

## SPIRITUALLY THRIVING CENTERS OF HOPE

The motto of Japan Mission is **Called to Serve**. We desire to serve the Japanese people in whatever way the Lord leads, **so that some may be saved**. The two main purposes of our ministry continues to be to evangelize the unsaved and assist the Bible-teaching churches of Japan.

Japan is in great need of **more churches that are spiritually thriving centers of hope**, that can meet the needs of those in their communities. The Lord has directed us to aid in the development of such **centers of hope** by encouraging the small churches -- thereby strengthening the Christian community as a whole.

Most of the 7,800 churches in Japan have an attendance of fewer than 30 people and struggle to survive. These churches are surrounded by people in need of counseling, social support, quality childcare, care for the elderly and effective education. JM workers and resources help to empower many churches to meet these needs and establish a connection with people -- thereby helping them reach people in their communities for Christ:

**1. LITERATURE** – JM publishes a **monthly evangelistic tract**, which helps churches evangelize their communities. We also remain committed to making thousands of **Bibles** available in various languages throughout Japan, China and other parts of the world.

**2. EVANGELISTIC PROGRAMS** – Missionary / Teachers teach **Conversational English** and share the Gospel in many churches. JM workers have also been involved in Camps, Cooking and Choir classes and Services for Children and the Elderly -- while sharing the Gospel.

**3. MEDIA & AUDIO VISUAL** – JM assists churches with **video production, advertising and website development**. Evangelistic and Christian educational videos, audio Bibles and message DVDs have also been made available. We remain committed to making significant investments in **Christian TV and Radio**, which impacts the lives of millions in Japan with the Gospel.

**4. RESOURCES & EDUCATION** – JM has provided **consultation and training seminars** that address specific needs. Teachers, special speakers, literature and teaching materials have also been provided.

**Pray** for wisdom and guidance as we seek to develop resources to assist churches become **spiritually thriving centers of hope**, that can connect and impact people in their communities for Christ.



March / April 2017

## HEALING OF THE HEART

"My honorable husband, we cannot possibly take the responsibility of giving a name to our baby girl. We must take her to the priest so that he can consult the gods," said Mrs. Hasegawa. "Her whole life will be affected by her name."

Mr. Hasegawa muttered about the cost and wondered whether it was really worth it. After the ceremony, a handsome fee was paid to the Shinto priest. He then bestowed the name **Kiyoko**, meaning 'Joy Child' on their first born, assuring her of a full and happy life.

Soon after she was born in Kobe in April 1937, it was discovered that Kiyoko had a defective heart and the doctors predicted that she would not live much longer than seven years. The family was devastated and did all they could to lavish love and care on Kiyoko, while her mother gave birth to 4 more children. As time passed, both the priest and their doctor were surprised to see Kiyoko grow older.

"I struggled with my health and spent much of my childhood in the hospital. I often felt weak and could not play outside like other children," she shared. "The priest with whom I consulted told me that my physical problems could not be helped. He said that it was my destiny and that I should make the best of it. This just added to my frustration and confusion. I took part in sacred rituals and attended religious meetings and camps in order to somehow gain merit before the gods and hoped to somehow be rid of my fate.

"At age 16, I was contemplating my problems when I heard the beating of a drum near my home. I thought that it was likely the village priest, announcing



**Kiyoko & Hiroyuki Kodama**

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the dance practice for the Festival of the Dead. I was curious, so I went to investigate and saw a large tent and a drum that was apparently intended to draw attention and announce that Christian meetings would be held there the following week.

"I attended the tent meetings out of curiosity, not knowing what they were really about. The first thing I learned was that the God who created the heaven and the earth loved me. The speaker spoke to my heart when he explained how God did not destine me to a hopeless future. This God came to save me by sending His Son to be my Savior! On the third night, I decided to follow Jesus and accepted Him as my personal Savior.

Kiyoko did not realize that her parents would be so opposed to her decision. For three generations the Hasegawa family had been steadfast adherents of Tenrikyo (Heaven & Earth Religion). They were indignantly opposed to her decision, but she was not shaken from her new found faith.

