

REACHING THE OTHER 99
church planting with you to reach the 99% in Japan

JULY 2014 NEWS

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CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN

"You have the words of eternal life." John 6:68

www.LavermansInJapan.com



➔ God Put it in Writing

The Japanese writing system is a rich source of evangelistic truth. Bible stories, symbols, and redemptive meaning are contained in the pictographic letters. God left a witness in the Japanese heart language.



Mrs. N shows how the letters in this familiar Japanese rhyme are arranged to spell out gospel truth.

was no stopping her after this. Now, every so often, we offer a Japanese Calligraphy Workshop. Participants practice writing Scripture. They create postcards and various display items. All the while, God's words of life are bearing witness in their own heart language.

Written calligraphy is making a comeback in a country obsessed with digital media. Along with the comeback is a discovery of God's letters of life.

Several years ago in our early days of church planting, we led a certain new believer through a study of using one's talent for God. Afterwards she prayed, "Lord, help me to use my shuujji (calligraphy writing) for you." God took her up on that simple request.

It wasn't long before she discovered how beautiful Scripture was, and how alive Biblical concepts became, when she wrote them in traditional Japanese lettering. A new passion was born. There

For many in the class above, it's their first interaction with the Bible. Toward the end of class, our church member (standing in the photo) shared a familiar Japanese rhyme used in writing exercises. Few Japanese know that it was created by Japan's underground church during the martyrdom of the 17th century. The last letters of each line form the hidden acrostic: "Jesus died for me." That discovery brought some startled response from the ladies!"

I (Kevin) have attempted my own Bible lessons around Japanese writing. I thought I should wait until I understood Japanese better before attempting this. But my life is not long enough. So,

➔ continued on back

Words of Life (photo above)

The Japanese letter for "grace" in the photo above "just so happens" to be formed from two parts: one means "cross" and the other means "think." If Japanese think about the cross, they will discover real grace. So will we.

PRAY with us thru the week

SUN Praise God for 55 who turned out for our special gospel workshop in June. Pray for salvation decisions from among our 20+ regular gospel workshop members.

MON Pray for 6 seekers in the church to place faith in Christ, and 2 new believers to receive baptism.

TUE Religious festivals and holidays in August are a time of much spiritual oppression in Japan. Pray for the spiritual protection of our church.

WED Late July brings very humid weather to Japan. Pray for adequate energy for the mission work and rest together as family.

THUR Pray for us as we call a new national pastor to Denen Grace Chapel. In spite of the leadership shortage in Japan, ask God to provide the right man to take over this ministry and allow us to move on with new church planting work.

FRI Praise God for healing Kaori's shoulder pain. Pray for Justen to catch up with homeschooling studies. Pray for Kevin to maintain healthy routines of diet, rest and exercise.

Additional support: \$137 needed monthly. See our website to give online.



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➔ Walking toward the future vision



Walking through the Musashi-Kosugi neighborhood mega projects.

I've been doing a lot of walking. Losing pounds, focusing on prayer, and looking at potential new church sites.

There's still a lot left to do at Denen Grace Chapel, but we are slowly phasing out of the church work there and looking toward our next church planting location. As I write this, the sounds in our neighborhood are of cranes, scaffolding and rivet drivers. Another tall building project just up the street. The Kawasaki area is growing quickly!

Just 15 minutes east of our house is an area of even greater growth. Over the last 5 years, we've watched as the skyline darkened with hi-rise residences. Several massive 50-story buildings are complete. Many are underway. We have a lot of new neighbors in Kawasaki!

The "where" of our next church work is one question we're praying to clarify in 2014. Certainly Musashi-Kosugi and its hi-rises are one candidate location. It's within partnership distance of our existing church, Denen Grace. It has amazing access to the city: six train lines all come together here! It's the new residential hub for Tokyo. Walking through the area you can feel the energy of a changing area on the rise.

But walking about gave me an even greater reason to consider this spot:



Musashi Kosugi, rising in the distance, is a potential spot for more church planting.

People. Lost. 99% are unreached. And my research shows that no evangelical church is yet established here. Our tens of thousands of new neighbors need a church witness! Would you pray for our Musashi-Kosugi vision today? 🙏

➔ continued from front

again recently during our Gospel Sunday, I preached an evangelistic message on how God deals with our shame. I did my best to show how the Japanese characters for covering, righteousness and others illustrate the Jesus' redemptive work.

In my 15 years of preaching in Japanese, this is the first time someone came up afterwards and enthusiastically shook my hand. Quite a reaction for reserved Japanese! It wasn't me, though. Many centuries ago when the Japanese writing system was first being developed (from Chinese), nestorian Christians and their Bible stories had an impact on how letters were drawn. It was God's wisdom to reveal himself like this to Chinese and Japanese people every time they write!

Would you pray that Japanese will discover and respond to the gospel testimony in their own language? 🙏

Over the years we've tried to blend Japanese culture into our church activities, while being careful not to compromise the integrity of the gospel message. This is always a difficult balance. Pray for us to have wisdom and clarity in how to do so properly. Pray for us to utilize the Japanese culture to point to the Transformer of cultures, Christ.

LIFE IN JAPAN

Come Weary Travelers

"...and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Although I've walked it often on the way to Denen Grace, only recently did I dig up a bit of the history of the historic road that goes through our neighborhood:

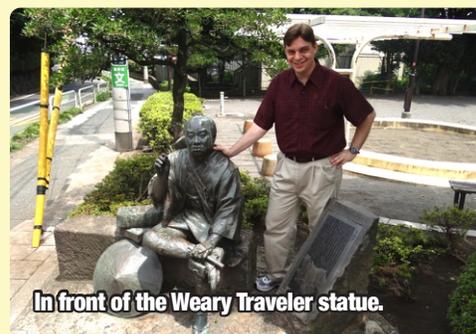
It's the famous Oyama Kaido, a Tokyo version of Route 66. It wore out a lot of Japanese shoe leather. In the photo, I'm standing on a section of the road next to the statue of a weary man that represents a religious pilgrim. During the Edo era, many walked this road on a spiritual journey to a distant holy mountain in Oyama. Later, entrepreneurial Japanese used the road as a trade route to market their goods to neighboring towns.

What's interesting is that this road goes directly in front of our church location. In fact, Mizonokuchi, where our church is, was once a rest town for these travelers!

So many Japanese are like this statue. Weary. Seeking spiritual things in remote wearisome ways. Seeking

happiness by earning and working and bustling about. They're weighed down by the heavy loads they carry. They're worn out by the stresses and challenges of life in non-stop Japan. They need rest.

It's no surprise that many Japanese churches have Matthew 11:28 permanently lettered on their outdoor signs. Real soul-level rest is what Japanese crave most. Would you pray that our church will be a rest spot on their way to Jesus? Weary travelers welcomed here!



In front of the Weary Traveler statue.