けることを目的としています。私たちのビジョンは企業・組織を立ち上げ、一つ一つの企業を通して日本社会に影響をもたらす、質の高いサービスや商品をお客様に届け、信仰を具体的な形で示し、健全で、生き生きとした、バランスの取れた文化を作ることを目指しています。



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Orient Market Insight is a market research agency specializing in the healthcare space. Our interviewer's role is to engage with research participants and uncover clinical, social, and emotional insights that will become the key to unlocking marketing strategies for pharmaceutical clients. This full-time, paid position is based in Kobe and will involve facilitating market research interviews with doctors and patients and creating strategic reports for clients.

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The **KENTO Center** works with families and schools in the Kansai area to provide educational and therapeutic support for kids with special needs. We are looking for an additional child psychologist who is certified to do psychological/developmental evaluations (e.g. WISC, WPPSI, ADOS, BASC, etc.) as well as provide counseling and therapeutic services for English-speaking children. This full-time, paid position is based in Kobe and would part of a small team of professionals serving the community in Kansai.

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MOYO Coffee is looking for baristas who are passionate about serving great coffee and loving people. MOYO is located on Rokko Island and shares a space with the KENTO Center, interacting with their clients as well as members of the local community. These paid positions are based in Kobe and will involve creating coffee, as well as managing the operations of the cafe and planning events to reach those in the community.

For Inquiries

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OrientMarketInsight.com

MoyoCoffee.jp

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A Japanese pastor's perspective on evangelism in Japan

Part Two of an interview with a Japanese pastor

By Dene Hughes



In the first part of my interview with Pastor Matsuda, I had a clear brief—to ask him about how and why he rests as a pastor, and why his peers look up to him as a pastor who's "good at rest".¹ As we explored why some of those peers may find it hard to rest effectively, I kept hearing about the invisible pressures Japanese pastors face in today's society, and how much that has changed for Matsuda-sensei since he began in ministry. So I asked him about these pressures.

Dene: When missionaries are heading for a place like Japan, they're encouraged to study the culture, and within that they might study the religions Buddhism and Shinto. But there are also more unofficial value systems that have a large influence. I've heard people describe Japan as having a hidden but strongly effective, almost religion-like "worship of the surrounding eyes". What do you think about this idea?

Pastor Matsuda: Because I'm a person who doesn't so much care what others think, perhaps I've already gone in a different direction to Japanese pastors in that regard. I mean, even if I'm told, "You play too much," I know that my relationship with God is strong and people can think what they like. I acknowledge not everyone can do that.

D: Then, as a pastor who is relatively free from those surrounding eyes, how do you go about preaching the gospel to today's Japan? What are the key characteristics of your gospel message?

M: That's an incredibly difficult thing in modern Japan! In the first place, modern Japanese don't actually believe in Buddhism. They don't actually believe in Shinto. They take part just as a habit, you know? So preaching against those things isn't relevant. Pastors all across Japan are concerned about how to speak to modern Japan.

In terms of effective evangelism, in our own denomination there are 205 churches across Japan, and each year only 250 or so baptisms, averaging a little over one per church! So that also means some churches see no conversions at all.

At the time I was finishing seminary—late '70s, early '80s—if you spoke about sin and the need to repent, people might accept that and turn around. But this generation is characterized by "Is that even sin?" and "What is sin, anyway?" What was "sin" back then isn't thought of as sin any longer. So our approach to evangelism is a real area of concern.

Just for example, consider "adultery"—back then you might have mentioned it as a bad thing and it would be understood as something to turn away from, but now people are likely to respond, "Sorry, adultery—what's wrong with that?"

So the approach is difficult. Without an understanding of sin, how can you understand the cross? No appreciation of sin means no appreciation of the cross. So people aren't turning to Christ—no need!

D: That's something we really need to think hard about as missionaries too.

M: Not only that, there's the place that church has in society—that has changed a lot. Back in the day, people approached the church for help with mental health worries. Nowadays they go to the clinic, even if the problem they have is spiritual.

