

PETERSON PERSONALS

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Notes from Gunma; March, 1999

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New Beginnings

Spring is a very important time of year in Japan. April is the start of the new school year, the new fiscal year and the time when companies hire new employees. Spring is when things come to life in our hearts and minds as well. Easter is when we celebrate the victorious resurrection of our Lord and the new life which we have received. Nature's song of new life can be heard in the chirping birds and seen in the blossoming flowers. Winter is over and warmth is returning. Our deepest desire is that the people around us might be touched by the joy of new life in Christ. Sometimes the lack of response can be discouraging and so we pray for a deeper understanding of "God's time" rather than our own. He is in charge and we desire to be used of Him in what ever way He desires.

Kids, Kids and more Kids!

In our last letter we asked for prayer for the children's Christmas meeting at our church on Dec. 23rd and thanks in part, to your prayers we were thrilled to welcome 85 kids that day, most of whom have never heard the gospel before. Please pray that the seeds sown will take root.

In an attempt to bring together the children and their families that we know from various activities, Hydi has been organizing a monthly get together called **Saturday in the Park**. It's a very informal play time geared towards children and their parents. In January and February we met in a local gym for indoor games. Imagine our surprise when over 40 kids showed up in January. February brought almost as many again! In March we got together at a local indoor pool for pool games. Hopefully in April we will finally live up to the name and gather in a local park.

Thursday night kids' English classes continue to be very busy with about 40 kids coming to the church every week. We will soon be adding a third class since the waiting list keeps growing.

Pastors Wanted!

Our Covenant churches in Gunma are facing a real shortage of pastors. The Isezaki church has been without a pastor for some time. Now the pastor of the Shibukawa church has resigned and so we are covering 5 churches with 3 pastors. It makes for a very busy preaching schedule.

Easter Celebration

By the time you read this we will have had a couple of special Easter events here in Yoshioka. On March 23rd Hydi will be hosting

an Easter brunch for about 15 women who attend the weekly English conversation class. We have had a number of new ladies recently so please pray that they will hear the message of Easter with open hearts. On Easter Sunday we will have our annual Gunma area singspiration gathering. All 5 Gunma Covenant churches come together for a time of music and celebration.

Family News

As we write this Miles is finishing up his year of first grade at the local Japanese elementary school and preparing to move up to 2nd grade. Kendra will soon become a 3rd year kindergartener and believe it or not, Eli will be starting kindergarten in April. At last, all three kids in school!

Hydi's health has improved. Thanks for your prayers. Her knees have been much better and the allergy shots seem to be helping.

Jim will be travelling to Chicago this summer for a three week intensive study time as a part of the Doctor of Ministry in Preaching program offered by North Park Theological Seminary in conjunction with the Association of Chicago Theological Schools.

Oops!

It has come to our attention that our last prayer letter may have been a bit misleading. In particular it seems that our description of the new hot springs spa in our neighborhood was incomplete in that we failed to mention the fact that the hot springs baths are not, repeat, **NOT** co-ed. Sorry about that. ☺

Please Pray

- **For the Yoshioka Church**
We want to reach more people; plain and simple!
- **For a new believer**
Mr. Konuma was baptized at Christmas. Please pray for him as he grows into his new found faith.
- **For the Shibukawa church**
Pray for healing and for a successful pastoral search.
- **For the Easter Brunch**
Pray that the ladies will get a taste of Christ's love.
- **For our kids**
Pray for Miles, Kendra and Eli as they each enter new classes and new settings in April.

In Christ,
Jim, Hydi, Miles, Kendra, & Eli