



May – August 2025

千亿 BILLIONS



People

Behind closed doors
Mission in the margins
From reluctant to
convicted



Places

Beyond language
through art
Not retired in Japan
Special moments in
Japan



Participate

Strategic mission
Sussing out Japan
For love, not duty



日本横断

Crossing Japan



Heart for Asia. Hope for Billions.

We are OMF International, founded by James Hudson Taylor in 1865 as the China Inland Mission. We serve the Church and share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness with the people of East Asia.

Billions comes out three times a year and is free for supporters. It started life as *China's Millions* in 1875, the title highlighted the numbers of people without the hope of Christ. In 2000 we changed the name to reflect East Asia's growing population. Today we still want to help all Christians get involved in God's global plan and to pursue every avenue to reach East Asians for Jesus.

編者的話

From the Editor

Our communications intern Lorenzo Ortega and I recently had the privilege of meeting a group of students from SONOKO, a university student ministry in Cambodia. Their bold vision: to launch ministries in university campuses beyond Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

What does Cambodia have to do with Japan, you might ask?

Remarkably, SONOKO was founded by two former students from a Japanese Christian student fellowship called KGK (Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai), who stepped out in faith to pioneer a ministry movement in Cambodia. SONOKO has steadily grown and is now a locally-led movement among Cambodian students.

Sometimes we look at Japan and wonder, "Where is the fruit?" In SONOKO's beginnings we see how God used two people to spark a movement in another nation. Will you join us in praying for more workers to sow the seeds of the gospel in Japan, Cambodia and beyond? May we continue to trust in our heavenly Father, the Lord of the harvest, who brings the growth and gathers the fruit in His perfect time (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Scott Brown

OMF Australia Communications Lead
au.media@omfmail.com

AU NATIONAL CENTRE

OMF International (AU)

18-20 Oxford St, Epping NSW 2121
PO Box 849, Epping NSW 1710

T (02) 9868 4777

F (02) 9868 5743

au.info@omfmail.com

omf.org/au

STATE CENTRES

NSW

18-20 Oxford St, Epping NSW 2121
PO Box 849, Epping NSW 1710

T (02) 9868 4777

F (02) 9868 5743

nsw@omfmail.com

VIC/TAS

525 Middleborough Road,
Box Hill North VIC 3129
PO Box 199, Box Hill VIC 3128

T (03) 9898 9922

vic@omfmail.com

tas@omfmail.com

QLD/NT

34 Trafalgar Street,
Woolloongabba QLD 4102
PO Box 8207,
Woolloongabba QLD 4102

T (07) 3391 6777

qld@omfmail.com

nt@omfmail.com

WA

Suite 12 & 13, Hulme House,
32 Hulme Court, Myaree WA 6154

T (08) 9240 8312

wa@omfmail.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Design:

Anton Triyanto & Sparks Studio

Back cover artwork:

Sarah Lok

Editing:

Trix Wilkins & Reuben Grace

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

OMF International

2 Cluny Road, Singapore 259570

T +65 6319 4550

F +65 6472 2398

omf.org

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through art

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STRATEGIC MISSION

-without getting on a plane

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10 years with OMF

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JAPAN

a personal reflection

If the gospel is so powerful, why are so few Japanese people saved? OMF Australia National Director Paul Jessop challenges us to pray for the current spiritual opportunities in Japan.

Japan holds a special place in my heart because we served there for four years. Behind that simple sentence lie so many memories, moments and ministry. The streetlights illuminating the gently falling snow on a chilly winter evening. Steaming hot onsens on a freezing day soothing aches and stresses. Kind friends who helped us translate notes from kinder and school. A brain-bending language that continually confounded me. Cultural rules and conventions that produce politeness and conformity in equal measure. The birth of two of our children in a foreign land.

Like the extremes of Japanese seasons, I often felt extremes of emotions. Ecstatic joy at seeing seekers come to faith, at sharing a Bible story in Japanese to those who had never heard one before, at building friendships, joyful moments with our young children and preaching in passable Japanese. Yet also agonizing lows at being exhausted, unable to communicate, raising children with little support, seeing churches stall or stagnate. Often, I was forced to face hard theological questions: If the gospel is so powerful, why are so few Japanese people saved? Why does the enemy seem to win so many battles? Are our ministry methods wrong? These are not easy questions.

God's gracious sustenance

The challenges to the gospel are certainly great in Japan. The church is small and faces many trials. Christianity is still viewed as a foreign faith, alien to a homogenous Japanese culture. Japanese religious, cultural and familiar customs and conventions are woven together with the ever-present pressure of conformity. Ancestor worship, temple visits, busyness, family honor and group expectations at school and work are all streams feeding into a collective river that flows strongly against Christianity, where seekers and new Christians can easily be swept away.

God was gracious in sustaining us and showing us where He was at work. His provision of just the right care for our children when they had particular needs, at just the right time. The abundant rice and apple harvests in Aomori. The beauty of the changing seasons. His presence and power

displayed in profound ways through our acute weaknesses. Faithful Japanese Christians who persevered through persecutions and pressure that was hard for us to fathom. And yet, much remains that I long for. Even now, only 1-2% of Japan knows the beauty of Christ.

Shaken from sleep

Over the years, I have felt convicted to pray 'big prayers' for the big spiritual challenges of Japan. Church history teaches us that God often uses significant geo-political events to shake people out of spiritual slumber. So, I have prayed for some big events to shake up Japan—even today, seeds are being sown that will lead to great transformation.

One of the trends is population demographics and immigration. Japan has one of the oldest populations in the world, and combined with one of the lowest birth rates in the world, this is creating fundamental changes in Japan. For the first time in its long history, this island nation is having to accept large numbers of immigrants as temporary or permanent workers; according to the Immigration Services Agency of Japan, in June 2024 this exceeded 3.41 million people.