Again, back when I was a fresh graduate, the church I was going to had upwards of 90 children in the Sunday School. Now they would see around 10 children. Back then, even non-Christian parents would bring their children to church on a Sunday morning, but nowadays they won't entrust their children to anything religious. Back then the church was trusted, Christians were trusted—thought of as nice people. Now Christians are thought of as just another religion—in other words, dangerous. Religions are a threat to society, a threat to the country, and Christianity is included with that in the minds of Japanese people now.

So that makes our church a bit unusual in Japan as well, since we have so many children.

I think it must be difficult for missionaries too, not just pastors. I'm sure you find the same in student ministry.

D: Yes. I mean, for example, I often hear of a third or fourth year student who finally has built up the courage to admit to one of their friends that they are in fact a



Christian. I find that a bit shocking—to hear that they’re praying for a God-given opportunity to say that they’re Christian in their senior years at university. And I want to exclaim, “Today is your chance!”

M: Certainly in the past so many of Japan’s pastors have come from that student ministry background . . .

D: And the same is still true—plenty of people called to ministry are coming through that same route, and we’re really thankful for that, but it’s like there’s a big spiritual maturity gap between, say, students who are sure from their second year that God is calling them to minister to the youth of Japan and the many students who aren’t confident to admit anything about their faith publicly.

M: For sure, there is that pattern. What can you say . . . we hope that Christians will have an influence on society, but in reality at times society is strongly influencing Christians.

Although the interview didn’t really finish on a positive topic, it was relationally very positive for Pastor Matsuda and me. We could recognize in each other the struggle we share in trying to engage people with the gospel in today’s Japan. Many of the advantages the church seemed to have in the ‘70s and ‘80s have waned, and quite a few presumptions that the church and society once shared no longer stand. But God has not changed. He is still calling people to himself, and so we need to walk carefully and courageously to faithfully express the gospel in ways that are meaningful in a changing mission field. **JH**

1. See the first half of the interview in Japan Harvest, Spring 2022, 22.

Dene Hughes with his wife Rachel and two sons, came to Japan 10 years ago. Their mission agency (CMS Australia) has them formally linked with the student ministry KGG, but over time, they’ve become more involved with their local church.

Voice of Experience

I attribute it all to the grace of God

Mobilisation, dedication, and God’s grace

When I was growing up, our denomination in New Zealand had a constant stream of furloughing missionaries reporting and exhorting (mobilising) in our churches.

My wife, Connie, and I came to Japan to do church-planting in 1960. Since that time, we have had 10 workers who attended Bible school (seminary). Now one of our church members, Nanbu Sakae, is training to be a missionary outside Japan, and another is labouring in a Muslim country.

Among the 10, one family of four all trained formally. The father of this family had never been to school, having contracted polio and becoming crippled at age three. The mother of the family, Yukiko, had been led to the Lord by our senior missionary, Stuart Caldwell, and she married this man to help him preach the gospel. She pickabacked him for 50 years! She told the Lord she would serve him as a nurse, but the Lord mobilised her using John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (author’s paraphrase). She’s still alive!

After Connie and I pioneered in Sapporo for a year or two, we asked this family to mind our house while we furloughed. They stayed on and helped to make our first church plant into one of the biggest churches in Japan north of Tokyo!



We have tried to provide training and discipleship in normal ministry, including having the saints join us in massive tract distribution and gospel meetings. This gave the saints priceless experience as workers. The crux of service is dedication rather than graduation. The Lord’s mobilisation method is self-sacrifice, demonstrated by Yukiko.

Each time the saints seemed ready, we moved to pioneer elsewhere but my mobilisation ideals have failed regarding massive distribution and constant crusades. I keep wondering why we have been able to mobilise up to 20 new groups/churches in Japan. Was it the prayers of 250 New Zealand churches? Was it fasting, or tracting, or preaching? But I’ve been forced to attribute all to the grace of God. Don’t laugh; I actually grew in grace before I was born! Grace is my dear mother’s name!

I realise that better mobilisation might have produced better results all round. But up to 20 churches and groups keep me happily busy in prayer and care. Praise God!

