And Many Happy Returns

Q: What do all these people in the photo above have in common? A: They’ve all lived in the Midwest during their lifetime.

This is a group of Midwest “Returnees.” Every year thousands of Japanese travel overseas to live as students or professionals. Separated from the entanglements of their home culture, many Japanese become Christians while overseas. Every year thousands of Japanese return back to their homeland as changed people.

The fact is that MANY MORE Japanese become believers while outside their country, than those who remain in Japan! Nearly 80% of all Japanese who become Christians made the decision while abroad.

The challenge is in connecting these new believers to a church when they eventually return home. Often, Japanese returnees find that they cannot relate well to a traditional Japanese church. They are neither understood nor accepted. Often shortly after returning home they uproot their faith from a local church altogether and blend back into society.

Japanese church would be many times its paltry ½% of the population size.

This past week I (Kevin) attended ANRC (All Nations Returnee Conference) here in Saitama, Japan which (continued on back)

PRAYER FOCUS Thru-the-week:
During the months of April and May, our 7-year-old church plant will be walking through the final steps in their decision to call their first national pastor. We have been encouraging these new believers in this leap of faith. Please remember us as a church as we work through the issues of vision and finances in the next weeks.

Monday Justen’s Schooling
It’s true: our son commutes daily to his downtown Tokyo “office” in white shirt, tie and sport coat. “Office” is the term the teachers use for his desk. The dress code is the school uniform. Pray for Justen’s safety in the VERY packed 40-minute daily train ride.

Tuesday Basic Christianity Class
We currently have five not-yet-Christians attending Denen Grace every week. This is a good proportion for the size of our church. Kevin does an evangelistic study with them. Pray for spiritual decisions from this group.

Wednesday Gospel Workshop
We were pleased to have three seekers from our Gospel Music Workshop join us for Easter Sunday. We had one decision for Christ through this workshop last year, but we desire many more! Pray for deep spiritual hunger through Gospel Music at our church!

Thursday Financial Stability
The dollar has rallied against the yen in the last few months, but the exchange rate is still quite pathetic overall. Pray that our support status would return to 100% this year.

Friday Physical needs
Spurred by the results of his recent physical Kevin hit the gym and has lost 10 pounds. Kaori is responding well to her hepatitis B treatment and is reducing her need for injections. Pray for our physical health and stamina during these full days of ministry.
Online giving:
www.lavermansinjapan.org
See our website if you desire more detail, or please send in the form at right.

Church missions committee, or as a family, are willing to make a one-time gift as a portion of the pastor's salary. If you are making a one-time gift as a church missions committee, or as a family, please send in the form at right.

Church planters -- overcoming all kinds of odds. In fact, Christianity was still a proscribed religion in Japan when the first missionaries arrived.

The evangelistic work in Japan during this time often needed to be done discreetly at the initiation of the Japanese seeker. One missionary wrote in 1869 of the difficulty: "I read those words (prohibition of Christian preaching), and I realized at once the excessive difficulty of our task. What were we to do? The only opportunity I had was simply to receive the visits of any inquirers who chose to come to my house; and would Japanese venture thus? They did venture. Day by day, hour by hour, my house would be thronged with Japanese visitors..." In spite of this prohibition, missionary work in Yokohama resulted in a series of revivals, with many converts coming from samurai families belonging to the Shogunate. The most success, however, was realized only after Christianity was granted freedom in the country. This occurred on February 21, 1873 in part as a response to encourage trade with the West. The government removed the prohibition of Christianity notices on public bulletin boards for the first time in over 200 years. Now, Christian missionaries were free to evangelize openly. The scope of the mission work was greatly expanded with the help of national evangelists and pastors including such men as Shinozaki and Honda.

Thank you for praying for our Easter outreach as a church this past month. We had many first time visitors on Easter Sunday. And we had a great time of fun together during our Kids Easter Party on April 5. Kids in Japan have no idea that Easter has anything to do with Jesus. But at least a dozen more do now!

The Laverman Blog Spot

Protestant Missions in Japan turns 150
posted on March 17, 2009

This spring marks the 150th anniversary of Protestant Missions in Japan. The first protestant missionaries set foot in the port of Yokohama back in 1859. They were real church planters -- overcoming all kinds of odds. In fact, Christianity was still a proscribed religion in Japan when the first missionaries arrived.

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Take a look at the photo above of one of the earliest Protestant churches. Missionary Guido Verbeck is in the middle of this group of all male samurai-era believers.

We missionaries today owe a great debt of gratitude for the stubborn will and faith in God that established the foundations of Christianity in this country! Thank you, Lord, for advancing your church in Japan! www.lavermansinjapan.blogspot.com

Our church has returnees at its core: probably 70% of the church has the experience of living from one to ten years overseas. Would you pray that we would continue to bring in and care for returnees, regardless of whether they have yet made a decision for Christ, so that a great harvest of souls would not be lost, and the church in Japan would grow strong?

Easter in Japan

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