Such significant numbers of foreigners inevitably changes a country—bringing different values, customs, languages and beliefs. More Japanese will meet people different to themselves, breaking down 'them and us' barriers and opening relationships, connections and influence not seen on this scale in Japan before. And many foreign workers entering Japan are Christians not from the west, but neighboring countries such as Korea and the Philippines.

Another trend is the global interest and engagement in mission to Japan.

In OMF Australia, Japan is by far the most popular field of enquiry.

The Lord is raising up workers from around the world as well as multitudes of praying saints. And when we pray, breakthroughs happen.

As the former General Director of China Inland Mission

(now OMF) J.O. Sanders wrote, "There has never been a significant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the mission field without previous outpouring of the human spirit in preparatory prayer."

Praying with expectation

God is at work. His plans will not fail. For God so loved the world, including the Japanese, that he gave his one and only Son. I love the passion and depth of emotion God expresses in Hosea 11:8, "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?... My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused." "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9-10). He is sovereign and merciful. He is faithful will grow His kingdom in Japan. My brothers and sisters, let us persevere in praying for Japan and wait expectantly to see what breakthroughs and transformation will come.

Paul Jessop

OMF Australia

National Director



Online prayer groups for Japan

- Second Monday, 7:30-9:30pm (AEST/AEDT)
- Second Monday, 9:00-10:00am (AEST/AEDT)
- Third Monday, 7:30-8:30pm (AEST/AEDT)
- Last Saturday, 2:00-3:00pm (WAT)

Contact au.prayer@omfmail.com.

BEYOND LANGUAGE

through art

“Art is able to touch people’s hearts without language, and through beauty, we can point people to the Most Beautiful One,” Kalos and Aggie Chan write. They prayed and asked God, “How can we bring Your beauty and glory to a people with such sensitivity and desire for beauty?” Last November, Kalos and Aggie hosted a creative and arts short-term mission team—holding art exhibitions, teaching workshops and collaborating with their local community in Niseko, Japan.

Blending art and mission

The idea first came to us in Australia, when we were tasked to organize a mission fundraiser. We held an art event where handmade goods, canvases, prints and crochet works were sold, with 100% of the profits going towards mission.

Since then, we’ve been reflecting on the role of creative giftings in the global church for the local church’s needs. Art creates and slows people down to a sacred moment where God can stir in their hearts, and He uses beauty in creativity and nature to bring about restoration.

The idea of a creative arts mission trip first came about when Aggie met Ling, a fellow missionary who uses her artistic gifts in ministry. Ling is always looking for ways to mobilize people into mission, and encouraged us to pray about hosting a creative arts team in Japan.

When we arrived in Hokkaido, we saw a growing interest in learning how to connect art with missions. We also saw a gap, where creative Christians may not even think about the

possibility of mission work.

With a wave of Christian artists rising up, we saw the role art can play in reaching Japanese with the gospel. Art is able to touch people’s hearts without language, and through beauty, we can point people to the Most Beautiful One.

The trip became a test to see how art can be used for mission in a sustainable way.

For six months prior, we sought the Lord. How could we bring God’s beauty and glory to a people with such sensitivity and desire for beauty? From the theme to the itinerary, every aspect was an answer to prayer, as God granted us creativity, wisdom and sensitivity to Japanese culture.

Bringing beautiful pieces together

Each team member prepared and brought their art pieces to Hokkaido around the theme *Light in the Darkness*, in the lead-up to Christmas. With the pieces, we hosted several art events at:

- A local church, whose pastor is a talented oil painter. We held an art sharing event where church members and our team each told the





story behind their art, encouraging those present that art can be used to display God's goodness.

- A local Christian café whose chef makes desserts based on Bible passages. We hosted an art exhibition night of sharing and fellowship over art.
- Art workshops in Niseko, where we invited adults and children from the general public. Niseko church members invited friends, and a class of high school students joined!
- An art exhibition in Niseko, which displayed the work of local Christian artists alongside those created by the team. A video was shared, giving a local Christian family an opportunity to share their faith publicly.

We finished the trip by leaving each art piece at a local town hall, praying that each person walking by will catch a glimpse of God's goodness through the art and descriptions.

Connecting beyond language barriers through art

Love often takes time to be felt, but when people saw the art our team had taken time to produce, there was an immediate openness to engage. We saw people connect beyond language barriers—even with our team members who didn't speak Japanese.

We were greatly encouraged that the trip created a space for local church members to be empowered to share their faith with others. Through this event, many local people discovered that there is actually a church in Niseko.

We were repeatedly reminded that God really is the one who brings people and softens hearts where needed—we simply follow faithfully and get to watch from the front seat!

Who would have thought that a random international event in the summer would allow

us to connect with a teacher from a local high school? And that this teacher, though not a Christian, would bring her students to art events run by a local church? Then that some of these students would come to church the following Sunday—and



keep coming almost weekly ever since?

What a joy it is to see God work His wonders, and we are witnessing God softening their hearts to keep learning about Jesus.

Bridging church and community through workshops

Since the short-term trip, we've received invitations from our local community—including the high school—to host more art workshops! We are praying and planning on interweaving the gospel as a whole into the program. God-willing, we hope to continue running regular art workshops as a bridge between the church and our community. Pray that God will continue to give us opportunities to meet people through these creative avenues, and work in the hearts of all we connect with.

*Kalos and Aggie Chan
with Trix Wilkins*

3 TIPS FOR CHRISTIAN CREATIVES

1. God is a creative God and that calls for us to steward these creative gifts that He has given us. Keep praying for God to use the gifts He's given you for His Kingdom. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)
2. Love your local church and see her beauty as the Bride of Christ. Aim for God to use you to build up the body of Christ. That may look like art ministry, but it may also look like supporting your local church in other ways, where there are often very limited resources.
3. Art itself can speak and display God's glory, but more often than not, the artist themselves, as God's creation, allows others to connect and see His goodness and grace in their lives. You are God's ultimate masterpiece, whether God uses your gifts or not!



