

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Christmas is a special time of year when Japanese people are especially open to Christianity. Japan Mission workers become very busy, participating in evangelistic meetings, concerts and parties. Workers will be involved in over 100 gatherings, to help churches reach those in their community, who desire to learn more about the meaning of Christmas. **Pray** for wisdom and strength, and that the Lord would transform the hearts of many through these evangelistic opportunities.
2. Japan Mission recently held a two-day English Camp in the mountains. Many heard the Gospel for the first time, as an evangelist shared from the Word and friendships were cultivated. **Pray** for the seeds sown in the hearts of those who have never been to church.



JAPANORAMA - UNDERWATER SHRINE

Located two hours away from Tokyo, Hasama Underwater Park is a perfect diving spot where one can swim with sunfish.

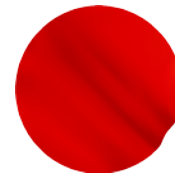
Divers can also visit the **Hasama bottom of the sea Shrine**. This unusual shrine, dedicated to the good fortune of divers, is located 18 meters (60 feet) underwater, and is frequented during the New Year by many divers who dive into the icy waters to pray to the gods for safety and blessing.

During the New Year, about 80 million Japanese visit the temples and shrines to pray for good luck and protection. It is sad to be surrounded by so much misplaced hope and emptiness.

It is wonderful to know that our source of hope for the New Year comes from our precious Savior, with whom anything is possible -- in the midst of the troubled world we live in.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jer. 29:11).

Let us rejoice in the hope we have in our precious Savior!
We pray that you will have a blessed Christmas and New Year.



JAPAN MISSION

CALLED TO SERVE

Nov / Dec 2017

THE GODS WERE SILENT - PART I

Dr. Kiichi Ariga was born in June 1933, to parents who were deeply religious. "As a small baby my parents took me to the Shinto shrine where I was dedicated," Kiichi shared. "They purchased an **omamori** (good luck charm) at the shrine, which they tied to my belt.

"As I grew older, I slept with my good luck charm under my pillow, believing that it would help me get better grades at school. The **omamori**, which my parents purchased at the temple annually, also protected me from theft, fire and sickness. I felt that my gods would protect me, even if an earthquake killed all of the other students.

"Superstitions haunted my life and I had never heard of the true God or the cross of Calvary. I was taught to light a candle and offer rice and miso soup to the gods every morning. I also offered the same things to Buddha and my dead ancestors.

"When I was twelve, my parents encouraged me to save my money to buy a bicycle. When no one was looking, I took the money from my savings to buy candy, go to the movies and buy toys. One day, my mother found out that the money I had been saving was almost gone and confronted me. She believed me when I lied and blamed the theft on a naughty boy in the neighborhood. She told others about this boy and his bad deeds.

"My conscience bothered me and I did not want to incur the wrath of the gods for lying to my mother, so I got up at 5 am to sweep the yard at the Shinto shrine. In this way, I felt that I could gain favor with the gods.

"After had I finished, I went to pray. There I bowed my head and clapped my hands, but I felt no peace in my heart. **The gods were silent.**



Dr. Kiichi Ariga

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"One day, a classmate and I went to see a Japanese wrestling match. Shortly after we returned home, this 13-year-old friend suddenly became sick with a very high fever and died the next day! My heart was deeply troubled because he had been my best friend.

"At his funeral I saw him lying in the coffin, dressed in a white kimono. In his right hand was a long stick, which was meant to help him on his long journey to the Buddhist heaven.

"I thought to myself, 'Where did he go? To heaven or to hell?' Then I wondered, 'where would I go if I suddenly died?'

"I felt that I would go to hell because of my sinful lying heart. I was overcome by darkness and fear by this realization.

"I made pilgrimages to the shrines, meditated and listened to lectures by the priests. A Shinto priest even gave me a special blessing by waving a white wool-like tassel over me to purify me, but I still had no peace and **the gods were silent**.

