

ADAIR UPDATE



Sunrise on an overcast morning at the bay near our home

CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

Abdication and other transitions

As we have mentioned before, April is the start of the Japanese fiscal year and is always marked by a lot of transition. This year, though, seems to involve even more layers of change than usual with the biggest being the emperor of Japan abdicating his throne of 30 years at the end of April. This is the first time this has happened in over 200 years and is rather exciting for the entire nation.

Additionally our partner church since 2012 is having a transition of leadership that has been in process for about three years. We appreciate your prayers for our church community as the current associate pastor, Yukimasa-sensei, will be installed as the senior pastor at the end of April. The current pastor (his father) will remain as an advisor.

Other changes include the inevitable goodbyes in March as many Japanese companies frequently move their employees. One of my English students whose 3 children have been connected with the church as well as

a few other friends from the boys' school and kids community center are among those moving. Also 2 of my closest friends and English students are going back to work, and their demanding schedules likely mean we will see them significantly less in this next season.

In April, our boys will transition to a new school year. Joseph will start his second year of kindergarten (3 years in Japan) with a new teacher and slightly new schedule. Benji will officially start kindergarten. We will put on our fancy clothes and go to his school entrance ceremony on April 6th and celebrate this milestone with 25 other families from our community.

I know that I crave stability and routine (especially since becoming a mom), so please pray we would adapt well to these transitions. Pray for the nation of Japan, for our church family, for our friends moving and starting work, and for our kids as they, too, process these changes.



After two years, the construction in our neighborhood is almost finished! Instead of storing construction supplies and vehicles, the lot next to our home has been made into a small park and will open soon. We are thankful to have a yard we don't have to take care of and are looking forward to spending a lot of time there with our neighbors.

LIFE IN TWO WORLDS

Beads and play dough

We recently went to the US for a quick trip to introduce Anderson to family and to celebrate a family wedding. After 24 hours of travel going across 11 time zones, we arrived at my mother's house in Pennsylvania around midnight. It was below freezing, yet Joseph (4) wouldn't go inside. I watched him take steps toward the door and then shuffle backwards. After a few moments, I realized that he was confused about the house not having a *genkan* (a Japanese-style entryway that is a step down from the rest of the house where people take off their shoes).

Once I explained to him that it is okay to go inside with shoes on, he still immediately took them off and lined them up neatly before reacquainting himself with Grandma's house. There were many moments like this when I realized once again that our kids are different from me. They don't know the rules yet to two cultures, and we had to explain things to them that I forget are different (other examples: no splashing water out of the bathtub as there isn't a drain on the bathroom floor like in Japan, what to say after meals, etc.).

Red and blue beads

I recently heard a helpful illustration (thank you, Michele Phoenix) describing a difference between missionaries and their kids. Robert and I are like jars of blue and red beads - we grew up in one culture yet live in another. There is clarity between what parts of us are American and what parts are Japanese. Of course living in Japan for many years is shaping our thinking and behavior, yet we are still a mix of distinguishable parts.

Red and blue play dough

Our boys, on the other hand, are more like red and blue play dough. Their cultures are all mashed together creating a new color that can't be easily pulled apart. The process of forming and understanding their identity is confusing and complicated and beautiful. Yet we need to understand that we are different "colors:" R and I are red and blue and our kids are purple. We are still just barely scratching the surface in understanding this enormous topic, but we appreciate your prayers as we, two jars of beads, raise 3 play dough kids.

A journey

Something I am trying to do more is to recognize and affirm the good in two different things instead of needing to decide which is better. For instance, I love the robust, age-appropriate Sunday school programs available for kids in the US. At the same time, I also love aspects of our 2 and 4 year old boys being in the same Sunday school class with middle and high schoolers in Japan. Even if lacking in "perfectly age appropriate content," our boys have the benefit of watching older kids in process of making their faith their own (and who are sweet *oniichan/oneechan* - older brothers and sisters).

In the same way, both beads and play dough are good things. This is where God has led us for this season, and where he leads isn't always easy but is always good. Thank you for partnering with us as we continue to learn, live, and serve in Higashi Shioyama.

- R, R, J, B & A



Partner

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Specific Prayer Points

- Many transitions in the upcoming months for the nation, our church, and us (p. 1)
- The boys as they continue to grow and learn (especially J and B as they begin a new school year in April)
- Robert as he travels to Korea and Kyushu and Roberta when she is home with the boys
- The church plant: growing in our love for God, one another, and the lost; wisdom for the future

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