



# Hikari! from Kevin & Kaori

Hikari means "light"

## Church Planting with the Lavernans in Japan

Light up the Darkness!

Dec 2009 Japan Partner Newsletter



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Denen Grace Chapel people at the November 2009 Family Festa

## Around the Harvest Table

*"Open your eyes and look...they are ripe for harvest." John 4:35b*

The harvest is slow to come in Japan. We church planters sometimes shake our heads and wonder why God is so patient, and why Japanese are so slow to respond to the Gospel. Is it us? Is it them? Is it not truly good news? Recently, even the Japan Christian News called Japan a country "closed to Christianity."

The harvest is slow...but steadily reaped. Study the photo above for a minute. It was taken at a recent multi-church activity. Look at the faces. A year ago, three would have been missing. Three are recent believers. Three more lost sheep have been brought home, and God is rejoicing with the angels in heaven.

Annually we have a "Family Festa" or joint meeting of all the greater Tokyo area churches as a way of cultivating community and fellowship, and helping us

develop a bigger picture of what God is doing in our midst. 24 churches and 150 people from our church association participated. A few decades ago only a few of these churches would have been in existence!

150 people might not sound like much, but it's quite a large group of Christians by Japanese

standards! This photo was taken there.

I was reminded again that although the progress seems slow by human standards, God is keeping his promise to build his church one person at a time. Pray for even more harvest to come from among our churches spread across the Kanto plain! ■

## ▶ Ringing in Christmas

When are Japanese non-Christians most likely to seek out a church? At Christmas. In Japan, Christmas is devoid of any spiritual nuance, except in the church. Christmas gives us an opportunity to reach many more Japanese with the gospel message. This year we have an outreach for families, and a service with handbells and gospel music. Pray with us for preparation and impact.



This hand bell choir will be part of our Christmas celebration this year

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[www.lavernansinJapan.org](http://www.lavernansinJapan.org)

## ▶ This Week in Prayer

### PRAYER FOCUS Thru-the-week:

*We are preparing the church plant for pastoral leadership. Pastor Kondo and his wife will be starting at Denen Grace Chapel from January 2010. Please pray for needed startup monies for his initial salary and ministry needs. Please pray for this transition of leadership for the church as we begin working with a national pastor.*

### Monday Baby Believers

Please pray for a couple of new believers as they move toward baptism and deeper discipleship. Please pray their families will accept their decisions. Pray for the salvation of three regular seekers in the church.

### Tuesday Kaori's Health

Please continue to pray for the health of Kaori, with hep B, particularly with the swine flu outbreak in Japan. We praise God that she is experiencing more energy these days and her blood work has been good.

### Wednesday Yearend Finances

The historically weak dollar and economy have produced a lot of pressure on our missionary support this year. We'd like to end the year in the black with all of our support need met. Although that appears unrealistic, we know God is in the business of busting expectations. Pray with us. Update in January.

### Thursday Postcard Outreach

The ladies at Denen Grace are hosting a calligraphy outreach for their non-Christian friends in November. Kaori is preparing a gospel message. Pray for a good response.

### Friday 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.

**Additional Support Needed:** \$359 per month



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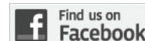
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"The [Japanese] people walking in DARKNESS  
have seen a great LIGHT." Isaiah 9:2

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## Let the Children Come

Japanese celebrate a 1000-year-old festival in November called Shichigosan. "Shichigosan" literally means "seven, five, three." These are the ages that are considered critical in a child's development



Kids gathered in our church for a functional substitute for Shichigosan

by Japanese. Parents will dress their children in traditional clothing, and take them to the local shrine where the priest will offer a prayer of blessing from the gods.

This affords a unique opportunity for the church in Japan. There is no stronger god than the true, living God; and no greater blessing than that which He gives. Why not ask parents to have the church pray for their children instead?

This past November Sunday, I again had the opportunity to pray for the salvation or spiritual growth of kids gathered at our church, as parents watched and listened. Jesus said, "Let the little children come!" and so we welcome them in His name! ■

## The Laverman Blog Spot

### Finding Resting in 7-11 24/7 365 Day Japan

posted on November 1, 2009

This past week at Denen I preached on the importance of rest. I shared how the concept of rest flows thematically through Scripture, from God modeling physical rest for us in Genesis 2 after creation, to man experiencing and then losing rest in Eden, to Christ offering spiritual rest to us in Matthew 11:28, and onward to heaven where man finds the fullness of rest finally restored.

Sometimes the preacher needs to pay attention to his own message. The list of things a church planter needs to do never ends. We have been far too busy as a family in the last several months with much ministry, particularly with the upcoming transition to a national pastor (below, left) and scarcely have had a chance to rest. We justify the busyness (or at least I do) by reminding ourselves that it is for God's kingdom purposes. If it's ministry, that's good busyness, right? No, we need a Sabbath rest, too.

The truth is, most people in Tokyo do. This culture is a 7-11 24/7 365-day-a-year, non-stop culture. People are worn down and

Laverman three in front of Mt. Fuji  
(yes, there's really a mountain in back of us)



worn out. It's obvious just by doing a little people watching. And our church people are equally overstressed and overworked. The biggest obstacle to church planting in Japan (in my humble opinion, at least), is that the hectic lifestyle gives no room for one to consider spiritual things, much less be part of a church community in a consistent way.

Well, I digress. What I really wanted to say is that we finally took some time off as a family last week and went down south to the Mt. Fuji area. The fall colors were wonderful, as was the time together as family. We also had the opportunity to attend a conference for church planters in the Fuji area, with English worship, messages, and fellowship that we needed for our spiritual renewal.

Enjoying our connection with God, with his creation, and with each other. The same components of rest that man knew in Eden. It's good to taste a bit of Eden again!

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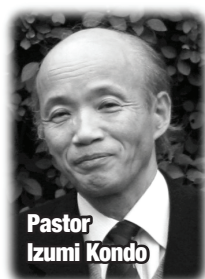
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## Pastor Project Need



Pastor  
Izumi Kondo

Our church plant, Denen Grace Chapel, needs a bit of a boost the first few years to enable us to call a pastor from January.

We have opened a special project with WorldVenture to subsidize in part the

first few years only of the Pastor Kondo'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 below. More info can be found on our website, or the letter likely included with this prayerletter.