Praying for creative arts ministries in Japan

Our team aimed to learn about and mobilize prayer for Japan, to encourage missionaries and local Christian artists, and to partner with the local church in using creative gifts to portray the gospel. Join us in praying for:

- A share house project (in construction), to create a space where a Christian manager can connect with guests in an ongoing way.
- The use of a traditional tea ceremony as a way to reach a community, by adding Christian themes while respecting this artform.
- A local Christian, professionally trained in traditional stand-up comedy, using his performances to share gospel stories and themes in a more easily digestible format.

Sharing the gospel is so much more than just hearing and knowing. God has also placed Christians around each of us to help disciple and grow their knowledge and love for Jesus. May we have wisdom in how to do this effectively and lovingly in Niseko.

NOT RETIRED IN JAPAN

After decades of service in East Asia and Australia, Zechariah and Elizabeth are on a new mission adventure: pioneering returnee ministry with East Asian students in Japan. They share what it's like to have adult kids out of home—and not be retired in beautiful Japan.*

When you get asked by people in Japan, “Why are you here?” what do you say?

To our surprise, some have asked, “Are you retired?” or even, “Have you come to retire?”—which makes us feel old! When we reply, “We are learning Japanese,” we often see an unspoken question on their faces, “Why would someone your age learn a new language?”

Our responses vary depending on who's asking. Sometimes, we simply say that since we plan to live here for a few years, learning the language is necessary. Other times, we joke, “We heard that learning a new language helps prevent dementia,” which usually gets a good laugh.

Sometimes, we share a deeper reason—that Japan's international communities are growing, and we are here because God wants to reach them. Many come from countries where hearing the gospel is nearly impossible, and we feel called to be part of God's work among them.

You've had experience in different cross-cultural contexts over the years. What has God been teaching you in Japan?

Learning a new language and culture while also serving as the pioneering team here has been deeply humbling, making us acutely aware of our limitations and inadequacies.

We are reminded that God's work is not accomplished by our own strength or ability but by His power alone. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6). Our role is to trust Him, follow His leading, and remain

obedient to His direction.

God has also been showing us that it is His work. We'd been wondering—where will we find the people we are called to connect with? How can we build partnerships with churches, especially Japanese churches, given that we don't speak Japanese?

Recently, a local Japanese church reached out to us—a small group of East Asian students, all wanting to know more about Jesus, had been attending their services! This was a powerful reminder that God has called us here as His witnesses. He is always at work, preparing the way.

Zechariah and Elizabeth*

**Names changed for privacy and security reasons.*



Pray for Zechariah, Elizabeth and East Asian students in Japan

- Pray as Zechariah and Elizabeth begin a ministry partnership with the Japan Christian Students Association. Pray as they reach out to East Asian students in Japan.
- Zechariah and Elizabeth are researching potential ministry opportunities and beginning to attend a Japanese church. Balancing these commitments is challenging. Pray for God's strength and guidance, that they may remain focused and fruitful in each area.
- Pray for East Asian students attending Japanese churches and seeking to know more about Jesus, that their curiosity and fervor might grow, and they may come to faith.

REVEALING *The Beauty of Christ* THROUGH ART

Creative and arts team member En Hui Ong shares highlights from a recent short-term trip to Japan.

God's provision

I have always been interested in exploring how art can be used for mission, but had many uncertainties—finance, art skills and language. As our short-term team met and started planning, I saw God provide for us in each part of the journey. He gave us inspiration to create our art piece based on the theme *Light in the Darkness*, and our first dance choreography to a Japanese worship song. He provided financially for my air tickets through a friend's kind sponsorship.

Our team also planned and hosted art workshops for missionaries, high schoolers and children—and it was amazing how the materials for the workshops were always sufficient, even though there were changes along the way! God is so gracious and faithful. I learnt that I do not need to

know the big picture, but I can trust in a God who does and holds all things in His hands.

Meeting faithful Christians

Japanese churches may have small and ageing congregations, but their members are so faithful in meeting. Some may need to travel long distances to get to church, which can be challenging during the snowy winter, but they continue to persevere in their faith. They were also really hospitable, and demonstrated a heart of service which reminded me of Jesus' servant heart.

A new thing springs forth

Another highlight was visiting Moerenuma, a park built on wasteland. I was in awe of its beauty—such

a contrast to a wasteland! It brought to mind Isaiah 43:18-19, "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth,

do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." I was reminded



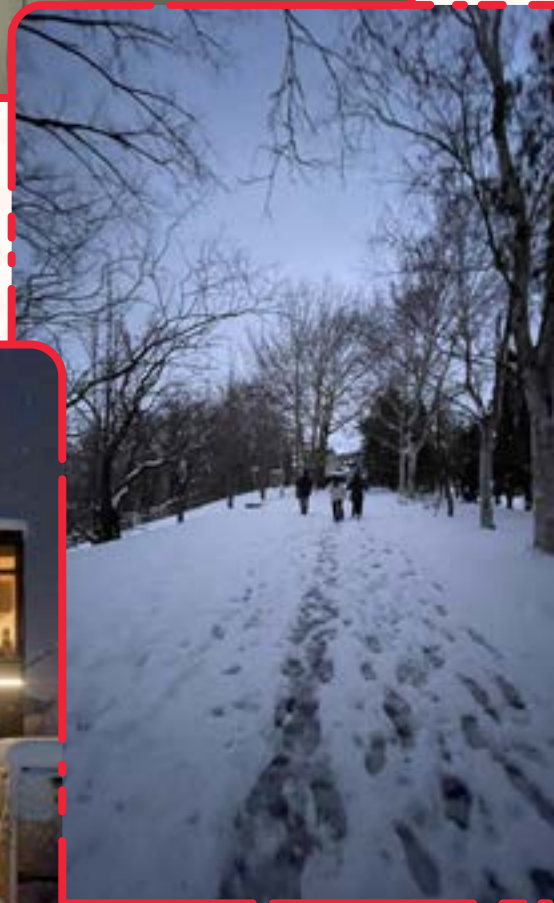
of how God can do a new thing in Japan. Even when things seem tough and slow, nothing is impossible with God. We can have faith and trust in Him for new things to happen.

