

## A SHOCKING START

Japan experienced an unexpected and shocking start to 2024. A M7.6 earthquake struck the Noto peninsula on New Years Day! This rural region of Japan, located about 300 km away from us, sustained much damage. About 250 people died and entire communities were cut off as roads were damaged. The damage was so extensive that it took authorities a few weeks to reach residents in some of the more remote areas.

We are in contact with a network of local churches and are partnering with them to offer aid to those in need. **Pray** for the families of those who have been affected. **Pray** that the Lord will continue to give us wisdom as we strive to meet the needs of the victims and are given opportunities to point them to Jesus.

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## THREE NEW WORKERS

Three new missionaries joined Japan Mission in January, 2024. Callum Kyllonen is a young man from British Columbia, Canada. He is working as an English evangelism teacher in various churches, as well as helping with media outreach.

Ed and Toby Thomas are a retired couple from Texas, USA. They are working as English evangelism teachers, while also helping with evangelism and discipleship in local churches.

**Pray** that the Lord would bless these three missionaries with wisdom and discernment as they adjust to a new culture.

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## BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Edward and Josephine Zimmerman were married in April 2022, and continue to work as missionaries with Japan Mission. They are expecting their first child at the end of March 2024. **Pray** for a safe delivery and that the Lord would use this child to bring glory to His name.



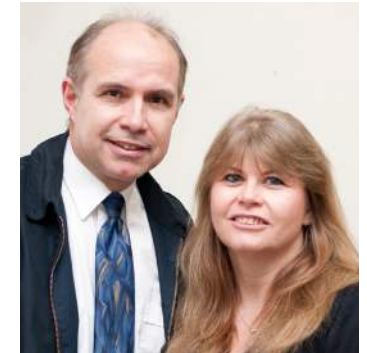
# JAPAN MISSION

CALLED TO SERVE

March / April 2024

## A MOST UNUSUAL WEDDING

David Verwey was born in the UK in January, 1962. He was three months old when the late founders of the Japan Mission, Neil and Peggy Verwey, brought him to Japan. After completing his education in the USA in 1987, he started working together with his wife Sue, as a missionary with Japan Mission, and is now the Director of this work in Japan.



David & Sue Verwey

While doing missionary work, David has received requests to perform weddings.

"I had a most unusual experience a few weeks ago," David shared. "I was asked to perform a Christian wedding in Osaka for a group of 17 travelers from the interior of China. Their native tongue was Chinese (Mandarin) and they did not speak much Japanese. Most of them seemed to speak and understand some English, although their pronunciation was poor.

"I cannot speak Chinese, so I performed 90% of the wedding in English and a little in Japanese. I noticed the cheerful faces of many as we sang *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* and I read from 1 Corinthians 13.

"After the wedding couple voiced their agreement to the English vows I recited, they also read their own vows to each other in Chinese. I could not understand a word, but I saw tears streaming down the bride's face.

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### INFORMATION & INQUIRIES

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#### UK - For Donations & Gift Aid

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Clearly mark: **for Japan Mission**  
Make checks payable to:  
*DM Stearns Missionary Fund Inc*  
PO Box 1578  
North Wales PA 19454

#### CANADA - For Tax Deductible Receipts

Make checks payable to:  
*Society of Japan Mission of Canada for Evangelism*  
1305 43 Avenue, Vernon  
BC V1T 8J9 Tel: 778-932-2532

“As I prayed a prayer of blessing upon the couple, many joined in by heartily saying **Amen!** at the end.

“After the wedding, we moved outside to congratulate the couple by throwing rose petals into the air while they walked down the steps. As we waited for the couple to come out, my eyes met the eyes of those in the wedding party. I gazed at their smiling and beaming faces and instantly sensed that we were kindred spirits.

“I asked the lady next to me if they were Christians from China and she nodded. I encouraged her by saying, “We are praying for you in China!”

To think, these Chinese people had to escape to Japan to enjoy the freedom to openly hold a Christian wedding!

These are the fortunate ones who have money to travel. There are many poor and oppressed Christians in China who have to do much in hiding for fear of persecution. Please join us in prayer for these people.

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## OUTREACH TO CHINESE IN JAPAN

Before COVID, about 9 million Chinese tourists visited Japan each year. This number decreased during COVID, but is again steadily on the increase. Statistics also indicate that about 700,000 Chinese live in Japan, of which 100,000 are students. This has presented us with a golden opportunity to reach literally millions of Chinese for the Lord. We supply them with tracts and Bibles, with the hope that they will take them back to China.

One day, a Chinese man came to the Japan Mission in search of a Bible. He found our details on the Internet. His wife sent him out that morning saying, “Don’t come back without a Bible!” She had Christians in her family, but he had been struggling in his heart with Buddhism. We later introduced him and his family to a good church. They attended regularly and later gave their hearts to the Lord. They introduced several of their Chinese friends to the same fellowship and they were also saved!

In China, it is nearly impossible to openly worship the Lord. However, many churches in Japan are frequented by Chinese students and tourists. Japan Mission is working in partnership with various organizations to reach out to these people.

**Pray** that many would be truly be transformed and bold enough to sow the seed as they return to their home country.

## BIBLES FOR CHINA NEWS

Japan Mission continues to make Bibles available to China through various ministry partners. Taking Bibles into China became nearly impossible during the COVID travel restrictions. Since these restrictions have been lifted, Bibles are once again flowing into the hands of those in China.

We continue to receive reports from various sources of how restrictions on Christians have increased. Mr. Chang (not his real name) shared, “Over the past five years the authorities have tried very hard to stop the spread of Christianity. In some provinces, 85% of all churches have been shut down and many buildings have been demolished. No young people are allowed to attend church. Christian weddings and funerals are no longer possible, and no Christmas events can be held.

Brother Chang told of pamphlets being distributed to the public, warning against **illegal Christian activities**. A system has been put in place where those who inform the authorities of Christian meetings and activities will be given cash rewards.

If someone is caught having a Christian service in their home, they are heavily fined. Many have had their property, cars and possessions confiscated. Others are threatened, harassed, and imprisoned. One brother is currently serving a 5-year prison sentence for **illegally** printing Christian literature.

In one church, 1,400 people gathered every Sunday until they were forced to close. This church has now split into small groups of around 20 believers each. They presently meet in private homes and have found this to be a real blessing, which has led to an expansion of the Kingdom of God. Unbelievers are discretely invited to their meetings and many profess faith in Christ. Furthermore, they have found that these smaller groups are more difficult for the authorities to detect. **Pray** that the Lord would bless and protect those in these small group churches, which are now found all over China.

The believers in China truly need our prayers. The need for Bibles continues to be tremendous. Since COVID restrictions were lifted, Bibles are once again being taken into China.

**Pray** for wisdom and protection for those involved in transporting God’s Word into the far reaches of China. **Pray** that the Lord will provide the necessary resources to meet this need.