

# REACHING THE OTHER 99

church planting with you to reach the 99% in Japan

DECEMBER 2017 NEWS

## Kevin & Kaori Laverman CHURCH PLANTING IN KAWASAKI, JAPAN



Yokohama port at Christmas

[www.LavermansInJapan.com](http://www.LavermansInJapan.com)



## ➔ Central Reason & Theme

What am I doing in Japan again? What connects it all?

They must have felt the curious stares of a thousand kimono-clad Japanese as they stepped off the ships at Yokohama port (*photo today above*) in conspicuous western dresses and suitcoats. I wonder if the first Protestant missionaries to Japan didn't silently ask themselves the question...



Gospel choir members at our September evangelistic service. Attended by 82; many who are not yet Christians.

... "What am I doing here again?" It wasn't really the ships that brought them in 1859. Just like it wasn't the jet that brought us in 1999. We're here in Kawasaki / Yokohama for one simple reason: *the love of Christ compels us* (2 Cor 5:14).

Christ is both the compelling call upon our lives, and the redemptive thread who weaves through and holds together every random activity we're about as missionaries -- and there's a lot. Every meeting I fumble to lead, every worship service we plan, every Bible study I prepare (dictionary in hand), every church event I fret about, every hand in the hospital I hold in prayer, every wedding or funeral I conduct (thankfully, more weddings than funerals lately), every

church bazaar flooded with visitors (*see back photo*), every note sung in our gospel music workshops, every kids outreach, English Bible Class, prayer times, or church association face times.

I often look back at what we've done in the last few months (usually when writing this newsletter), and ask, "What's the theme? What connected all those dots of activity? **WHAT AM I DOING HERE AGAIN?** And is it all really moving our mission vision forward?"

➔ continued on back



The big November wedding day for F-san and E-san (church member)

## MERRY CHRISTMAS! Christ's birth. The hope of Japan.

Thanks for your part with us in 2017 to reach Japanese for Christ. Your support and encouragement makes a world of difference here.

## PRAY with us thru the week

**SUN** Christmas is an open door to Japan's heart. Pray for my message prep, newcomers at our services and events, caroling, and a response to the gospel.

**MON** Pray for a place for Denen Grace. Church leadership is discussing and searching for a small building for weekday outreach in our neighborhood.

**TUE** Pray for someone to catch the vision to come and teach conversational English at our church. Opportunities abound around us.

**WED** Pray for our partnership in church planting work with new missionaries (Mitchells) and Changs (arriving in 2018). We have a vision to reach the sprawling communities west and south of us.

**THUR** Pray for Justen's witness as he attends his freshman year at Yokohama College of Art & Design (4-year school). Pray for a part-time job that suits his abilities.

**FRI** Pray for our new believer Bible studies. Pray for baptism decisions among new believers. Pray for ongoing marriage counseling for new couples including the two in left photo.



**Our November church bazaar to support post-tsunami mission work drew a lot of visitors**

☞ **continued from front**

Then in quiet reflection, I realize that the central reason and theme is bigger than our tiny mission vision (*below right*), or even church planting work. The center of it all, when you get down to it, is Christ: “Everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him” Col 1:16b.

So, I repent of having an overly pragmatic eye. Sure, I want it all to move a larger mission vision forward. But more than that, I want it all to move people to the center of it



**These gospel musicians were a great encouragement to our church this fall**

all: Christ. He is the axle and spokes of the wheel of this work. He is the best vision for this country. And the reason we’re here at all.

Yes, all those conversations held in my poor Japanese. All those kanji-filled (Japanese) emails written that Kaori lovingly corrected. All those messages in broken Japanese that make my wife giggle (*see upper right corner*) or sigh when I practice. All those prayers I stumbled through in my language inadequacy. All those reports, thank you notes to wonderful supporters, and newsletters. And

**Kevin:** Kaori, why did you snicker in church during my message today?  
**Kaori:** When you quoted Ps. 3:3 and said God lifts up our head (*kashira*), you reversed the Japanese word and said God lifts up our mustard (*karashi*).  
**Kevin:** [Feeling humbled]. But...but, no one else even smiled!  
**Kaori:** Yeah, don’t you love how they held it in so well?

especially that caramel macchiato I just sipped together with a new Japanese brother in Christ at the edge of the Tama river in view of Mt. Fuji.

**It’s all about Christ. I wouldn’t be here without Him. I wouldn’t do it for any less reason than love for Him. He’s the central theme of it all.**

Through that lens, I see the last few months of activity more clearly. Not everything moved along our vision as I wanted, but hundreds of people -- many who have never met a Christian in Japan -- were moved along to the center of it all, and pointed to the cross of Christ.

A recent conference we attended here (*below photo*) brought together missionaries from many different countries. 158 years later, new missionaries are still arriving in Japan. Far less from the west, though. In the thick of language and cultural stress, a flurry of ministry activities and mistakes, they no doubt will sometimes wonder, “What am I doing here again?”

The answer: Christ, the original missionary, came incarnate to earth,



**Church Planter’s Institute, October 2017 in Kumagaya, Japan**



**Out fishing at our August Kids Outreach**

sacrificing all, to bring people to God. His model is the one that motivates us still. I am here by Him and for Him alone. Christ is the central reason and theme of it all.

May this truth guide our thoughts toward Christmas 2017! ☞

**VISION** to reach Japan

**What 2020 Tokyo Olympics?** Our vision for Japan is bigger than that! Could you take a few minutes to read through this link below that describes what we plan ahead?



**Our 2020 Vision Booklet**  
 ↳ [www.LavermansInJapan.org/vision](http://www.LavermansInJapan.org/vision)

**Would you consider standing with us in this vision?** We are needing giving partners (see bottom form) in order to move forward in this plan for new churches in Kawasaki and Yokohama. Thanks for being part!