Seeing God's creativity

God showed me how mission can take place in different forms. Missions can differ across countries and regions, and it is important to consider different needs and cultural backgrounds. He taught me to pray and seek Him on what He wants us to do in that place and season, and take little steps of faith and obedience.

Through this trip, God's shown me how He can use creative arts for His glory. I believe arts has a special place in Japan, and I would love to see how different art forms can be used for missions here. It's my prayer that Christian artists will use steward their giftings and that God will continue to soften the hearts of the Japanese and reveal Himself to them through His unique ways.

En Hui Ong



STRATEGIC MISSION

-without getting on a plane

There are three things that Takeshi Shibuya loves about Melbourne: its creativity, an openness to Asian culture, and one hot spring. Yet as someone who hates the cold weather, he never imagined that he would one day call Melbourne home. Today, Takeshi serves as a pastor in a church in Melbourne, focused on reaching Japanese people with the gospel.

Takeshi Shibuya is a rarity in Japan. With approximately 0.5% of the population considered to be evangelical Christians [1], it is incredibly rare to meet a Japanese person who grew up in a Christian household in Japan.

When he heard about an opportunity to go on a working holiday in Australia, Takeshi felt like God was opening a door. He'd been wanting to experience other church cultures. His original plan was to make his way down the east coast of Australia, but while he was in Sydney, he started attending a Japanese church and met Katie. He fell in love with Australia's relaxed culture—and Katie, with whom he shared a vision for helping Japanese people meet Jesus.

A heart for Japan and an apparently closed door

After Takeshi and Katie married, he completed his theological studies at Sydney Missionary Bible College with a heart to return to Japan.

"I personally wanted to join the church-planting movement because it's such a need. There is a 99% non-Christian population in Japan, so I thought, we have to go," Takeshi says.

It was at this time that the pandemic hit, and Takeshi found himself in lockdown.

"I was so shocked. But you know, God changed my view. I thought we needed to go to Japan, but we couldn't go at that time. What we could do is go somewhere in Australia to reach Japanese people," Takeshi says. He saw an opportunity in Melbourne,

a city with a significant Japanese population but few resources for Japanese ministry.

A strategic Japanese ministry

OMF missionary Greg Seymour sees Japanese returnee focus (RF) ministry as highly strategic. The RF team aims to share the gospel with Japanese people who are in Australia short term, creating opportunities to connect and explore faith in Jesus. Then after returning to Japan, the team continues to support them with follow-up and connections to local churches.

"Half of Japanese people becoming Christians today are being saved while overseas," Greg says. "Furthermore, Australia receives more short-term Japanese people than any other country in the world."

Greg, along with other Melbourne-based OMF workers reaching Japanese people, had been developing and praying for the expansion of the ministry. They prayed for a Japanese pastor and approached CrossCulture Church of Christ in Melbourne's CBD to partner with them.

Takeshi's vision and experience as a migrant to Australia proved to be the answer to this prayer. And so, Takeshi and his family moved to Melbourne, taking up the role of Japanese pastor within a partnership between CrossCulture and OMF's returnee focus ministry.

Regular flows, unique opportunities

Takeshi describes the ministry as being like an airport. People are constantly arriving and departing, with some only staying for a few months. But the regular flow of people also creates unique opportunities to share the gospel.

"We can explain who God is, discuss important life questions. With the time pressure, often Japanese people are more open about deeper thoughts, and it helps people to make decisions."

While Takeshi's title is 'Japanese pastor,' his vision is no longer about planting a church. Instead, his focus is on making Japanese disciples of Jesus who also

desire to make more disciples. By God's grace, he is seeing this vision come to pass.

Japanese people finding new life in Christ

Tatsuya* came to Melbourne for work experience and started attending English conversation classes at CrossCulture. He enjoyed the community and began engaging more deeply with questions about life and faith—attending Outreach Gathering (an event with an evangelistic focus) and the bilingual Japanese service. Through Bible studies, one-to-one discipleship, and even joining the church's student ministry, Tatsuya accepted Christ and was baptized.

He returned to Japan after less than a year in Melbourne, where OMF workers supported him to connect with a local church. He became an active member and shared his testimony with his brother. Takeshi recalls the joy when he heard the good news that Tatsuya's brother had also accepted Christ and was to be baptized!

God's timing is not ours. It need not take a year like Tatsuya; a single interaction might suffice.

"Maiko* attended our Japanese gathering once as a visitor," Takeshi recalls. A few months later, Maiko decided to follow Christ and was baptized at a church in Japan. She told Takeshi that experiencing the love of Jesus within their church community led her to reflect on the meaning of life, which led to her faith in Jesus.

Deepening faith among Japanese Christians

It's not only the lives of new Christians that are being transformed. Japanese Christians are growing in their faith.

Takeshi explains that since baptisms in Japan are rare, many Japanese Christians may not have seen the gospel transform people. In Australia, it's different. "[We] can actually see someone's life before and after. So God is also strengthening and discipling Japanese Christians."

Greg has been encouraged by the growing appreciation for the relatively new monthly Japanese service. Whilst this service was originally started to nurture Japanese Christians, he and the team have noticed that those interested in Christianity have

begun attending as well.

"It seems that as much as the evangelistic messages and other outreaches are important, it is seeing fellow Japanese people worshipping in community that is also very helpful for their faith journey," notes Greg.

Multiple communities of Japanese Christians

Takeshi dreams of multiple communities of Japanese people worshipping Jesus and inviting others to explore faith, not just in Melbourne but all over Australia.

While he knows that many Christians consider going to Japan for missions, he wants to encourage people to consider Australia as a strategic place for reaching Japanese.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few," Takeshi says. "Please pray for more workers, that more people will invest in the Japanese Returnee Ministry."

