

Kwan
Quarterly



Updates from Ray and Shelley Kwan



"The sad fact today is that most missionaries go home after 10 years at the most, just when they are beginning to reap the benefits of their relationships. I have found that after 20 years of service doors were open wider than ever before, and after 30 they are unbelievable."

- Denis Lane, OMF Overseas Director and missionary to Singapore and Malaysia

Appreciating cherry blossoms with our Japanese class

Konnichiwa!

Dear Family and Friends,

April 30 marked the end of the Heisei era in Japan as Emperor Akihito abdicated his throne to his son, Naruhito. There is a feeling of hopeful renewal as people across the country and, to a lesser extent, around the world anticipate the new Reiwa era, which means, "beauty and harmony." Yet, as Easter reminded us last week, we as Christians have an even greater reason to rejoice every day. We have a secure and eternal hope and daily-renewed hearts made possible through the victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is hope in Jesus alone that we cling to and pray will be known throughout Japan and the world!



Map from www.japanunveiled.com

Highlights

TRANSITION UPDATE

In our last newsletter, we mentioned that we are in the process of transitioning from Osaka to Tokyo. Since then, we applied and interviewed with two missions agencies. It looks like we may be able to partner with a missions agency called ABWE to secure a visa and hopefully move to Tokyo by the fall! In July, we will be flying out to Pennsylvania for two weeks of training and a final interview. Once approved, we will seek commitments from current and new financial partners and apply for a visa transfer. Please pray that everything will go smoothly in this process and that we will remain confident in the Lord and His perfect timing and provision.

MEGUMI BIBLE CHURCH IN TOKYO

On April 7, Megumi Bible Church held its first services in Korakuen, Tokyo. Nearly 30 people from all over the greater Tokyo area attended the Japanese-language service, and around 10 people participated in the English service. Please pray for the elders, Daisuke Okada and Ray, as well as the members as we serve faithfully while trusting Christ to build His church as He promises in Matthew 16:18-19. If you know anyone in the greater Tokyo area who might be looking for a Christ-centered church that faithfully expounds the Word of God, please let us know! You can also check out our website at www.megumibc.jp.

PLANES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES

These past few months have been filled with travel! With the Tokyo move on hold, all three of us flew to California to spend some time with family and friends. While Ray hadn't been back in over a year, it was Shelley and Masanobu's third trip in less than a year. We are thankful for all those we were able to see on short notice and for the opportunities to share what God has been doing in Japan.

Ray has been commuting twice a month to Tokyo for the church plant, with Shelley and Masanobu joining once a month. Whether by bullet train or plane, from door to door, it takes roughly four hours each way. We'll also be going to the southern island of Kyushu to meet with ABWE Japan missionaries in May. Please pray for encouraging times of fellowship and humble hearts that glorify the Lord!



In March, Masanobu "graduated" from Mommy and Me class.



In February, we traveled to Tokyo to meet with our church planting team. We were thankful to spend some extra time getting to know Yoshi, who has been a big help!



We are excited that one of Shelley's former students from Shimane is now

OSAKA LIFE CONTINUES

Even though we are in Osaka for longer than we initially thought, we are grateful for our “bonus time.” Masanobu started preschool at the same place that Shelley and he went to Mommy and Me class, which we believe is a gentler transition for him than if he started Japanese preschool in a totally new environment. Ray’s English classes at Hatta Nishi recently gained a couple of new unbelieving students. Shelley still participates in the young moms’ ministry and is also delighted to deepen relationships with a small group of young working ladies who recently began meeting for fellowship and prayer.

Though life is ever changing, we take comfort and trust in our unchanging God who loves us more than we deserve, is always good, and is with us every step of the journey. We also thank Him for your ongoing support, encouragement, and prayers!

By His grace,

Ray, Shelley, and Masanobu Kwan

PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT

We thank God for your partnership in making disciples in Japan!

For those interested in giving online or using a credit card, here's an easy way for you to do that on the IBC

website: <http://www.ibcbible.org/missions/kwan-missions/>

We appreciate your support!

Book Review

Simple Church

Thomas S. Rainer & Eric Geiger, 296 pages

Reflections by Ray

While looking for books on church planting on Amazon, I came across this very helpful book in the recommendations section of the webpage. Those in Southern Baptist circles will probably be a little more familiar

a mom in Tokyo! We hope to see her more often.



