



Hikari! from Kevin & Kaori

Hikari means "light"

Church Planting with the Lavermans in Japan

Light up the Darkness!

April 2009 Japan Partner Newsletter



JAPAN ADDRESS: 4-14-24-1 Futago, Takatsu; Kawasaki 213-0002 EMAIL: lavermansinjapan@mac.com



Kevin (L) with the ANRC returnees from the Midwest USA

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.

This is a great tragedy in the evangelization of Japan! If all these new believers were to remain in the church and grow strong in their faith, the

Japanese church would be many times its paltry 1/2% of the population size.

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

▶ Grad to meet you!

Kaori and I had the privilege of baptizing these (below) young believers in Christ. We've watched them grow up spiritually the last few years. Now they are graduating from college and into the work world. We are proud of these graduates!

Now is the transition time in life when they will meet hard challenges to their new faith in Japanese culture. Would you continue to pray for Megumi, Naoko & Haruka?



Our grads: Megumi, Naoko (Kaori & Justen) and Haruka (L to R)

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▶ This Week in Prayer

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 40minute 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.

Additional Support Needed: \$657 per month



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"The [Japanese] people walking in DARKNESS have seen a great LIGHT." Isaiah 9:2

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OUR NET PHONE: (219) 232-5321 OUR SKYPE ADDRESS: lavermansinjapan OUR BLOG SITE: www.lavermansinjapan.blogspot.com

(from front) focused on the returnee challenge. Naturally it was attended by returnees of all ages, including many just back home as new believers. Nearly 500 gathered for three days of sharing, worship, message, and strategy. I was renewed in my burden to reach out to this unique demographic in Japan.

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

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! ■



Easter Kids Outreach 2009
(discovering the REAL meaning of Easter)

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.

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



Verbeck & 1859 church. If only we could get this many men in the church today!

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 missionary work was greatly expanded with the help of national evangelists and pastors including such men as Shinozaki and Honda.

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

My partnership with the Lavermans' Ministry #381

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▶ Special Project Need

Our church plant, Denen Grace Chapel, will be calling a national pastor this year. This is a giant step of faith for our tiny congregation of new believers, and we need your help.

We have opened a special project with WorldVenture to subsidize in part the **first few years only** of the pastor's salary. If you are willing to make a one-time gift as a church missions committee, or as a family, please send in the form at right. check here

See our website if you desire more detail, or online giving: www.lavermansinjapan.org