

REACHING THE OTHER 99

church planting with you to reach the 99% in Japan

APRIL 2015 NEWS

Kevin & Kaori Laverman CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN



"He changes the times and seasons." Daniel 2:21

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➔ Seasons of Change

In Japan, April is considered a time of change. The new school year starts. New jobs begin. Job transfers abound. Movers stay busy. And in the midst of it all, cherry blossoms bloom and fall. April brings a change for us, too...



Gospel workshop members sing at the farewell luncheon for Pastor & Mrs. Kondo

We expressed our appreciation for their faithful service during a heartfelt farewell luncheon. Members shared testimonies. Our gospel group sang some special numbers.

We're disappointed by this setback for the church work. Yet, we know that God directs our steps in life. We

Seasons change. God's promises remain the same. Five years ago, believing the next step for our church plant was Japanese leadership, we called Rev. & Mrs. Izumi Kondo to serve as pastor for Denen Grace Chapel. For the last few years we've worked with them in joint ministry. Our hope was that they would carry the work of the growing church while we transitioned out to begin a new church work in the area, in partnership together.

Pastor Kondo's physical and emotional health concerns have limited his ministry ability. Approaching the ages of 65, they have decided to retire from pastoral ministry and conclude their work at Denen. Their last Sunday was March 22.

believe every apparent setback is really a move forward into something different that he has already prepared. Our new church has pushed down some deep roots of maturity through the last years. They have learned what it means to support a national pastor in every sense. They remain eager to call a new pastor and we continue that search.

Meanwhile, there's a lot of rebuilding to do. We will remain at Denen for a time, coaching its leaders, casting vision, and revitalizing small groups, community outreach and evangelism work. Pray for us as we juggle multiple roles. Pray for Kevin in his increased Sunday message prep, Kaori in her womens' mentoring,

➔ continued on back

Japan castle sakura (photo above)

Japanese believe a fallen cherry blossom (sakura) symbolizes a fallen samurai who sacrifices his life for his lord. This year the sakura peaked on Good Friday, the day our Lord sacrificed his life for us. What a contrast!

PRAY with us thru the week

SUN Pray for Kevin's evangelistic Bible studies with Mr. S, Mr. S#2, Mr. N, and Mr. T#2. Pray for our early discipleship studies with Mr. T, Ms. O, and Miss H.

MON We've started an evangelistic Bible study prior to the gospel workshop on Sunday afternoons. Eight came for the first meeting. Pray for hearts to respond to the real gospel.

TUE Pray for us as we look for partnerships for a new church planting work in the area.

WED Pray for wisdom and time use as we lead our tiny flock in Kawasaki, and wear multiple hats within ministry and our mission team.

THUR Pray for the provision of a Japanese pastor for our church. We need God's man in place to enable us to move onto new church work.

FRI Pray for Kaori's good health with hepatitis B. Pray for Justin to catch up with homeschooling studies. Pray for Kevin to maintain routines of diet, rest and exercise.

Additional support: \$114 needed monthly. See our website to give online.



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➔ To the USA and Back Again



Together with family back in Indiana for Kevin's parents' 50th Wedding Anniversary

It's true. We were briefly back in the States from late January to early March. It was a blizzard of a visit in terms of weather conditions and activity. Our purpose back this time was to:

- 1) Celebrate Kevin's parents' 50th golden anniversary together with family
- 2) Care for Kaori's permanent residence requirements with Homeland Security
- 3) Visit with churches and groups to share our vision for the work in Japan

- 4) Eat a western breakfast at Denny's and slice of pie at Baker's Square
- 5) Buy some clothes that fit American proportions at prices I can afford (Those last two are hard to do in Japan, and were important, too!)

We visited with 10 churches in 5 states. A highlight of our travels was speaking at a couple of Japanese church groups in Buffalo and Niagara under the care of former WorldVenture missionaries, Cliff and Marion Schiefer. Japanese abroad are more open spiritually.

Although we were not able to make many personal visits with supporters (our short time and energy limits didn't allow for it), we did see many of you in the churches we visited from Illinois to New York. Thanks to many who fed our stomachs and spirits on stops along the way! In the middle of record cold and snow, your warm fellowship meant a lot! ☺

➔ continued from front

and both of us in our evangelistic studies with seekers. Also, pray for open doors and hearts as we build a foundation for new church work in the area, layering it as we go into ongoing partnership with Denen Grace, and seeking additional workers for the vision. We want to see many more Japanese come to the joy of salvation that Christ may be glorified in this nation! He is worthy of our best! ☺



Seven years to baptism

As challenging as it is for Japanese to make decisions for Christ, the next step of baptism is often an even greater challenge. The baptism decision can upset family structures, work obligations and relationships. So, this is always an early test of discipleship for Japanese: Which will I honor? Family harmony and earthly kingdoms? Or, my new allegiance to Christ, God's family and his kingdom?

It took Miss E seven years from decision for Christ to baptism, during which she hid her church involvement from family, left church and cut off relationships altogether, only to return again some time later. This is sometimes the patient nature of church planting in Japan.

During an evangelistic Bible study some time ago, she had shared with me her family's anti-religion stance and concerns. So, it was quite a surprise to her when her strong mother recently said out of the blue, "You know, E-san, I think it would be okay if you were a (baptized) Christian." Where did that come from? A small push and promise from God?

Praise God for Miss E's recent baptism! Pray for her to be a spiritual bridge to her family. She is currently going through another personal challenge that is testing her young faith.

LIFE IN JAPAN

Relearning Opposites (When Left is Right)

It happens every time we go to the States and back (see above). For a week or so (longer if jet lag persists), I need to relearn that left is really right. It is right to drive on the left side of the road in Japan. Forgetting this can create sheer terror for other motorists. Yet the steering wheel is on the right side of the vehicle. Forgetting this can create sheer confusion when one first gets in to drive. And just to round things out, the turn signal is on the left side of the steering column, and wiper control is on the right -- opposite where they should be, right? How often I've signaled my turns with no more than a swoosh of wipers! Oh, and the passing lane on highways? Yep, that's opposite, too: to the right. Don't forget! I've gotten a ticket for driving in the passing lane when I did.

Walking can be just as hazardous in the thick of jet lag. One must remember to look to the left *first* before crossing the street. Oncoming traffic doesn't stop because of foreign sensibilities. Japanese also walk on the left side of the sidewalk (or stairs, etc). I often forget and find myself walking head on into another pedestrian. Instinctively, I'll swerve to the right to avoid the collision. Japanese, however, will instinctively swerve to the left. Guess what happens then? If I'm on a bicycle (a main mode of transport here), the result is even more disastrous. How often my opposite instincts have gotten me tangled up with harried professionals, the elderly, policemen, and small dogs.

Even with collisions being my fault, polite Japanese will bow humbly and say sorry. In Japan, left is right, and right is definitely wrong. But even if you're wrong, people will make you feel that you were right.

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