Home Again

“So, Kevin, how does it feel to be home again?”

That’s the question we are often asked during our six-week Stateside visit with churches and supporters. I find myself struggling for an answer. Why? Because the question touches on the heart of the “schizophrenic” nature of being a missionary. Our heart is divided.

How does it feel when a child in a church comes up, gives his allowance money, and says, “This is for the missionary.”

How does it feel when a couple lends us their vehicle for our use while home at no small inconvenience to them?

How does it feel when a lady asks me a couple of informed questions that shows she has been carefully following our ministry, and then assures, “I pray for Kaori and you every day.”

How does it feel when a friend drives a hour out of their way to visit you while you are in town?

How does it feel when we pull into a church parking lot and the sign in front reads, “Welcome home, Kevin and Kaori.”

How does it feel when a church, our family, and people shower us with love and support? It feels great, but... (here comes the “but”)

But Japan is waiting.

While I feel a strong urge on my heart to stay in this loving environment (and this would be so easy to do), the call of King Jesus upon me is back to Japan. It feel great to be enveloped in a Christian environment. But the people in Japan are desperately spiritually needy. Many have (cont’d back)

Thanks for your work

One great encouragement in traveling amongst our supporting churches is the opportunity to see the various ways you all are tirelessly reaching out to your own local neighborhoods. Seeing your energy and creativity spurs us along in our own faithfulness to the harvest task in Japan.

Thank you for working hard in reaching out, building up, and encouraging people in their mission vision. You have blessed us!

Additional Support Needed: $798 per month
Pastor Izumi Kondo was recently called by NET PHONE: (219) 232-5321 to urge the church toward national leadership. "Who's 'minding the store' back in Japan?" I'm often asked in our supporting churches, Japanese for Christ. We are honored to be of age (young for a pastor in Japan) with a "young pastor" of only 60 years. During the year, I have come to appreciate in our absence. We've also raised a core of leaders in the church who since January. We've stayed in close touch since January. We've stayed in close touch Denen. We've been serving together with him during our 6 weeks of time here. We've also stayed in close touch since January. We've stayed in close touch during our 6 weeks of time here. We've also worked together with him since January. We’ve stayed in close touch during our 6 weeks of time here. We’ve also raised a core of leaders in the church who are ministering in our absence.

I'm often asked in our supporting churches, "Who's 'minding the store' back in Japan?" After 8 years of solo church planting, we urged the church toward national leadership. Pastor Izumi Kondo was recently called by NET PHONE: (219) 232-5321 to Denen. We’ve been serving together with him since January. We’ve stayed in close touch during our 6 weeks of time here. We’ve also raised a core of leaders in the church who are ministering in our absence.

During the year, I have come to appreciate Pastor Kondo’s wisdom and humility. He is an energetic ‘young pastor’ of only 60 years of age (young for a pastor in Japan) with a lot of ideas and vision for reaching returnee Japanese for Christ. We are honored to be working together. As the church cannot initially fully support Pastor Kondo, we have opened a special project with WorldVenture to help subsidize the first few years only of his salary. If you would like to help by making a one-time gift through WorldVenture to this project, please see our website for details: www.lavermansinjapan.org

It hits me every time we return home. Call it part of re-entry shock. Coming back is landing in the land of a million choices. The day after we arrived here in New Jersey, we needed to stock the refrigerator with some essentials for living. So, off to the supermarket. What’s the big deal? The big deal is that EVERYTHING is BIG. And supermarkets here have a million different of everything to choose from. But you knew that already. I thought I did too. I grabbed a cart, gripped the handle, and steeled myself to focus on the immediate task: milk! It was no use. The bakery section emitted a Siren's cry to my long pie-deprived stomach. Turning the corner, I nearly wept at the selection of cereals. A whole aisle. Incredible! And the boxes could last for days. Steering into the next aisle, I hunted for garbage bags. Again, the variety and selection nearly overwhelmed me. JUST GARBAGE BAGS! It took every bit of jet-lagged resolve I had left to not leave the aisle without something.

It was ice cream that finally did me in. A carton of vanilla ice cream. A simple thing! There were 17 coolers of ice cream in every size, shape and flavor known to man!

Ah, but Japan has one up on the States in this area. My local supermarket in Japan has octopus ice cream. Yes, it’s true. The photo above is proof.

Still, I am again left speechless by the land of many choices and large sizes: my country. After being gone for a while it all seems so incredible again!

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Our supporting churches bring us great joy. People not only encourage us, but many times help keep us real...especially the kids.

A young boy came up to me in a church we visited and asked energetically "Hi. Who are you?" Aware that I may be a new face to him (and perhaps smell of something foreign), I said, "I'm Kevin. I'm a missionary in Japan." "Oh," he replied, then thinking of his own self-introduction he smiled widely and said, "I'm Tim. I'm a kid in America."

At another church, I shook the hand of a child, "Hi. I’m Kevin from Japan." The boy sized me up quizzically, noted that I did not look the least bit Asian, and asked "Why do you live in Japan? Don't you like America?" "Of course, I do. I was born here. But I'm a missionary there," I explained. "Oh," he shrugged, then added matter of factly, "You must be strange." Strange indeed.