An easy part of my daily prayers is this one that the Lord Jesus urged us to pray: “The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He mobilise labourers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2, author’s paraphrase). **JH**

Richard Goodall and his wife, Connie, came to Japan from New Zealand in 1960. They pioneered four Hokkaido churches, which God multiplied into fourteen. After Connie passed away, he married Yuko. He has six children and thirteen grandchildren.

Top 10 Reasons to Study at Tokyo Christian University

by Randall Short, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies

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Listening for echoes of the gospel

Japanese literature and films reverberate with resonances of the gospel

God is the author par excellence. He conceived the plot of the gospel in eternity past and is now enacting it in human and cosmic history. All other stories pick up refrains from this story.

Some novels by authors such as C. S. Lewis, Leo Tolstoy, Shūsaku Endō, and Ayako Miura are written from a Christian perspective with obvious references to the gospel in them. But the vast majority of novels and films are created by authors and directors who subscribe to worldviews different from the biblical one. And yet even these contain refrains from the gospel. Straining your ears to hear these echoes of the gospel can deepen your appreciation of Japanese culture and create precious points of connection for sharing the gospel with Japanese people in ways that resonate with them.

Genres point to the gospel

Often the genre of a piece of literature or film will affect how it connects to the gospel. For example, according to Ephesians 5:22–33, love stories are all reflections of the greatest love story of all—Christ’s love for his church. Detective stories appeal to an inherent desire in all of us to get to the bottom of seemingly intractable mysteries and to see justice done—a desire that will only be finally met when Jesus returns and judges the world. Horror stories pander to a fascination with an unseen world that the Bible assures us is very real. The list goes on. With any genre you can find a connection with the gospel narrative.

Emphases within Japanese culture

Another way to find connections with the gospel is to notice common emphases in Japanese literature and film. For example, the Japanese are very conscious of the transitory nature of everything in this world as epitomized by cherry blossoms that flutter to the ground shortly after blooming. This resonates with the Bible’s assurance that everything in this present age is passing away. Another emphasis is the central role that shame and honour play in influencing a person’s standing with others and their community. Again, the Bible develops these themes: it points us to Jesus, who took our shame upon himself when he died in the most demeaning way and bestows undeserved honour on those who deserve everlasting shame. Finally, there is a strong consciousness in Japanese culture that people live on after death. While this is a far cry from the Bible’s view of life after death, it is nevertheless a strong reminder that death is not the end.

Some examples

It’s helpful to consider a couple of examples of how books and movies can bring out elements of the gospel.

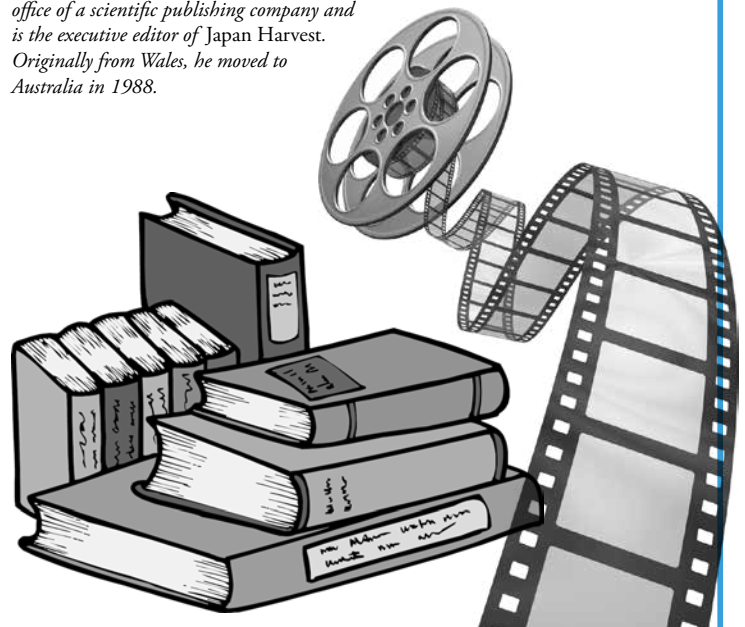
Yoko Ogawa’s novel *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is all about finding beauty in unexpected places.¹ The professor shares his love of number theory with the housekeeper and her son. Who knew that maths could be so entrancing? It’s a pertinent reminder that while we live in a fallen world, there is beauty lurking beneath the surface, testifying to a transcendent creator. Also, the relationship of mutual respect and care that develops between the two unlikeliest of people points us to the church, where people from every social status, education, profession, and cultural background live life together and care for each other as equals.