Abigail Kwan

OMF Australia Creatives team

References:

[1] <https://joshuaproject.net/countries/JA>

*Name changed for privacy reasons.



Pray for a short-term returnee focus team to Japan

- Pray for Greg and his team as they prepare for a short-term trip to Japan in May, particularly as they organize a returnee outreach event to be held in Tokyo.
- Pray for Japanese Christians and others who have returned to Japan. Pray that they will come to the Tokyo returnee event and engage in local ministries and communities.
- Pray as the team attends an international returnee conference, where they will be inviting Japanese Christians to serve as interns for an outreach in Melbourne.

Friendship and Food:

MINISTRY WITH THE JAPANESE HOUSE OF PEACE

OMF alumni Gary Weston has been reaching out to Japanese people for over forty years. He shares how a local ministry began with food—and tips on how you can start your own!

The gap between the average Japanese and the Christian Japanese person is huge. How do we span that gap? Is there any way to break that gap down into easy-to-take steps? We started with food. We began a Japanese meal called “Mama Meshi” at the University of Queensland. It was incredibly popular—at one stage we had so many coming, we had to turn people away. All everyone had to do was eat together and introduce themselves. Having done that, they might be prepared to come to a similar meeting that included not only a meal but a Bible talk as well. That meeting is JHoP. If the Holy Spirit is at work and people are wanting more, they can take the next step by attending a Bible study or Japanese Christian Fellowship. Praise the Lord, by His grace, a number of people have come through not only steps one or two but even three and have believed and even been baptized.

JHoP originated with the mission organization Power to Change. They had so many international students coming to their weekly meetings, House of Peace, that they divided the students into groups. When the Japanese group formed, it seemed natural to call it: Japanese House of Peace. Then because Korean pop music was very popular and often called “K-Pop,” it was an easy transition

to begin calling the Japanese House of Peace “JHoP.”

When Ruth and I returned to Australia after 32 years in Japan, I gravitated to any Japanese people and any Japanese ministry. We started going to the weekly House of Peace meetings and developed good relationships with the group leaders. By the time JHoP became its own group, the Power to Change leaders said to us, “It would be best if you took over.” We began running it off-campus at students’ houses, and have been involved with JHoP ever since.

The concept is super simple. All meetings consist of students simply relaxing and hanging out with each other with a Bible time and food. Sometimes we go hiking, play soccer, badminton or other sports, watch a film, make gyoza, sing, play a game—but the unchanging part is always a short Bible bit and food. I believe simple is best.

JHoP joys

When I see our JHoP leaders taking initiative, doing things that need to be done, that’s really encouraging. When I see people keep coming, repeatedly—especially when they’re not yet Christians, and they’re interested in hearing about Jesus, that’s encouraging.

Another highlight is hearing about how God’s been working in the lives of people who have come to JHoP—like when someone gets baptized! I remember the joy of getting the news about a young





man
who got
baptized,

found a church in Japan, and is now in Australia and going to church here. We studied the Bible together up until recently. He was challenged to run a Bible study with others, and has now run at least one. He told me, “You know Gary it takes a lot of hard work to prepare a Bible study. It takes a lot of thought, preparation and prayer.” He’s right! And that is so encouraging to hear.

My most recent encouragement is a lady who started by coming to JHoP and now has started coming to a Bible study. She told me, “I’m beginning to believe.” Wow! That is encouraging.

Tips for running your own JHoP

1. *Do it! Try it! Have a go, and don’t worry about making mistakes*
I think God wants Christians to be out there more than we are, to not hold back while He’s saying: “Get out there into the harvest.” There’s a Japanese proverb that says: mistakes are the beginning of success. By making mistakes, we learn and succeed. Do it, and have a go.
2. *Word of mouth is the best way to advertise, but don’t let the ideal get in the way of the good.*
If you know people, and if you can meet people for coffee and invite them—do so. But don’t let non-ideal things put you off. If you can’t do the ideal, then do it anyway you can—just get the word out there, that’s the important thing.

3. *Spread your net wide—the more people you can tell, the more people come.*

There’s a good chance that people are not coming because they don’t know, so aim to tell as many people as possible. We’ve been using an app called Line, which Japanese people use in the same way many use WhatsApp. It’s an effective way to reach out.

4. *Keep it simple.*

You don’t have to do anything elaborate, expensive or complicated. A lot of people are happy to enjoy something simple like a picnic. The rule of thumb is if you have food they will come, and you can even invite people to bring food to share.

Gary Weston
with Trix Wilkins



Praying for Japanese House of Peace

- Pray for people to come regularly and for a community to build. JHoP is intended to just be the start, a place for Japanese people to meet and become friends, then continue to gather in other ways outside of meetings, too.
- Pray for friendships for those coming to JHoP, who are often geographically spread and doing different things (some are students, some are seasonal workers, for instance). It is not easy to find a time to meet and to connect across life stages or interests.
- Gary and the JHoP team have been sowing and planting gospel seeds for years. Pray for more Japanese people to commit to Christ, and for the coming years to be more focused on reaping and harvesting.



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Short-term worker Annie Tan gets a close look at daily life for missionaries in Japan, learning that “gospel work in Japan involves being present, purposeful, proactive and patient.”

“If you want to really get a taste of the mission experience, spend time living with missionaries. Observe what daily life looks like for them and ask lots of questions.”

This was a friend’s wise suggestion for the next step of my mission journey last year. Having been convicted that I could be part of God’s global mission, over the past ten years I have been prayerfully preparing to serve God and His people in Japan.

Spiritual emptiness, earthly beauty

As someone who grew up knowing the saving grace of Jesus, it shocked me to discover that there are people elsewhere who will go their whole lives without ever hearing His Name, let alone having the hope of eternal life in Him. And there was something about the spiritual emptiness permeating throughout the earthly beauty of Japan that broke my heart.

