

PETERSON PERSONALS

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Notes from Gunma

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A Cold Wind Blows

It's winter in Gunma. The mountains around us are white, the rabbit's water is frozen solid every morning, and the cold wind just keeps blowing. Actually, for many of you our winters would seem rather mild, rarely getting below 25 degrees Fahrenheit. But the constant wind and the drafty houses without central heating are constant reminders of the season. We had two big snows in January and a couple smaller ones too. Weather pundits tell us it's the snowiest January in 43 years! Now that's something to write home about amidst all the talk of global warming.

At church we finally purchased what is known as a kotatsu. It is a low table with an electric heater on the underside. During the winter a large quilt is draped over the entire table and the tabletop goes over the quilt. It keeps the lower half of the body very warm and every Japanese home has one. Ours can sit 6 or 7 people so we use it for Sunday school, small English classes, prayer meetings etc.



Christmas Report

Christmas provides a great opportunity for outreach in our community. This past Christmas we focused our efforts on two event in particular.

On December 22nd we held our 6th annual **Children's Christmas Program** at the church. In preparation we handed out flyers to almost every child (just over 1,000) at both elementary schools in town. We also put up posters at all 6 kindergartens and preschools in town, including the one owned by the Buddhist temple and the one owned by the Shinto shrine. We were thrilled to welcome about 120 kids to a program of fun and games, music and puppets, Santa and presents, and of course the Good News about Christmas.

On December 24th we had our **Christmas worship service** at church. Everyone at church invited friends for this special celebration of our Savior's birth. In addition to our 15 or so regulars we had 10 visitors for worship and the potluck that followed! Among them were three members of the cycling team Jim belongs to. This was the first time anyone from that contact has come to church so we were very pleased.



Church News



During our home assignment in the fall of last year the Yoshioka church began meeting regularly after worship for tea and a time of sharing and prayer. We had wanted to do this before but didn't think people would be able to stick around that late in the afternoon. (Worship is from 3:30PM to 4:30PM) But they just decided to do it during our absence since the regular mid-week prayer meeting was on hold. We are very happy for this development and see it as a time of growing closer together as a church family. It also is a great way to make visitors feel welcome.

English classes at church resumed in January after a 6-month break. We see close to 70 kids come through the doors every week on Thursdays and Fridays. We also offer several adult classes. So far we have seen one woman from English class contacts come to the Lord and there are a couple more who seem close.

Family News



Returning to Japan after our three-month home assignment was much smoother and easier than when we were gone for a whole year. We were able to come back to the same house, put the kids back into the same classes at the same school and basically just pick up where we left off. We thank God for the smooth transition.

The kids continue to enjoy school. They also keep busy with tennis lessons and lots of other things. Keeping up with their English studies at home after finishing their Japanese homework is challenging but they are making a great effort.

In January Hydi traveled to Australia with her Japanese doubles partner for a tennis tournament. They were gone for 13 days and had a blast while Jim and the kids held the fort.

Jim is keeping very busy with the demands of pastoring, the doctoral program he's working on and serving on a couple of denominational committees and one board.

Please Pray

We ask for your continued prayers for

- The Yoshioka Covenant Church
- Several friends who have expressed interest in the Good News
- Opportunities for new ministries of local outreach
- Knowledge of God's priorities as we juggle busy schedules



In Christ,

Jim, Hydi, Miles, Kendra & Eli