

August 2017

AIR UPDATE



English Day
Camp 2017

LOW-HANGING FRUIT

An answer to prayer

A few weeks ago, our new friend E was at our home for coffee. She asked Roberta where we work, and Roberta said we work with a nearby church. To our surprise, E responded: "That's great. I have been wanting to learn more about Jesus."

As we start our term in Higashi-Shiogama, one of our main prayer requests has been for low-hanging fruit. Even though Japan is known as a place where it is difficult for people to become Christians, we have been praying for people who will respond quickly and will be a part of the foundation of the church plant.

The night we met E, a few interns from the States were visiting. As we were walking back to our house from the train station, Joseph and I (Robert) stopped to buy *takoyaki* (doughy balls with octopus inside) to go with our dinner. Roberta didn't have her key, so they waited outside for us to come home. This is when E came by walking her dog. Roberta struck up a conversation and invited her over. A few days

later, she came to our home and we found out about her interest in Christ.

We have met with her for Bible study five weeks in a row. These times have been initiated by E. She has also come to church with us 3 times. We are slowly getting to know each other and learn a bit about her journey to this point. She is highly intelligent but also has a lot of sadness in her personal life. She is kind with our boys and is becoming a friend. Also, having grown up in East Shiogama, she is teaching us a lot of important things about our new community.

We do not know where this relationship will lead. Please pray with us that E will encounter Jesus and commit to following him for the rest of her life. Also please pray that we would have insight in how to clearly communicate the hope with have in Christ and connect her to the broader Christian community through our church.



What are Roberta and Joseph doing?

- A) Making a mess
- B) Making pizza
- C) Finger painting
- D) Playing a game

SUMMER "VACATION"

Connecting with kids in the community

The last week of July, I (Robert) found myself on the bottom bunk in a room with 4 elementary boys trying to convince them to go to sleep. This was after a busy 2-week stretch at the beginning of summer vacation focused on engaging the children in our area. Below are snapshots of various activities. The first three events are in partnership with Crossway Community Church in Southern California (pictured top), which has been a fun and fruitful partnership over the last 7 years.

2nd & 3rd grade fun

This was our 6th year doing an English event for the students at the closest elementary school to our partner church. Through the years, we have made many new friends and have been able to connect them to our church community through this event. For example, 5 years ago, a mother joined our church's gospel choir and her two sons come to various events throughout the year (including camp). The event has also been an encouragement to the school.

English Day Camp

This event has been effective at taking relationships from the acquaintance to friend category over the last 5 years. For three days, we have a VBS-style program. The kids enjoy crafts, games, songs, English lessons, Bible time, and creative snacks. At the same time, we are focused on getting to know the parents as many stay while their children participate. This allows us to get to know people who we usually only see for a few moments as they drop off or pick up their children from English Class.

Fujikura Jidokan

Throughout Japan there are community centers for children, called *jidokan*. These facilities are funded by the government and serve kids 0-18. The Fujikura Jidokan (Fujikura is the name of our neighborhood) is located about a minute walk from our house. Our boys are there several times a week to play with the various toys, use the slide, or just run around with other children.

A few weeks ago, we hosted an English event there as well. It was our first time hosting at this facility, and we had over 70 children and many parents attend. Please pray that we would be a blessing to this facility and that we would be able to form new relationships through our connection there.

Summer Camp

Several children in our church have made their professions of faith at camp through the years. It is a significant time where we have a lot of fun yet also have fairly direct and intentional conversations with each of the campers (most of whom are not from Christian homes). I really enjoyed hearing how each of them was wrestling with what it means to follow Jesus.

The point is...

New relationships, deepening relationships, and encountering Christ: these activities are designed with those three goals in mind. Please pray that the relationships we have made this summer will deepen and lead to entire families encountering Christ. Thank you for your prayers and partnership with Christ's work in Japan.

-R, R, J & B



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Specific Prayer Points

- For E and other "low-hanging fruit"
- For good continuing language options (and perseverance) for Roberta
- For favor with people in East Shiogama (neighbors, staff and families connected to the *jidokan*, etc.) and that many people will turn to Jesus
- For the boys - health, friends, and continued adjustment to living in Japan

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