"Many thought that I was very religious. The school principal even gave me a special certificate in honor of my faithful work at the shrine. In reality, I had been trying to appease the gods and cleanse my sins through my own good works.

"After two years of meditation, I went to the priests and asked them to give me a word of acknowledgement for my devotion. To my amazement they replied, 'Sorry, but you will only know the result after you die.'

"I could not believe it! I did not want to die like my friend, not knowing where I was going.

"I became depressed and felt that the only solution left for me was to commit suicide. I wrote a farewell note to my parents, asking them to forgive me, and went to the nearby railway line.

"I threw myself in front of an oncoming train, but to my utter amazement, it passed over me and I was unhurt! I had fallen between the two tracks! I went home, utterly discouraged. I concluded that even the god of death disliked me!

"I made my way to the Shinto shrine on New Year's Eve. I was sure that the first prayer prayed after midnight would be answered.

"As I walked along the dark lonely street, someone tapped me on my shoulder. I was surprised to see a classmate of mine. 'Where are you going?' he asked. 'To the shrine,' I replied. 'Come to church with me,' he said. 'No, I don't want to go to a Christian church,' I replied. But he insisted and twisted my arm. He was the leader of our debating society and was also good at Judo, so I reluctantly agreed.

"He took me to a meeting that was held in the home of a poor tailor called Mr. Nakamura, who was the acting pastor. He spoke of how he had suffered during the war and how an America bomber had dropped a bomb on his home, killing his wife, his only son, and two of his three daughters. He shared that life would not have been worth living if God had not sustained him.

"It was a New Year's Eve prayer meeting and the Christians began to pray out loud. It was my first time ever to enter a Christian church and I was a total stranger.

"Suddenly, to my surprise someone prayed for me by name. Then the others joined in until the whole church was praying for my salvation.

"For the first time I came to understand the love Jesus had for me on Calvary and of my need to repent of my sins. As I was crying, Mr. Nakamura encouraged me to confess my sins. With tears, I accepted Christ as my Savior. Afterwards he quoted Matthew 9:2: **Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.** I was born again by God's Spirit. I was a new creature in Christ Jesus!

"I never did get to the Shinto shrine that night. I did not need to, for I had met the true and living God. I had prayed and He had answered. **God was not silent!** My heart was at last filled with the peace that I had sought for so long.

"After returning home, I witnessed to my parents and apologized for my sinful and disobedient conduct. I also apologized to my mother for lying to her about the bicycle money.

"Some months later, I was asked to become a Sunday School teacher. After church I went to the same shrine where I used to sweep the yard and held an afternoon Sunday School class for thirty boys and girls.

"So great was my love for Jesus that I had to tell others of His love.

One of those that I lead to the Lord, was the boy that my mother had falsely accused of stealing my bicycle money. I apologized to him and he accepted Jesus as His Savior. He still serves the Lord today.

"When I told my friends at school about the Lord, many of them teased me and called me, **Kirisuto** (Christ). They laughed at me when I prayed before lunch and read my Bible at school, but they could not silence me. The Lord gave me a deep desire to share Christ at every opportunity."

Kiichi later went to Bible school and became an evangelist. Today he continues to preach the Gospel and reach many for Christ.

Dr. Kiichi Ariga has been a dear friend of **Japan Mission** for many years. He has spoken at some of our evangelistic events and we have supported his ministry for the past 50 years.

Pray that the Lord would bless and strengthen Dr. Ariga, who is still going strong and maintains a busy schedule of meetings and lectures at age 84!

Read the next issue to find out how the Lord has mightily used Dr. Kiichi Ariga to bring many to the cross of Calvary. □

(Contributor - Kiichi Ariga)

SPECIAL THANKS

We want to thank each person who has faithfully prayed and supported the work of Japan Mission during 2017. You have played an important role in helping us further the Lord's work. We praise the Lord for the many changed lives, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and His faithful protection and provision. Thank you for the way you have partnered with us to reach many for Christ.