

AIDAIR UPDATE



Beauty and
3.11 scars

SOFT LAUNCH

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer”

In the year since being back in Japan, we cleaned the church plant building in the fall, started teaching English classes in November, and had a candlelight Christmas service in December. And now - at last - we are beginning regular worship services in East Shiogama twice a month.

Robert’s first message was on Acts 2:42 (above), and we pray that the church plant is marked by teaching from scripture, fellowship, food, and prayer. Even though we have been slow to invite people as we are just beginning, we’ve been encouraged by the small group that is starting to form: a new believer who lives a few blocks away, two local Christian ladies we were recently introduced to, a young woman who lives next door to the building, and wonderful “cheerleaders” from our partner church.

Will you pray with us that God will continue drawing others to himself in this community? Please pray that God will raise up people to be

part of the core of the church plant and that this church will be planted firmly in East Shiogama .

On a personal note, I feel a tension between recognizing the smallness of our numbers (“if anyone in the US saw this, they’d think it was quite unimpressive”) and overemphasizing the infertility of the field where we’re trying to plant a church (“this is a big deal, folks!”). Both of these feelings of insignificance and pride miss the point - that it’s not about us.

We want to do Sunday worship services well; we also don’t want it to take too much of our focus as “church services” aren’t what church is about. At its most basic, church is a community of disciples seeking to love God, love each other, and love the world. We all know that church is not simply a worship service - and certainly not a performance. As we continue to ask questions about how to see people engage the gospel, what worship forms we will utilize, and how to deepen relationships, pray that we would be led by the Holy Spirit.



What are these boys excited to do on Anderson’s first camping trip?

- A) swim in the ocean
- B) throw rocks in the ocean
- C) write poetry about the ocean
- D) frolic and twirl near the ocean

(Answer on page 2)



AROUND THE TABLE

“You can take the girl out of Kosovo, but you can’t take Kosovo out of the girl”

As many of you know, I (Roberta) lived in Kosovo for 3 very formative years. Two of what I found to be defining characteristics of the culture were extreme hospitality (strangers regularly inviting me in for coffee or a full meal) and extreme togetherness (every meal and coffee and moment *together*). For an extreme extrovert, this fit me quite well. And then I came to Japan.

From loneliness...

Japan is arguably a society that values aloneness more than most, which is equally surprising and understandable given the population density. I recognize that aloneness and loneliness are two very different things. I also struggle understanding what part of my discomfort to this aspect of my surroundings is related to personality, to cultural differences, and to scripture.

Yet many people in Japan live alone - some in total isolation. In packed trains, with their eyes glued to their phones, they essentially commute alone. And many people eat alone. Many restaurants are designed to accommodate a majority of people eating by themselves; supermarkets sell a lot of food designed for one person. Despite it being a group-oriented culture, I think many people around us live in profound loneliness.

To community...

Americans bathe alone and eat together; Japanese bathe together and eat alone. Don't get me wrong, I really enjoy going to *onsen* (public bath), and a couple of my Japanese friends seem to have a high value for eating together, too.

But being around a table - a messy table with spilled drinks, smeared curry, mini battles about eating “two more bites, (Benji!)” - this is where peoples’ bodies are fed. This is where peoples’ souls are fed, too. Whether it’s a table with chairs, Japanese-style on the floor, or picnic mats under a tree, there is something sacred about eating meals together. Right now with little kids, it’s less likely that deep conversations happen in this space. But it’s time spent together, seeing one another do this basic and wonderful thing of eating, and (often) sharing stuff we’ve made or bought that is beautiful and good.

Especially now that little people are involved, I sometimes find myself more tired than refreshed when people leave. Yet I am full after these shared moments together, and I want to believe that it is sacred, too - beyond the sincere but short “Thank you, Jesus, for this food” prayer.

To knowing and being known

They devoted themselves to the...breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). Obviously just eating meals together isn’t church, but I believe that it’s a vital aspect of church life. When I was a kid, before what felt like every meal at family gatherings, a certain family member insisted on taking a picture. I really didn’t like to wait before diving in because eating was and still is one of my favorite pastimes. Yet I find myself doing the same thing as I want to remember these moments.

We are grateful for your partnership with us and for the meals so many of you have shared with us!

Love, R, R, J, B & A



Partner

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Specific Prayer Points

- For bi-monthly worship services in East Shiogama
- For continued discipleship of our friend E
- For our English students and neighbors to know Jesus
- For opportunities to deepen relationships and to clearly present the gospel
- For good preparation for summer activities and teams
- For a good conference with our A2 family next week

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