In Christianity, Kiyoko had at last found the answer to the question which had troubled her for so long: ***For what reason am I alive in this weak and sickly body?*** At last she knew that there was meaning to life. She had a sense of purpose as joy filled her heart. "As I started to attend church, I developed a deep desire to help people who had very little hope, as I once did."

Kiyoko went on from strength to strength, and during her first year as a Christian the doctor reported that her heart was completely healed!

She started work as an assistant to an eye specialist and later worked at

a Christian hospital as a pediatrician's assistant. "While I helped people with their physical ailments, I found myself praying for their salvation as I listened to their heart's concerns," she shared.

"I clearly felt the Lord's calling to dedicate my life to help those who were troubled find salvation through Jesus Christ, so I joined Japan Mission (JM) in January, 1959." Shortly after, Kiyoko attended Kansai Bible College and graduated in 1961.

The Lord used her to reach many for Christ over the next 8 years, even though she faced personal struggles. "A few years after graduating from Bible college, I was hospitalized for two years with an infection of the spinal cord. This also affected my central nervous system. It took me 6 years to fully recover from this illness. The doctors told me on various occasions that I may not recover, but the hope that I had in the Lord Jesus sustained me through those dark days."

"The Lord taught me some valuable lessons through my illness. I saw Him use me to transform the lives of many patients, as they accepted the salvation offered to them by the Savior. I dedicated my life to being the friend of the struggling and hopeless. I realized that I had no strength in myself, but the Lord had given me the strength to serve. Some patients were facing their last moments on earth, but their faces were radiant as they put their faith in Christ, and their bed of sorrow became a place of deliverance and sublime hope."

Hiroyuki Kodama graduated from Kansai Bible College in 1968. He was a promising young hospital evangelist who was committed to

work with JM. While in Bible college, he often attended the JM prayer meetings. That is where Kiyoko met him and they developed an interest in each other.

They were married on April 28th, 1968 and settled in south Osaka, where JM opened a new evangelistic center and they joyfully served the Lord together.

A daughter was born to them in the spring of 1969. They would often distribute the ***Yorokobi no Izumi*** (Fountain of Joy) tract while doing evangelism, so they decided to name their daughter ***Izumi***, meaning 'Fountain'. The Lord later blessed them with two more children.

"Since we were saved and married, the Lord did a wonderful work in the lives of both of our extended families. Our hearts were filled with joy as we saw one after another come to know the Lord." Kiyoko's mother and brother were the first to be saved. Her

father, who was a devout Tenrikyo worshiper, accepted the Lord as Savior when he was 80, just 50 days before he passed away.

"We have experienced much hardship in life and used to be people who were so self-centered and focused on our own success, but our lives are now dedicated to giving hope to the hopeless. The Lord changed our hearts and called us to help the needy and share the joyous Gospel message with them."

Hiroyuki is now 79 years old and continues to do evangelism, while contributing each month as a writer of the ***Fountain of Joy*** tract. At the age of 80, Kiyoko is involved in caring for the elderly. She has found this to be a wonderful way to share God's love and offer hope to the hopeless.

**Pray** that the Lord would strengthen and guide the Kodama family as they seek to faithfully serve Him to the end. □

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## JAPANORAMA - HEAVEN & EARTH RELIGION

Tenrikyo (Heaven & Earth Religion) was founded in 1838 by a woman named Miki Nakayama and has about 2 million followers. They teach that the way of salvation is to live a joyous life, made evident through acts of charity and abstaining from greed, selfishness, hatred and anger. Many zealous followers can be seen in parts of Japan wearing black and white ***happy coats***, while sweeping the roads and cleaning public toilets.

They believe in one god who created all men to be equal. Since Miki Nakayama died in 1887, they continue to wait for her to return. They say that the only thing that Christianity has that they do not have is the resurrection. Every day the priests in Tenri City go through the ritual of praying and preparing food and a bath for her while they await her return.

**Pray** for the deliverance of those who have been deceived into believing in religions that offer false hope and teach salvation by works.

**Pray** that the eyes of many would be opened to respond to the powerful, life-giving message of salvation by the grace, through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.