Another example of an unusual relationship is found in the light novel *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* by Yoru Sumino.² In it, a strong platonic relationship develops between two high school classmates who couldn’t be more different—Sakura, a vivacious, outgoing girl who is dying of pancreatic cancer, and Haruki, a withdrawn boy who prefers books to people. One theme that runs throughout the novel is what it means to truly live. When Haruki asks Sakura what life means to her, she replies, “It’s surely to connect to someone on a heart level.” The Bible also affirms the centrality of relationships, ultimately with God, but also with others. Also, Haruki and Sakura’s best friend, Keiko, are very antipathetic to each other throughout the story, but they become close friends after Sakura’s death—a vivid picture of how hostile relationships as typified by the Jew/Gentile divide are transformed by the death of Jesus.

The next time you’re watching a Japanese movie or reading a Japanese book, try to spot connections between it and aspects of the gospel. **JH**

1. Yoko Ogawa, *The Housekeeper and the Professor* (Vintage; 2010).
2. Yoru Sumino, *I Want to Eat Your Pancreas* (Seven Seas; 2018).

Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company and is the executive editor of Japan Harvest. Originally from Wales, he moved to Australia in 1988.



Become friends with non-Christians

The gospel gives us the power to be a true friend

We church planters are encouraged to build relationships with non-Christians, as having a relationship of trust is the first step to sharing the gospel. Indeed, Jesus built a relationship with the woman at the well in Samaria before he brought up her sin; it is even written that Jesus became a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34). Since words and deeds should always go together, friendship with non-Christians is a crucial part of our gospel presentation. The term “friendship ministry” has come out of such an understanding of the need of friendship in the evangelistic context.

But what does it mean to be a friend of non-Christians? Sometimes, we think it means to be just an acquaintance or a casual friend, close enough to start a conversation. But when we look at the Bible, the concept of “friend” is much deeper than that. “A friend loves at all times” (Prov. 17:17 ESV). “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel” (Prov. 27:9). “Two are better than one . . . For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!” (Eccl. 4:9-10). The Bible portrays friends as committed to each other, and that they are an invaluable help in times of difficulty. Friends need each other and help each other.

Implications for us

Sometimes we think we should come alongside our friends and offer help in their moment of difficulty. This is right, but only half true. Scripture tells us that friendship is reciprocal. To be a friend means that we also need to be vulnerable before them and be ready to receive their help. It can feel awkward to ask for their help and encouragement when we know the ultimate helper and counselor, Jesus. Yet biblical friendship invites us to learn from friends (regardless of whether they are Christian or not)—“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27:17). We fool ourselves if we think we do not need friendship from non-Christians. When Jesus came to Samaria to share God’s good news to the woman at the well, he became vulnerable and asked for water. It was not fake or posed—he had a real need and asked her for help. Out of his humble reliance on a non-Christian woman, the gospel shone through.



This does not mean we do everything with them so that we come to be seen as a friend of the world. Our allegiance is with God, and we need to make sure that there is a boundary between the way of Jesus and the way of the world. Yet, Paul said, we are not called to dissociate from sinful friends (1 Cor. 5:9–10), and Jesus said we are called to be salt and light in the world.

This does not mean we should seek friendship with non-Christians over Christians. We surely need to pursue true friendship within the body of Christ as we are one in Christ. However, this should not dissuade us from pursuing a true friendship with non-Christians.

It is not easy to be a true friend with non-Christians. To be vulnerable before anyone is not easy. We want to be respected and needed, not to be pitied or needy. It can feel dangerous to open up ourselves to non-Christians, because they might not understand and could criticize us. The only way that we become a true friend is through the gospel, which gives us power to be vulnerable and humbly accept their friendship. No matter how low we become, the gospel tells us that we are nonetheless called as God’s sons and daughters, and our life is kept in Jesus.

