

PETERSON PERSONALS

Notes from Japan

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Spring is Here, Summer is Coming

The cold months have passed and signs of new life are everywhere. Cherry blossoms, green foliage, and flowers in the garden are God's way of reminding us that creation is in His hands; the God of love, master of nature, author of life.

New life in Christ is at the core of everything we do. As our ministries expand we see fresh and exciting examples of this new life in many places.

Yoshioka Church

Actually we experienced some trials since our last newsletter. The Gospel Choir ministry has had a huge impact on our small church over the course of 3 years and we thank God for every moment, every song, and every soul that was touched by it.

After another successful series of year end concerts we came face to face with a thorny problem. It became increasingly apparent that the organizer of the choir had a distinctly different vision of church and ministry than the membership of the church. After much prayer, long discussions and lots of tears, it was decided that we would pursue separate paths. As of April, he and 6 others left our congregation to start a new church and continue the gospel choir ministry in a new location.

For a small congregation of 20-25 people, losing 7 all at once is not easy. But just when we might have been tempted to feel sorry for ourselves God decided to cheer us up. In the 4 weeks since saying goodbye to our friends we have had new people at worship every Sunday and have started a bi-weekly Bible study class. The numbers keep increasing but currently we have 3 non-Christians and 3 church members attending! Please pray that God's love will find a place in their hearts.

We continue reaching out to children through the English classes at church, and this spring we will once again host a kids' Gospel choir. The church also continues to host music lessons. Hydi's adult English class on Sunday evenings draws together a group of women, several of whom have expressed an interest in more than English. "Flow Spirit, flow!"

Raising up Tomorrow's Leaders

The Japanese church is facing a crisis in the form of a leadership shortage. We believe that the harvest is great and that the God of the harvest is calling for more workers, so it is with a deep sense of joy that Jim teaches at two schools that are about the business of training the leaders of tomorrow's church. The Covenant Seminary is owned and run by the Japan Covenant Church but has an inter-denominational student body. Jim teaches an

advanced preaching class and a church history class on Pietism and Covenant roots.

The other school is Tokyo Christian University, the only evangelical four year university in Japan. He teaches a preaching theory class and a preaching practicum class to undergraduates. These ministries are the fulfillment of many years of prayer. Please join us in praying for those who will lead the church in the years to come.

Christian Academy in Japan

Last spring all three kids made the switch from Japanese public schools to education in English at the Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ). Hydi also began teaching full time at CAJ. She teaches Jr. & Sr. High P.E. and Sr. High health. She also coaches tennis and some basketball.

Although the school is Christian, and most of the students come from Christian homes, there are many who don't. And even for those who do, the need to share God's love in visible and tangible ways makes Hydi's job a crucial opportunity for ministry. Please pray that nothing, including the endless details and busywork that hound every teacher, would get in the way of Hydi's heartfelt desire to be a reflection of Christ among her students.

Sports Ministry

During our 8 years in Gunma, Hydi built up a network of tennis acquaintances and relationships that have provided the context for sharing the Good News with a large group of people who would rarely consider spending a Sunday anywhere indoors.

She still continues that ministry on weekends and on the occasional day off from school. Please pray that her partners and opponents alike would see the joy of Christ in her, both on and off the court.

Visiting the U.S.

This summer we will be in the U.S. for several weeks and hope to visit with as many of you as possible. Please pray for safe travel as we seek to report in person, on how God is using your prayers and gifts in this corner of His kingdom.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. And thank you even more for your faithful prayers and generous support of this work.

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