

ADAIR UPDATE



A Christmas Cookie Party with English Class Moms

CONFERENCE DOWN SOUTH

Hanging out with a lot of Japanese pastors...in southern Japan

We frequently talk about how our ministry is functioning on a micro level (i.e. local ministry in Shiogama), but I (Robert) am having more and more chances to interact with Japanese pastors from around the region and country. Towards the end of November, I had the opportunity to attend the JCGI (Japan Church Growth Institute) annual meeting and graduation ceremony. I spent 3 days living with and learning from Japanese pastors and leaders. It is worth noting that JCGI is a ministry that was birthed out of Asian Access.

This year the conference speaker was Doug Birdsall, former President of Asian Access and the Lausanne movement. I was personally encouraged by his call for leaders to take regular times for retreat and prayer. When I was in Kyushu I would take a day or two every quarter to pray, but I haven't done this lately. I am challenged to do it again in the near future.

The conference was also a great opportunity to network with young Japanese

pastors. I was able to join a group that is committed to encouraging and caring for pastors who are under 40 years old. This is exciting because it is my demographic and the generation of men and women we will likely be ministering with as long as we are in Japan. It was a great chance to exchange ideas and share what God is doing in our respective regions.

The conference also left me excited for the future. I believe that as westerners one of our privileges is to encourage Japanese leaders as we minister together. I am thankful that groups like JCGI exist to help start and strengthen churches as well as develop young leaders.

While I am still relatively new to Japan, I am excited to be getting to know these leaders and look forward to being able to encourage and learn from them in the years to come. Please pray that we would continue to be able to focus on local ministry while participating in more regional gatherings when appropriate.



Why do Japanese people commonly wear face masks?

- A) They are sick
- B) Everyone around them is sick
- C) Allergies
- D) Embarrassed to show their face
- E) all of the above.

Answer on page 2

BIG BIRDS AND TWINKLE LIGHTS

Communicating thankfulness and the light of the world

Despite not being an event person (I, Roberta, like spontaneous - the less planned, the sweeter), November and December have two of our more significant events of the year. One (Thanksgiving) is mostly unknown in Japan and the other (Christmas) is growing in popularity but is largely misunderstood.

Lots of Turkey

Geared toward kids and their families in the English classes, "Roba-to-sensei" (Teacher Robert) was the event organizer. He gave a talk about thankfulness as well as organized games and a craft (yes, he's amazing). I worked in the kitchen with another American cooking for the 80+ people who came (50+ of whom are not believers). This year, Robert invited several people from church to serve as table leaders to foster better connection between the church and the students. People seemed to have a good time and just so happen to have a new fondness for turkey.

T-day highlight

A highlight from the event was seeing parents and kids share what they are thankful for in a group of 6 or 7. Church members facilitated this time. As communication tends to be very indirect in Japan, it was special for this kind of sharing to take place (and likely uncomfortable...but good). I, standing over slightly lumpy gravy, saw people engaged in meaningful conversation with a couple of tears being brushed away.

One mom showed me a card her young son made her during the craft time, which said, "Thank you for making me yummy food, for

playing with me, and for taking care of me." She teared up, and I think this was probably one of the few times (or first time?) that she heard this kind of gratitude expressed. I hope that expressing gratitude to one another and to God is something that we can continue to encourage.

Lots of Lights

Despite Christmas music and decorations in stores, many Japanese people do not connect Christmas with the birth of Christ. At all. I think most of our friends associate Christmas with romance, Christmas cake, and eating KFC for Christmas lunch (what?!). Very few know the story of the virgin birth, of Emmanuel being born in a barn, or of angels first proclaiming His birth to a bunch of shepherds.

Our church is having a Christmas outreach on December 23rd with 450 people expected to attend. For a church of around 70 people, this is a big deal. The English students are singing in 2 choirs (with Robert as director of a 28-kid choir). Of these kids, only our partner pastor's kids are believers. The Gospel choir that I sing in will sing a few songs, too. Our leader, John Lucas, is a talented singer who has recently been on TV for singing competitions and will also perform.

Christians at this event will probably be outnumbered 5:1 - different than the usual 100:1 but still challenging. Pray that we would be able to have meaningful conversations following the event with our friends from the English classes, Gospel choir, workplaces, and our



What? It's already Christmas?

neighborhoods. This and events like it are so pointless without God's power and grace - and without focusing on relationships and people seeing Christ's love.

Light, Peace, Hope

As I shared at an English class for moms, I pray that people will know Jesus as Light - a metaphor that I think makes sense in Japan (unlike Shepherd or even Savior). Please pray that the Christians in our community will present Christ as Prince of Peace - another metaphor that seems to be culturally understandable as Japanese culture has a high value for harmony and (at least on the surface) for peace. For our many friends feeling discouraged in temporary housing, weary in challenging jobs and family situations, and fearful of the future, please pray that they will know Christ as Hope.

We hope that you and yours have a wonderful Christmas. From Japan, *Arigatou* and *Meri-Kurisumasu!* - R&R

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Specific Prayer Points

- Japanese language acquisition
- English students and Gospel choir friends to know Jesus
- Focus in the upcoming year
- Walking with some friends in some difficult situations
- Good followup after the Christmas outreach
- Beach friend M
- Small group friend N, who came for the first time last week

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