In March, we enjoyed seeing Ray's brother and sister-in-law in Sacramento. Masanobu also loved visiting the local train museum!



Masanobu watched planes during breakfast with his grandparents at the Sacramento Executive Airport.



Ray and Masanobu visited Knott's Berry Farm for the first time with Shelley's family during our visit to California in March.

with the authors, Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, both of whom graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The book caught my attention because one of Thom Rainer's books, *I Am a Church Member* has been translated into Japanese and is probably the best book available in Japanese on the topic of church membership. Japan Bible Academy gave the book away a few years ago at its annual Proclaim conference and I personally have given it away to many people at our church in Osaka. So I was familiar with Rainer's work and was interested when I came across another one of his books.

A Simple Question

As with *I Am a Church Member*, *Simple Church* did not disappoint. You can pretty much guess what the book is about from the title. I don't think there's anything particularly revolutionary about the content of the book, but I couldn't help but say "Amen!" in my mind over and over as I read over its pages. Early in the book, the authors pose the following question: "Many of our churches have become cluttered. So cluttered that people have a difficult time encountering the simple and powerful message of Christ. So cluttered that people are busy *doing* church instead of *being* the church (authors' emphasis). What about your church?" Then the authors spend the rest of the book explaining from their biblical and practical research the benefits of having a simple church with a few focused ministries versus a complex church with many unfocused ministries.

Avoiding Burnout

All the chapters of this book deserve to be read, but chapter eight's title and content caught my attention more than any other chapter. The title is, "Focus: Saying No to Almost Everything." If you're caught in a church culture where you're looked down upon for saying "no" to things, especially if you're already doing a ton of things, you're not in a healthy church culture. Burning your people out to have them do peripheral things is not a smart way to run your church. We also need to understand the simple principle that the more you divide your attention, the lesser the quality will be for each of the things you are doing. God's glory is better displayed in a few things done well than many things done poorly. So, in this chapter, the authors give five steps to having a



Ray led worship during Megumi Bible Church's opening services on April 7



Masanobu successfully grabbed a dangling donut with his mouth during a game at the Hatta Nishi church picnic a few days ago.

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PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. Visa: That the visa transfer process will go smoothly. Also that we would remain confident in the Lord and His perfect timing and provision.

2. Megumi Bible Church in Tokyo: That the elders and members would serve faithfully

focused ministry: 1) eliminate, 2) limit adding, 3) reduce special events, 4) make sure the existing processes are easily communicated, and 5) make sure those processes are simple to understand. It will be hard to say “no” when new ministries are proposed but if the reasoning is understood, the “no” will be easier to accept.

Work Smarter, Not Just Harder

If you are tired from ministry and often wonder why you’re doing what you’re doing, this book is for you. If the people at your church are suffering from burnout, this book is for your church. Don’t get me wrong. Church leaders ought to be tired people. Paul exhorts us to labor and strive in our ministries in a number of his letters. Ministry is hard and it never ends. However, we shouldn’t labor and strive unnecessarily. We should be smart about where we put our efforts. This book basically takes an Apple, Google, KonMari, etc. approach of simplicity and applies it to the church. You don’t have to like everything about those companies but know that their success is due to doing things in a smart and simple way. Christ did not mean for the church to be overly complicated. The account of Christ at Mary and Martha’s home in Luke 10:38-42 is a picture of what can happen with the church. We can get so focused on peripheral things that we tire ourselves out and forget to sit at the feet of Jesus to enjoy, adore, and worship Him. This book serves as a powerful reminder that we need to keep first things first.

while trusting Christ to build His church as He promises in Matthew 16:18-19.

3. Life in Transition: That we would be wise stewards of the time we have left in Osaka and glorify Christ wherever we are.

Did You Know?



In the spring, it’s a Japanese tradition to have a picnic under cherry blossom trees and eat *hanami dang*, a dessert of three different-colored skewered rice balls.

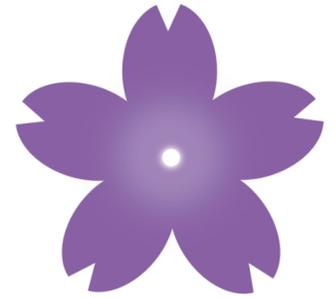


Japanese preschool begins with an opening ceremony that both parents attend, and they typically wear suits!

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