

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

There was a dramatic increase in COVID-19 during February, with cases exceeding 100,000 daily, resulting in a state of emergency being declared for most of Japan.

The Lord continues to enable us to reach many with the Gospel during such times through the internet. We have become quite used to switching our Bible talks and English classes to online sessions.

The Lord continues to use these methods in remarkable ways. Students have started to join our online sessions from various parts of Japan. One Christian English student connected online for English class from a neighboring prefecture. Her face was serious and she was obviously troubled. She had just learned that the minister of her dwindling rural church had put in his resignation, and that they would need to find a new minister.

Churches without a minister are on the rise, especially in rural Japan. However, the internet is helping to bridge this gap. We are thankful for the many churches that are beginning to harness the power of online worship services to fill these growing needs.

One woman logged in late for an online English class saying, "Sorry! Sorry! I'm late!" She explained that an old friend had just called. They had been friends for many years, but had drifted apart ever since she became a Christian. One day, when she was talking about her faith with her friend, she lashed out shouting, "Don't talk about Jesus anymore!"

Since that time, she never brought up her faith again and maintained a shallower relationship. Little did she know that her friend's sister had become a Christian, and over the years she had quietly started to attend her sister's church.

That morning over the phone she shared, "I just wanted to call you to say that I am getting baptized at my sister's church. Thank you for sharing your faith with me all those years ago, even though I couldn't accept it at that time."

The class was stunned to hear how the Lord had quietly worked in her friend's heart over the years! Praise the Lord!



JAPAN MISSION

CALLED TO SERVE

March / April 2022

JOINING GOD'S FAMILY

Yoshifumi Tanaka was born in Nagano city in 1963. His father ran a small shop which made paper doors. He and his two sisters were taught to worship the local gods and venerate the ancestors at an early age.

"As my older sister entered school, a friend invited her to Sunday School," Yoshifumi shared.

"She began to attend regularly, so she invited me and my younger sister along. I didn't have much interest in attending church, but went along at Christmas and other special occasions. Both of my sisters later gave their hearts to Jesus as teenagers.

"I eventually went on to attend university in Tokyo, which was a long way from my home. I studied hard, but found myself getting homesick and very lonely. When I told my sister about this, she contacted a church near me in Tokyo to arranged for them to visit me so that I would not feel so lonely.



Rev. Yoshifumi & Makiko Tanaka

INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

www.facebook.com/japanmission.jm/

Website: japanmission.org

E-mail: jm@japanmission.org

JAPAN

Japan Mission
7-40 Monzen Cho
Ikoma Nara 630-0266
Tel: +(81) 743-73-1754
Fax: +(81) 743-73-1681

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BC V1B 1C1 Tel: 250-260-5967

"The minister of this church invited me to his home, where I was welcomed with a hot meal and warm hospitality. I felt right at home and started to attend the meetings and Bible studies. I stayed at their church from morning to night on Sundays, and he even went on Saturdays.

"I was struck by the sincere and sacrificial way the minister and his wife loved and cared for us. In spite of not having much money, they would welcome about 30 students to enjoy good food and fellowship. Most of us were far from home, and we came to feel as though this was our home away from home.

"As I started to study the Bible, I was inspired by the deep desire and zeal of my fellow students to become faithful disciples of Christ. Little by little, I found myself amazed at the truths I discovered in God's Word as I was introduced to this new world.

"I longed to be part of this family of Christ, but felt as though I was on the outside looking in.

"I then attended a special meeting where I experienced a deep sense of God's presence as they were singing hymns.

"The verse that struck me was Acts 16:31, ***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.***

"Just then and there the Lord spoke to my heart and I decided to give my heart to the Lord. It was 1983 and I was 20 years old.

"After I graduated, I prayed about going to Bible school and working full-time for the Lord. Instead, the Lord led me to work for a company that imported and exported lumber.

"I continued to attend the church in Tokyo until my work transferred me to another branch in Osaka.

"While in Osaka, I found a church where I met Makiko. She was assigned to that church as a second year Bible school student.

"We soon developed a relationship and she felt led to get married to me. As I did a lot of soul-searching, the Lord used these circumstances to lead me to dedicate my life to full-time service. I then decided to quit my work and attend Bible school.

"We were married a short while later in March 1997. While Makiko was in her third year of Bible School, I started my first year.

"After I graduated, we were assigned to minister in a church for seven years. We then moved to the USA, where I completed two years of study at a seminary.

"We then returned to Japan in 2009 and were assigned to serve in a church in Osaka. This is where we have been ministering ever since. □

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Japan Mission (JM) works in partnership with Rev. Yoshifumi Tanaka and his wife, Makiko, to reach their community for Christ. Each week, JM sends a missionary to their church to teach English to the unsaved people in their area. These English classes have given them wonderful opportunities to share God's love with many, who would have never otherwise frequented their church. **Pray** that the Lord would continue to enable us together, to sow many seeds for the Kingdom.

Makiko also continues to work as a part-time worker for Japan Mission. Her responsibilities include office work, the literature ministry and help with the English Evangelism program by giving the Bible lessons to the parents and children who attend Kids Club ministry. Many have been blessed through her Bible talks and the Lord continues to use Makiko to help us make wonderful connections in our community.

Pray for wisdom and strength for Makiko as she continues to help with various aspects of the work at Japan Mission. **Pray** also for blessing and protection for both Rev. Tanaka and Makiko, as they seek to minister to the Christians in their fellowship and reach out to the unsaved.

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. The Lord gave Rev. Yoshifumi and Makiko Tanaka four children in their marriage: Shiki (21), Sou (18), Kazushi (16) and Chika (12). **Pray** that the Lord would bless and protect them as they strive to raise godly children in these challenging times.
2. Yoshifumi was raised in a rural part of Japan, at a time when people staunchly clung to their traditions. His parents later expressed their disappointment, because all three of their children did not follow their religious traditions, but became Christians. **Pray** for Yoshifumi's father who is now 87 years old and has yet to make a decision to put his trust in Christ.
3. We continue to receive reports from our ministry partners who work in Myanmar of horrific atrocities that are being committed there. **Pray** for the Christians and church in Myanmar. **Pray** also for the protection of the workers who carry the precious Word of God across the borders to these oppressed and persecuted people.