

PETERSON PERSONALS

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Notes from Gunma

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Looking Back

2002 has come and gone. It was a year filled with many unexpected blessings. In the words of the Psalmist, *"Praise the Lord, I tell myself, and never forget the good things he does for me."* (Ps103:2) Here are a few of the highlights:

- In March several new people started coming to our church.
- That same month the Gospel Choir ministry came to our church.
- In May Jim was awarded his Doctorate of Ministry in Preaching after 3 years of work.
- In July we welcomed a missions team from Newsong Church. They served in our local churches and at our denominational camp.
- In late August our family traveled to the U.S. for a 3 month deputation assignment. Jim traveled to Covenant churches around the country while Hydi and the kids stayed with her folks in Colorado Springs.
- In October Hydi helped host a 2 week international tennis tour in Colorado Springs. All 14 participants were tennis friends of Hydi's from Japan.
- In late November we returned to Japan and found things going stronger than ever at church!
- In December our church and the Gospel Choir had several special events that went well. See below for more details on one of them.

We feel blessed, protected, and loved. God has shown Himself to us in many ways over the past year and we give all the praise, honor, glory and thanks to Him.

New Years Eve

Maebashi City is the capital of Gunma Prefecture. The skyline is dominated by the 32 story capitol building that houses the prefectural government. The top floor is an observation deck with windows to the north, east and south. The view is stunning.

On New Years Eve the prefecture sponsored a countdown event at the capitol building. One part of that event was a Gospel Music fest on the 32nd floor. To our amazement the prefecture commissioned the entire event to our gospel choir. That meant long hours spent in preparation but the end result was nothing short of astonishing.

The fest went from 6PM until well after midnight. We invited a professional gospel singer and her band to come and put on a workshop which was attended by over 100 people. Then we had several local gospel groups perform. Throughout the entire event we were free to proclaim the good news and did so



without reserve.

The evening culminated with a multimedia countdown presentation seen by several hundred people, and we welcomed in the New Year with a very hip gospel version of Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. The significance of being allowed to celebrate Japan's most traditional holiday in that manner and in that place was totally mind boggling.

A Voyage to India

Jim made his first trip to India in January. The 3rd Asia Covenant Church Consultation was held in Bangalore, hosted by the India For Christ Ministries, Covenant Church. Ten representatives from Japan joined delegates from 6 other Asian countries. Jim served as the interpreter for the Japan delegation. Nine days in India was enough to create a lifetime of memories for Jim. Highlights included visiting several small village church plants in rural Andhra Pradesh and seeing several historically significant Christian sites including the grave of St. Thomas and the statue of Mary before which St. Francis Xavier was praying when he received the vision to take the Good News to the Far East. (He was the first missionary to Japan.)



Family News

The kids had a great 3 months of American public school education in Colorado Springs. Then we returned to Yoshioka and each one of them jumped right back into the same class they had left at the local Japanese elementary school.

Miles is doing well in tennis and is one of two selected to represent Gunma Prefecture in an upcoming Kanto regional tournament in the elementary division.

Hydi continues to be busy with tennis outreach and English teaching, not to mention three very active children. Pray for the seeds of truth being sown by God through her in the hearts of so many.

Jim is enjoying the ever growing ministries of the church and trying to prepare for his debut as a teacher at the Covenant Seminary in Tokyo next fall.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for the many people involved in music at our church; that they would receive a "song in their heart."
- Please pray for wisdom and Spirit guidance as we prayerfully contemplate the next steps in the ministry here in Gunma.
- Please pray for unity in the Japan Covenant Church as we face a number of challenges.
- Please pray for our kids as they continue to be the only Christians in a school of almost 600. Pray that the light would shine through them.



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