An example from my life

When my son injured his neck and was hospitalized, I was in a pit of fear and anxiety. A non-Christian friend saw me during his morning run before going to his work. When he found out what I was going through, he came and sat with me for about an hour in his busy morning. He didn’t say much, just listened to my story. I needed that. His friendship helped me during my difficult time, and through my vulnerable moment we became true friends. He is not yet a Christian, but it became much easier for me to share the gospel with him. He knows what faith has been for me and how Christ helped me in that difficult time.

When Jesus became a friend of sinners, he was willing to be helped, be encouraged, and enjoy their friendship. Are we ready to be a true friend with our non-Christian friends? Then we will find encouragement, joy, and a work of the gospel in it. **JH**

Seima Aoyagi was born in Japan and studied at Covenant Seminary in the US. He’s with MTW (Mission to the World) and pastor of Grace Harbor Church in Tokyo. He’s married to Naoko and they have four children.

Are you thriving?

Care is available to missionaries who feel they are struggling

Several years ago, I attended the Mental Health in Missions conference held annually in the US and was deeply impacted. I had been a missionary for more than 20 years but had no idea there was a community of experts, scholars, and practitioners who had given their professional lives to the field of member care in mission. This was a gathering of several hundred people who were organized around one primary goal: the flourishing of missionaries so they could fulfill their calling to the Great Commission. I was humbled, moved, and incredibly grateful for these men and women serving so that people like you and me could thrive.

Since the pandemic began in 2020, what it means to thrive feels less clear and straightforward to me. In my work as a counselor of missionaries, I notice I am not the only one. The disruption of our lives and ministries has been extensive. We have had to adjust and redefine repeatedly over these two-and-a-half years. These stressors, piled onto lives already carrying the normal stressors of missionary life, are heavy weights, ones we must acknowledge and tend to well so we can thrive in this moment in history.

Recognizing warning signs

It can be a real challenge to recognize and admit struggles, though. Author Aundi Kolber calls this “white knuckling.” She defines white knuckling as consciously or unconsciously ignoring warning signs from our minds or bodies to cope with situations that are overwhelming or disturbing. Missionary life almost sets us up to become white knucklers. We experience many difficult situations as we engage with a culture different than our own. We may push through our own discomfort to stay the course. But not listening to those warning signs is dangerous, and some may be finding they are no longer able to carry on as they always have.

If you find yourself there, you are not alone. Member care departments and missionary care agencies are receiving an unprecedented number of requests for care these days. This is a good thing, and these three small words can be the beginning of a shift from struggle to strength: “I need help.”

It may be helpful to consider when it’s time to reach out for help. What are some of the warning signs you need to address?

- Emotions that you cannot work through: anger, anxiety, apathy, depression, frustration, grief, sadness, etc.
- Physical symptoms that are not accounted for with medical conditions.
- Relational struggles that cannot be resolved with your usual practices.
- Thoughts or thinking patterns that are unhelpful and unproductive.

In general, when you feel stuck, inviting someone in can bring a new perspective that helps get you moving forward again. Asking for help can also be validating; to be seen, heard, and understood touches the core of what it means to be human.

Circles of missionary support

Best practices in member care remind us that sometimes the help we need is closer to home than we realize. The foundation of care for missionaries is Master care: spiritual connection and vitality in our relationship to our heavenly Father. We must start there, remembering his promise in Psalm 46:1 to be “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (ESV).

Our next circle of support comes from healthy self-care and mutual care—once again, resources we find nearby. This is a good time to review and revise self-care practices, making sure they align with our current situation. Team-mates, friends, local brothers and sisters, and others in our community can be invited in when we need extra support.

There are times when more specialized help is needed. Professional counseling may be indicated, and JEMA offers some possible options for this on their website under Resources > Member Care. Since 2021, one source of specialized help has become more accessible to missionaries in Japan: The Well International. They serve cross-cultural workers in Asia and around the world through clinical counseling, soul care, coaching, training, and events. The Well is now a JEMA-endorsed ministry, and most of the services are available online. This means workers in Japan

have better access to the expertise of over 30 professionals from around the world who are committed to helping missionaries thrive.