During my first short-term trip eight years ago,

I enjoyed a jam-packed program of participating in English conversation classes, visiting local schools, preparing for Christmas events and doing odd jobs around the church.

This January, I spent time with different missionaries from various agencies, including OMF workers Andrew and Jo Wong and Hoi-yan Shea in Yahaba. I’m grateful to those who opened their homes and lives for me to witness. Each missionary I stayed with shared vulnerably about their past, and current joys and challenges. It was a privilege to walk with them, pray with them, and serve them with my enjoyment of housework, playing with kids

and even teaching a child to read and write Japanese characters before she started at school.

Some missionaries used the word “mess” to describe what I witnessed. But I had hoped to see the typical life of a missionary behind the newsletters and videos—literally

behind closed doors—and that’s what I got.

A slower pace of life, and spiritual opposition

The slower pace of life in Japan allowed us time to chat a lot. I learnt much about living as a Christian amidst Japanese culture and lifestyles, effective



strategies for evangelism and discipleship, the nature of working within international teams, the values and structures of each mission agency, and the ways spiritual opposition can manifest.

It became clear that mission in Japan is slow, hard work that requires much prayer, perseverance and resilience. Looking over the beautiful city of Yamagata, I was heartbroken to hear that among its 200,000 people, there are currently 20 churches, each with an average of only 20 attendees. In the seven years of one church plant, they had only seen one person come to faith.

I was exposed to the wearying effects of team conflict, the struggle of loneliness, and the pain of physical and emotional distance from friends and family. I was discouraged by stories of local Japanese seekers who were close to believing in Jesus, but were turned away by idol worship, the busyness of work or unbelieving spouses. I almost felt despair seeing train carriages packed to bursting with those who have no knowledge of Christ who saves.

Spiritual warfare is real, and the enemy is certainly prowling, looking to devour those who seek the Lord. It seems like an impossible task. But God created, knows and loves each and every single one. And He has placed His people in Japan to do good work.

The most beautiful moments

Gospel work in Japan involves being present, purposeful, proactive and patient. One missionary regularly attends calligraphy class to connect with and share the gospel with his instructor and classmates. Another talks to waitresses, cashiers

and receptionists, and invites them to church events. Missionary parents are commonly involved in their children's schools and befriending other parents.

I was encouraged to see that missionaries' work is not so different to what we do in Australia. We helped a church take down Christmas lights. We co-taught primary school kids the English alphabet. We played board games at an after-school care center for kids with special needs. We studied the Bible with a new Christian.

Japan is definitely beautiful. But the most beautiful moments were found beyond the flashy tourism, not through the lens of a camera. It wasn't in the novelty gadgets or intricately assembled

dishes, nor in the cotton-like snow or gradients of the sunset behind mountains.

I saw beauty in the little interactions of the missionaries: the bag of biscuits given to a neighbour along with an offer of prayer, the time of family devotions before bed, the

communion using hibiscus tea with a church gathering of two people, the prayer walks for the town in the crisp winter air.

As I watched the white blanket of snow melt into the ground, the muted grey skies transform to blue, and the sunlight pierce through the clouds, I couldn't help but sense a great comfort from God that He will melt the hard hearts of the Japanese and shine His light into the darkness, filling the emptiness with His love and peace.

Annie Tan



For love, not duty: SHORT-TERM MISSION WITH KIDS IN TAIWAN

"Before I became a Christian, I imagined that mission was about going to a poor area," short-term worker Wei San Tang says. She shares lessons God taught her about mission on a recent trip.

"When I was growing up, religion was just a tick box on forms," short-term worker to Taiwan Wei San Tang admits. "To me, Christianity was a religion among others that you are free to choose from."

It was not until she met a Christian friend in Australia, Jo Druitt, that Wei San grew interested in exploring Christianity. After about a year of reading the Bible together, Jo invited her to attend a series at her church on the meaning of life. "I was curious, because while life would never be perfect and there were many good things in my life, I still felt something was missing," Wei San says. "I could not find the answers through the things I was pursuing."

Jo and Wei San then started attending a course together called Introducing God. "The many open and honest conversations Jo and I had made me realize that I have taken many things in my life seriously, but not the most important one: our creator, God himself," she says. "While I didn't have all the answers that I wanted, I was at the point where I could not sit on the fence anymore. I decided to jump off the wall and accept Jesus as my Lord in life." This happened one Saturday in 2020, while Jo and Wei San were on a bush walk.

The best gift and a transformed heart

"Before I became a Christian, I imagined that

mission was about going to a rural or poor area to help those in need, like the right thing to do as a member of society," Wei San says. "The Bible challenged my view. I saw that Christian mission is about sharing the good news of Jesus with the lost through God's wisdom and strength. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) calls us to do that out of love, not out of duty. Jesus gave us the best gift of salvation when we accepted Him as our Lord and Savior. When Jesus transforms our hearts, we need to reflect on that, too."

When Wei San first thought going on mission herself, she didn't know where to start. Christians at church advised her to pray and talk to people. As she did just that, the Lord led Wei San to explore short-term with OMF in Taiwan.

"It didn't happen overnight. I had to keep reminding myself to be patient," Wei San says. "I'm still unclear whether God calls me to be a part of His long-term mission work overseas, but I know that it will be an incredible journey regardless of the direction He takes me. Are you considering mission? Why not take the first step and allow God to take you on a journey of exploration?"

Short-term and long term mission with children in Taiwan

Earlier this year, Wei San joined a short-term team from Australia, California, Malaysia, and Singapore to help run a five-day summer cooking camp for students at Meibei Elementary School. OMF Taiwan's long-term missionary team in Meishan runs this camp every summer. Each day, students learned recipes, exercise dances, indoor and outdoor games, and Bible stories followed by small group





discussions.

During the school term, the Meishan team runs after-school programs such as a board games club. They also aim to establish a relationship with students' families. "A gospel conversation can only occur after a relationship is established and built upon," Wei San says. "It is a long process that requires long-term commitment. Going short-term gave me a better perspective on the more profound impact long-term missionaries can have. They have planted and are growing many seeds through their long-term presence in Meishan."

