

WEARING MASKS IN JAPAN

Covering the mouth with a sacred covering to prevent one's *unclean* breath from defiling religious rituals and festivals goes back as far as the Edo Period (1603-1868).

During the Spanish flu an estimated 450,000 died in Japan by 1920. Educational posters of that time featured slogans such as, "Reckless are those who don't wear masks."

The Japanese have long considered wearing masks in public synonymous with etiquette and hygiene. During 2020, the Japanese government did not pass a single law requiring people to wear masks. However, well over 95% of Japanese can be seen wearing masks in public today.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. **Pray** for Sunette Hugo who journeyed back to South Africa to retire at the end of October after 13 years of faithful service with JM. **Pray** that she would adjust well to her new living circumstances.
2. **Pray** for wisdom and discernment for Eliezer Tyree, who joined the work in November from the USA to help with many of the teaching and evangelism responsibilities in various churches.
3. **Pray** for the many seeds sown at an outdoor Day Camp event, which was held during November, with about 60 people from the community. Many listened intently to the Gospel message that was shared.
4. Christmas is a special time of year when many Japanese people are particularly open to Christianity. **Pray** that many would be reached through the Christmas parties and events that will be held.

SPECIAL THANKS

We want to thank each person who faithfully prayed and supported the work of Japan Mission during 2020. You have played an important role in helping us further the Lord's work. We praise the Lord for the many seeds sown, the changed lives and His faithful provision. Thank you for the way you continue to partner with us as we reach out to the lost. We have been greatly encouraged!



JAPAN MISSION

CALLED TO SERVE

Sep to Dec 2020

CORONAVIRUS OPPORTUNITIES - PART 2

Some may ask, "Why is Japan Mission involved in so many areas of outreach?" Each outreach has come about as we have perceived a need, and prayerfully followed the Lord's guidance as to how best to meet this need.

Using various methods to tirelessly sow the seed has been at the core of what Japan Mission is all about. ***Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening let your hands not be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both will do equally well*** (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

Japan Mission has faced various challenges over the years. However, the global coronavirus pandemic presented us with extraordinary difficulties. Efforts to befriend the unsaved through meetings, English classes and the cafe ministry were all affected. However, we were amazed to see how the Lord led our workers in the media and English ministries to come together to develop a new way to reach the unsaved through online interaction.

One method the Japan Mission has used over the decades to reach the unsaved is the ***Fountain of Joy*** tract, which is a monthly publication that always contains a testimony of salvation. About 24,000 copies of this tract continued to be distributed without interruption to about 1,000 churches and individuals during the pandemic.

We have received some encouraging reports of how the Lord has been using this publication to transform hearts during these unprecedented times.

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NO MORE PAIN

The following is the testimony of how this monthly tract was instrumental in the salvation of Mr. Nonoda.

The focus of the work of Japan Mission has been to evangelize the unsaved and to assist the churches of Japan. Most of these churches are small and find themselves in need of literature, evangelistic programs, media development and help from dedicated Christians workers.

As we befriend and share the Gospel with many in our area, we often find ourselves working in close contact with various ministers. The primary reason for this is because Japan Mission does not form churches, but introduces seekers and those saved through its efforts to local churches.

Rev. Yoshida of a nearby church is one such minister. He used to be a graffiti artist and was saved about 10 years ago while serving time in jail for his offences. After his release, he found a job working with the elderly. It was there that the Lord moved in his heart to attend seminary and become a minister. We recently featured his remarkable testimony in the ***Fountain of Joy*** tract.

Mr. Noda, who was a keen Christian craftsman and faithful member of a church, received this tract in another part of Japan. As he read this tract he was impressed and felt an affinity with Rev. Yoshida, because he had also been saved years earlier from a delinquent life-style.

He distributed many of these tracts in his community. Months later, he was instrumental in inviting Rev. Yoshida as a special guest speaker to his church.

In the meantime, the Lord led Mr. Noda to befriend Mr. Nonoda, who had received one of these tracts. Mr. Nonoda expressed some interest in Christianity and had attended church a few times.

He later fell ill and ended up in the hospital. Sadly, the doctors had to amputate both of his legs, due to complications with diabetes. When Mr. Nonoda was discharged a month later, he was distraught and could only cry about his terrible plight of being wheelchair bound.

When Mr. Noda invited him to church to hear this special guest speaker he tearfully declined saying, "I don't want people to see me like this and feel sorry for me!"

Mr. Noda then decided to invite Mr. Nonoda to his home after Rev. Yoshida had finished speaking at his church and asked him to share his testimony with Mr. Nonoda.

As Rev. Yoshida spoke, Mr. Nonoda was surprised and said, "I know you! You are the man I read about in that tract!" He felt as though he knew Rev. Yoshida and had found someone that he could pour his heart out to!

Rev. Yoshida assured him that Jesus loved him and would take care of him, and encouraged him to give his heart to the Lord. He also shared of how we would be given a new body and that

there would be no more pain or suffering in heaven (Rev. 21:4).

That day Mr. Nonoda accepted the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior and said that he would start to attend church! Praise be to God!

We praise the Lord for the way He used the ***Fountain of Joy*** tract as a stepping-stone in the salvation of Mr. Nonoda!

It has been an encouragement to see how the Lord is using this monthly publication to touch lives during these unprecedented times where social distancing has become the norm.

Pray that Mr. Nonoda would continue to attend church, read his Bible and trust the Lord to help him through his many struggles.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

During April and May 2020, most outreach activities came to a halt as a state of emergency was declared in Japan due to the coronavirus pandemic and people were encouraged to shelter-in-place.

However, God showed us that He is sovereign and can accomplish His work, despite the difficulties. When social gatherings were restricted, the Lord led Japan Mission workers to stay in touch with many through online Bible lessons and English classes.

During June, outreach activities slowly started to resume. Although Japan experienced a second wave of COVID-19 during August, there were far fewer deaths. The main reason for this seemed to be that the age groups affected were much younger.

During September, 90% of Japan Mission outreach activities resumed with social distancing, new sanitation measures and mask-wearing in place. English Evangelism classes resumed in the churches, people started to attend our outdoor cafe events and we started to hold evangelistic meetings again.

Pray for wisdom, protection and strength for the English teachers who have had the additional responsibilities of wiping things down in classrooms between classes and making sure all are social distancing or wearing masks. They have also been faced with the challenge of adapting their activities and curriculum to fit the new circumstances.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we were perplexed and driven to prayer. As we look back, we stand amazed at God's faithfulness and how He opened up the way before us!

We have seen God remain true to His promise to provide peace to His servants in the midst of challenging times. ***"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you"*** (Isaiah 26:3).