Learning to thrive

Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s definition of “thrive” is to grow vigorously, to flourish. As we have weathered two-and-a-half years of ministry in the pandemic, vigorous growth may not feel like the definition of our experience. But could it? By paying attention to the warning signs and reaching out for help when needed, I believe we can begin to flourish in our lives and ministries even at a time like this. **JH**

1. Aundi Kolber, *Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode—and into a Life of Connection and Joy* (Carol Stream: Tyndale Refresh, 2020), 19.

Amy Newsome and her husband Wayne have been church planters in Nagoya with Mission to the World since 1990 (sent from the US), and this shapes Amy’s work in member care and counseling. Connect with her and other professionals at The Well: www.thewellintl.org



Heading Home

Naomi Reed (*Authentic Media Limited, 2012*). 154 pp.

Naomi Reed was a missionary in Nepal. Her first book, *My Seventh Monsoon* (2007), was a success in Christian circles in her home country, Australia. Each of her books feels like a comfortable conversation with the author at her kitchen table.

Heading Home is the story of her family's adjustment to life in Australia after six years of service in Nepal. Throughout the book she wrestles with the concept of "home", something all missionaries can identify with. She writes about being an outsider and how she doesn't quite belong.

An attractive feature of Naomi's writing is that she doesn't hide her faults, doubts, or fears. She ends each chapter with a prayer. These written prayers, like David's psalms, are full of emotion. For example, the prayer following a chapter about her perceived failure in something she felt God leading her to do reads:

"Lord, we're all a bit hopeless. Some days we wake up and our legs are weak, our eyes are tired, our necks hurt . . . We can't speak well, write well, paint well, sing well, cook well or do anything well at all . . . We want to do things that honour you and speak of you, but often we don't feel as if we can . . . Reassure us that you'll do something in the middle of our hopelessness—you'll provide what we need . . . So Lord, help us today to keep walking forwards . . . or keep doing whatever it is that causes us to shake and tremble with nerves, but that brings honour to you. Amen" (p 138).

She suggests that the between-home status that missionaries often experience could be a gift because it causes us to face our status as Christians: none of us are home and never will be on this earth, but we're all on our way home. After reading this, I wrote on my blog: "But in the meantime, we stop in places and make them home for a while. The places, people, and roles in those times are given to us as gifts."¹

I recommend this book to any missionary, as well as two books that precede it: *My Seventh Monsoon* and *No Ordinary View*. They can be read independently from each other, but you'll probably enjoy reading this trilogy in chronological order. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

1. "Heading Home by Naomi Reed," on the edge of ordinary, May 17, 2015, <https://mmuser.blogspot.com/2015/05/headed-home-by-naomi-reed.html>

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

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Angela Duckworth (*Scribner, 2016*). 352 pp.

Grit provides a revolutionary look at success, pushing beyond the myths of talent and "being a natural" to demonstrate that it is our determination to carry on that makes all the difference in our professional and personal lives. Angela Duckworth begins with her own powerful story as the daughter of a scientist who frequently told her she lacked "genius." However, Duckworth went on to a thriving career as a researcher, applying advanced degrees in neurobiology and neuroscience to uncover the differences between hard work and inborn talent. Taking inspiration from her own life, Duckworth poses hypotheses about finding success. She tests these with insights from studies and personal stories. Whether these stories come from spelling bee champions, editorial cartoonists, or Olympians, the secret is the unique blend of passion and long-term persistence she calls "grit."