God knows, and God's glory: Lessons from Taiwan

God knows what He is doing even when we don't realize it

Wei San attributes her team's harmony to God's hand at work. "Everyone came with a common goal: sharing Christ's love. It felt like we had known each other for some time. We worked together in unity and agreement. We valued each other's ideas and opinions. We backed each other up—all for Christ's sake."

When help was needed with translation, God encouraged Wei San to put her Mandarin to good use. When she was nervous to lead a cooking lesson, her team supported her. "From what I recall, everyone had fun and had curry puffs to bring home," Wei San says. "There were many other examples where God brought the whole team together to overcome the hurdles. He hears our prayers."

Don't be afraid to try hard things

Wei San found herself volunteering to do two things she normally would not have: leading exercise dances and a cooking class. "I never bake at home and am not used to being at the front doing dances!" Wei San says. "I dared this time because God helped to shift my focus. It is not about whether I do a good job, but whether I am willing to obey Him and choose to do the difficult things He wants me to do."

She was also nervous about leading small group Bible discussions. It was especially daunting on the first day, when she had just met the students. As the camp went on, each day felt more manageable than the day before. "My role as a disciple of Christ is to keep sharing His good news and trust that God will bring things to fruition when the time is right," Wei San reflects. "The gospel is a good gift God has given us—not so that our ability to spread it can be put to good use, but so that our inability is exposed and He is glorified."

*Wei San Tang
with Trix Wilkins*



Pray for Wei San and OMF Taiwan

- Pray for patience for Wei San as she seeks the Lord to reveal His good plans for her. "When He does, pray I will pay attention and not attempt to run away!" Wei San asks.
- Pray for the people of Taiwan to meet Jesus, the only true God, who can give them the thing(s) they seek from other gods.
- Pray for the OMF Taiwan Meishan team, for their good relationship with Meibei Elementary School to continue for many years, and for encouragement to persevere in ministry.

SPECIAL MOMENTS IN JAPAN:

10 years with OMF

Paul and Mel Jessop share highlights from ten years of ministry with OMF in Japan and Australia. This is an abridged version of a longer article on our website, which you can read at:

omf.org/au/special-moments-in-japan-10-years-with-omf



Where the Jessops have served

- 4 years in Japan: language and culture learning and church planting
- 1 year of home assignment and homeseide ministry
- From Jan 2022: Paul - OMF Australia National Director. Mel - NSW missions mentor and mobilizer

God's provision

Paul: God really miraculously provided in ways that were far beyond what we could do in our own strength. The year we were doing partnership development, I remember feeling convicted that when one of our particular friends pledged to support us, it would be God saying, "You're good to go. I'm going to send you." Months passed, and this friend still had not pledged.

Mel: About a month before our deadline for financial clearance, we were at 30% and it looked very unlikely that 70% could come in time, especially because for the last couple of weeks we were on holidays. When we returned from our holiday—having done nothing about partnership development—we found our support was in the

mid-seventies. It had jumped 40%! We realized it's not what we're doing. We did nothing. It was just prayer and just total reliance on God.

Paul: Twenty-four hours before the deadline, still no pledge from the friend I mentioned—and still no financial clearance. That morning, Mel called saying, "You'll never guess who has just pledged." And it was that friend! About an hour later, OMF Australia's leaders told us, "You've got all your clearances, you're okay to go." It was God just doing what is impossible, and it's certainly well beyond our control. And that's really incredible.

Gentle reminders and rebukes

Paul: God's taught us that He works through fellowship. When we were at the Japanese language and culture center, it was a really hard time for me. I didn't enjoy learning language. I'm not a natural language learner. I put a lot of pressure on myself, I had a lot of pride and it was really difficult.

About 12 months in, I was not in a good place. We met with the leaders of the center, a lovely older couple, Jim and Terui. I remember sitting in their office, telling them about how I was going, how I felt about my language, how I felt about my life.

I remember Jim very gently saying, “You know, Paul...Do you want to finish your time at language school with great language—but poor character, not loving your wife, not loving your kids, not loving others? Or do you want to finish language school with okay language—but godly character, loving your wife, loving your family, and loving others?”

And it just hit my heart. They were the words of truth and wisdom that I needed at the time.

Mel: There was a lady I had become friends with who was really open to God, but didn't know much about Him. So I invited her to read some Bible stories with me. One of the stories was from Exodus. I remember thinking, “What in the world? How helpful is this story going to be?” After we read the story, she said, “God is just so patient, isn't He? You know, if I was God and Pharaoh had said to me, ‘I'm not letting your people go,’ I wouldn't have done what God did, giving him chance after chance to do the right thing. I would have just judged them all straight away.” God used the story of the plague of hail to illustrate His kindness and patience to her!

I felt really rebuked, and amazed at how God really can and does use His Word to help people know more about Him—even when I doubt.

Passing on lessons from ten years of ministry

Mel: There's always a reason to not go to the mission field, always a reason to stop being part of a mission organization. There are always challenges and issues, but don't let those things prevent you from going. Don't be swayed from your convictions because they're less convenient. Make the most of the opportunities that God puts before you and don't let time go by without you following through on those convictions and calling.

Paul: Jesus is the greatest joy and the greatest adventure. We've had many special moments of answered

prayer, provision and fellowship. Many things will disappoint us or cause hurt or pain or trials in life—but Jesus remains the same, and He is a wonderful source of joy and a great Savior. You never regret taking steps of faith as you follow Jesus. It's not always easy. He promises hardship, trial and persecution, yet He's always with us, our shepherd, guide, comfort and joy— and obedience and faithfulness to Him is the one place you want to be.

