

ADAIR UPDATE

Merry
Christmas and
Happy New
Year



CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

The gospel in music, message, and relationship

My (Roberta) friend, “K,” came to our church’s Christmas outreach. Her two daughters also came and seemed to enjoy themselves. The event was primarily kids singing, a short message, and some Christmas carols. A musical group from Tokyo also came and performed several songs as special musical guests.

After the event, K told me how beautiful she thought the music was. I jokingly asked, “You mean Robert’s pre-schoolers belting ‘We Wish You a Merry Christmas’?” She then shared with me lyrics from the guests’ performance that she found beautiful – things that I didn’t understand at all because of my limited Japanese. She said, “Roberta, Jesus coming to earth is the most important thing of all! He took our sins on his body so we can be reconciled with God. That’s why he came!”

I was so touched by her passion in sharing her understanding of why we celebrate

Christmas. As a bunch of us huddled around tables covered in food after the event, several church people engaged her in conversation. K has a lot of love for Jesus but not a whole lot of love for the church yet. Most of her “Christian fellowship” is with me, so it was exciting seeing her interact with other members of the body.

At this event, it was also really special seeing the English students (little kids) and their families connect with the church community. There have been other events, but I have never seen the English families and church members engage with each other to this degree. We are excited for how these relationships will continue to grow in the new year.

Some fringe people also helped during the several hours of setup and tear down. As serving is a pretty great way to be involved and move beyond “guest” status, we were pleased with this involvement. Thanks for praying for K, Robert’s students, and the church.



Which of these tastes was not a part of our Christmas gathering/goodbye party for some friends?

- A) Raw oysters
- B) Peppermint cupcakes
- C) Ramen
- D) Baskin Robbins Ice Cream cake

CHRISTMAS IN JAPAN

Everyone celebrates Christmas and almost nobody knows why...

As Roberta and I (Robert) have talked to people about Japan, a question we get asked is why more Japanese people aren't becoming Christians. Japan has had full freedom of religion since World War II, and Protestant missionaries have been here since the middle of the 1800's. Catholic missionaries first brought Christianity to Japan in 1549, and Orthodox missions have also done great work. There are schools and hospitals founded by and associated with Christians throughout Japan. Yet currently there is so little response to the gospel that the number of churches is decreasing.

Christmas

Why people don't choose to follow Christ is a tension between the grace of God and our sinfulness. Ultimately, it is God who is responsible for drawing people to Himself, and we have the opportunity to share the love of Christ with people in our lives.

In Japan, a significant barrier we encounter is a lack of general understanding of the Christian faith. It's Christmas season, and the sights and sounds are quite similar to what we experience in the States. Even though these forms look very similar to things we know are connected to celebrating the birth of Christ, the average Japanese person is unaware of these connections.

I want to share a few examples of this to help you better understand and pray for our Japanese friends who do not yet know Christ.

Christmas is a great opportunity to share Christ through various traditions associated with the holiday.

Santa's Birthday

One funny interpretation of Christmas I often hear is that it is Santa's birthday. I wonder if in the future it is worth using the story of St. Nicholas to bridge the gap between Santa and Jesus.

Caroling

Another example comes from a few weeks ago when another missionary at our church recommended taking a group of Japanese Christians caroling in tsunami affected areas. I remember going caroling with youth groups in Texas and with Roberta's family in PA. Most Americans, Christians or not, are aware of the habit of taking a small to medium sized group to sing for and encourage friends and family. I got a chuckle out of the fact that when the idea was presented, one of our Japanese partners asked what he meant by "caroling." I look forward to understanding if and how this tradition works in a Japanese context.

Illumination

Most Japanese towns have Christmas lights of some sort. They are often referred to as "illumination," which if I understand correctly is a British term. They are displayed in public places



Enjoying Christmas in Japan

(train stations, shopping malls, etc.) but not personal residences. After Christmas, everything is quickly cleaned up before the New Year, which is the most important holiday in Japan. As Christians, we celebrate the birth of the "Light of the world." I wonder if there is any way to connect this to our ministry?

Bringing meaning

This Christmas, we had several events and activities where we were able to share with our friends the true meaning of Christmas. Because Christmas is so prominent in popular culture already, it is a special chance for us to naturally share the gospel.

I realize that you are receiving this after Christmas. Please join us in praying that we would see fruit from the many seeds that were planted during this season and that in the future we would know how to best communicate the gospel during this special time.

Thanks for your partnership and prayers,

-R&R

Partner

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Specific Prayer Points

- Renewed energy for language study in 2013
- Meeting and building friendships with non-Christians
- Praise for Robert's students and their families coming to "Family Christmas" and for improving relationships with the church
- Wisdom on where to focus our time and energy

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