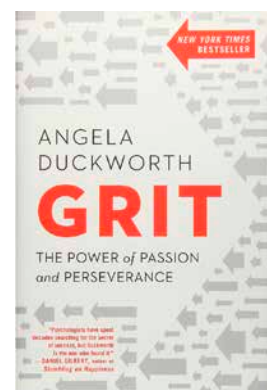
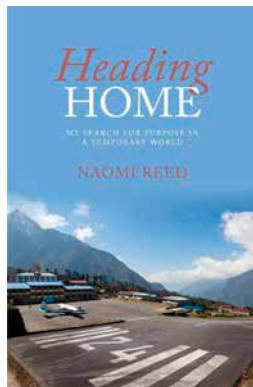
More than any other factor, grit is the most reliable predictor for who will overcome obstacles, regardless of IQ, social connections, or other advantages. Consistent devotion to endeavors that give us joy and purpose are the keys to true and lasting success. Duckworth delves into a treasure trove of findings that show why effort counts more than talent, how to discover your passion, and why doing hard things is good for us. The best news for all readers is that grit can be learned.

The book is divided into three sections: What Grit Is and Why It Matters, Growing Grit from the Inside Out (focusing on purpose, interests, and passion), and Growing Grit from the Outside In (which addresses how to live and parent as a "gritty" person).

While her book addresses a broad audience, Christians will be encouraged by her discussions of calling. She argues that calling, like interests, is developed rather than being something that arrives fully formed. In the same way people can develop grit to achieve goals—rather than relying on pure talent—calling unfolds through practice and intentionality, which means any activity can take on deep meaning. As she says, "A bricklayer who one day says, 'I am laying bricks' might at some point become the bricklayer who recognizes 'I am building the house of God.'" **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

Jackie Peveto is a freelance editor and writer. Though she lives in Colorado now, her thoughts travel to the far-off places she called home for a while, including the Bible school at Torchbearers Yamanakako.



Be unexpected

Use surprise and curiosity to engage your audience

How do we get people’s attention? And how do we keep it? These are key questions when it comes to communication, from books to sermons to prayer letters.

Get their attention

One way to do this is with surprise. But be careful not to slide over into gimmicky writing or “click bait”. To use the unexpected well, make sure it feeds into your core message. Consider what’s counterintuitive or odd in what you want to communicate. How can you use that to grab your audience’s attention? The first article I wrote for *Japan Harvest* was called “Crying in the snow”. That title immediately grabbed people’s attention: why was she crying? And why in the snow?

For example, if you’re writing about your children’s ministry, perhaps you could start with a story where a child (or parent) did something unexpected or humorous. This writing tool will help you grab people’s attention in a world where so many others are trying to do the same thing.

Hold their attention

And then you need to keep your readers’ interest. To do this you need to get your audience curious—create a little

suspense by showing them a gap between what they know and what they want to know. If you can get them asking “What will happen?” or even “Was I right?”, you’ll have their full attention.

One way to do this is to bookend your writing with a story—tell the first part of the story in your introduction and the conclusion of the story at the end. However, this can go wrong. I was once tormented by a speaker who told us about a family car accident, without telling us how the story finished until the end of the talk. In the middle while she talked about the Bible for many minutes, my mind kept being tugged away from her helpful points back to the car accident story. You don’t want to distract people like this. Be careful not to create so much suspense that your audience turns to the last paragraph and misses the content in the middle.

Unexpectedness is one of six principles in a book called *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath. It’s a very helpful book for learning ways to communicate ideas that stick in people’s heads.

Surprise and curiosity. Both of these are tools we can use to grab and keep people’s attention. **JH**

Wendy Marshall is the managing editor of Japan Harvest.



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The six spheres of prayer

“The greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer.” — F. B. Meyer¹

A friend of mine, Phil Miglioratti, was born in Chicago, but now lives in the Florida Keys. He is an avowed fan of the Beach Boys as well as director of the National Pastors Prayer Network and the Reimagine Network. I want to share his concept of the six spheres of prayer. I hope and pray that it will help us understand prayer better as it relates to all our relationships.

Phil uses a set of ratios to explain his concept. They indicate different levels of the connections or relationships Jesus had with the men and women he discipled. His relationship with John (“the one Jesus loved”) is 1:1. Jesus with Peter, James, and John is 1:3. Jesus with the twelve disciples is 1:12 (although the group he traveled with was larger and included women). At Pentecost it’s 1:120, when Jesus birthed the church by sending the Holy Spirit, and 1:5,000 is for when Jesus spoke to the 5,000 on the mount.

In your “closet”

This is one-on-one fellowship in prayer with Jesus [1:1]. Just as John was transformed from a “son of thunder” to the “apostle of love” through his relationship with Jesus, our daily relationship with Jesus, wherever and whenever, is important.

With your cohorts

There is accountability in a threesome. Jesus, in Gethsemane, called Peter, James, and John to come a little farther, into deeper prayer.

Jesus chose 12 disciples who were very different from one another. There can be diversity even in a small group. Sometimes we think that everyone in a group has to think the same, but Jesus did not have a problem with diversity.

Throughout your congregation

You can serve as the “prayer champion” in every context [1:120]. Think of how Jesus was building His church; this is prayer in many settings, from small groups to committees to teams to large gatherings.

Across your city

You can start citywide prayer groups and neighborhood prayer walks. You can lead citywide prayer gatherings and coordinate prayer guides for them. May corporate prayer to Jesus become something commonplace.

Penetrating culture

Pray for God’s kingdom to come (be revealed) and God’s will to be done (truth). Think about how this can affect our communities, nations, and people groups. It should affect us socially (issues and ideas) and politically

(worldview). This can be done by praying in your “closet” or with others.

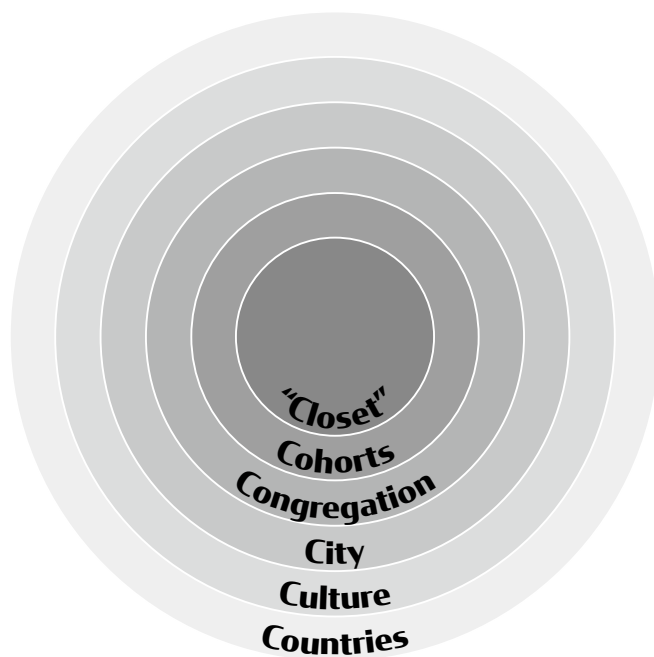
Praying for other countries

We should be praying for the global church—on every continent, in every nation, especially those experiencing hard times. We should be petitioning for the church to live out the gospel in obedience to the Great Commission. This, too, can be done by praying in your “closet” or with others.

Though the numbers might be different (especially here in Japan), I think it is helpful for us to see prayer as all-encompassing, from our personal time with the Lord to a much broader overall perspective. We need all of these perspectives as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission in the way He wants us to. May many more Japanese come to know Christ because of our obedience in prayer to Him. **JH**

For more information about six spheres of prayer, check out this article: The Reimagine.NETWORK, “A Template for Prayer: Personal or Corporate,” <https://reimaginetwork.ning.com/forum/topics1/the-6-spheres-of-prayer-a-template>

1. Goodreads, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/823762-the-greatest-tragedy-of-life-is-not-unanswered-prayer-but> (accessed April 26, 2022). We were unable to verify the original quote source.



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

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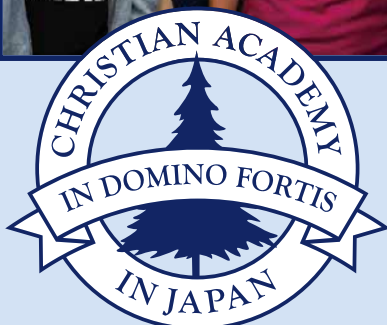
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