Paul and Mel Jessop

with Lorenzo Ortega and Trix Wilkins

“The most important prayers are the most cliché and simple ones. Pray that we would love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, that we would have joy in the Lord as we serve him and be renewed in the Lord daily. Pray daily that the Lord would raise up workers for the harvest from Australia, that churches and His people would be passionate and captivated by the Great Commission and the spiritual needs of East Asians—and that somehow the Lord would choose us to use us in that process.”

— Paul Jessop

ONE DAY AT A TIME: *25 years in Japan*



"God has shown us over the last 25 years that He even uses very ordinary individuals," David and Wendy Marshall write. They reflect on serving one day at a time in teaching and mission publishing.

Twenty-five years. During our first year in Japan, I shakily asked an experienced missionary how she'd managed to stay for so many years. She replied, "Just one day at a time. Ask yourself: can I stay today?" And that's how it's been—just one day at a time. Some extraordinary days, many very ordinary days, and the occasional day that you hope will never ever be repeated.

We joined OMF in November 2000 and spent our first term in Hokkaido, northern Japan, learning Japanese and working in a church plant. Since David's heart was to serve missionary families through teaching their children, when an opportunity to teach maths and science at Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ) came, he jumped at it. We moved to Tokyo in 2005.

Writing and publishing ministry

When the youngest of our three boys started school in 2010, I started working with Japan

Harvest as an editor, a magazine that is sent to about 1,200 missionaries, around half the Protestant missionaries in Japan.

A missionary once wrote to me, "I have always deeply appreciated the Japan Harvest . . . it draw[s] lines between all of us serving around the country, giving a true sense of connection and community . . . the magazine is truly a wonderful resource."

Over the years, by running writing workshops and retreats, I've provided opportunities for

writers within Japan's missionary community to grow. I've also helped publish two prayer guides for Japan.

In 2017, I started OMF Japan's blog, and lead our social media team. Our aim is to inspire people for ministry in Japan. Many of our new missionaries first hear about OMF

through our social media posts, which go out to thousands of people across the world each week.

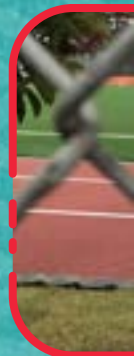
An OMF mobiliser in the US wrote, "between 80-90% of our contacts come through our various OMF websites" and the OMF Instagram account.

Seeing the next generation of missionaries

David is still working at CAJ. During the last 20 years he's taught various science and maths subjects—this year he's teaching statistics and

**I'LL CONTINUE TO BE PRAYING
FOR YOU GUYS AS THE LORD
USES YOU IN THIS INCREDIBLE,
UNIQUE AND POWERFUL WAY**

*to shape kids so that
they might impact
the world for Christ.*





calculus. David also oversees curriculum and staff professional development as CAJ's Director of Teaching and Learning.

It's not often that teachers see where their students end up, but one OMF family have three sons who all went to CAJ and are now serving the Lord as missionaries! A couple of years ago, David asked one of them about how CAJ contributed to his faith journey. He wrote: "You have, are, and will continue to have a huge influence on student's lives as they attend CAJ, so I'll continue to be praying for you guys as the Lord uses you in this incredible, unique and powerful way to shape kids so that they might impact the world for Christ. Thanks for your commitment to the work that the Lord has set before you in Japan! I think back on my time at CAJ very, very fondly."

Enjoying God's creation

We're both country kids and love seeing the less crowded parts of this beautiful land, taking time to camp in various places. In November 2016 we'd made plans to go camping (a time of year when temperatures regularly get close to zero). That year it snowed. The further we drove from Tokyo, the more snow we saw. When we finally arrived, we had to dig out several inches of snow to be able to just pitch our tent. We've got many camping stories to tell, but this is one of the best!

Knowing God's calling and leaning on Him

God has shown us over the last 25 years that He even uses very ordinary individuals (very few missionaries will ever have a biography written about them). We serve in ways that are not what most people imagine as typical missionaries, yet there are many behind-the-scenes workers like us. We don't have many dramatic stories, but are thankful we've been able to serve in ways that God has gifted us to support His work in Japan.

We've learned the importance of knowing that God's called us and continued to call us to serve Him here, even on the bad days. We've learned to lean hard on him. We've had times when we've wondered if God's call had changed, times that others have challenged our calling, yet somehow God has kept us serving in this place and in these ways. By God's grace he's allowed us to day-by-day serve in Japan for 25 years. All glory goes to Him.

*Wendy Marshall
(with David)*



Sussing out Japan FOR 20 YEARS

We're blessed with a number of online groups praying for Japan. Japan SUS (named for people 'sussing out Japan,' preparing to serve as missionaries) is one of them, and recently reached 20 years of praying together.

Japan SUS started in 2004 when Church Missionary Society worker Kellie Nicholas moved from Canberra to attend Bible college in Sydney. She had been introduced to the idea of SUS prayer groups through National Training Event, a conference for Christian university students run by the Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Japan SUS was born, welcoming workers from various mission agencies preparing to serve in Japan.

"Some of the people who were part of Japan SUS in the original days are Brian Birtles and Hoi-yan Shea," Kellie recalls. (Today, Hoi-yan is church planting with OMF in Yahaba, Japan.) "It's been a joy seeing people from the group head to Japan as missionaries, or on short-term trips."

In early 2013, when OMF workers Alex and Naomi Fung were about to depart for Japan, they handed leadership of the group to Tin Lok (Hoi-yan's brother), Geoff Wong (now serving with Global Recordings Network) and Barney Lau (who had just returned from OMF short-term trips to Singapore and Japan).

Today, Barney assists with administration, Tin collates missionary prayer letters, and workers

preparing to serve in Japan continue to join Japan SUS (OMF missionary Darren Hindle, due to depart for Japan at the time of writing, currently co-hosts the group).

"It has also been a great place for those who stay in Australia to keep praying for those of us who have gone," Kellie says. "Because it has been a regular meeting for so many years, we have built a community of people praying for Japan. The longer you pray for a missionary, the more you feel invested in the partnership we have in the gospel as those who go."

Not just names, souls in need of Jesus

Barney Lau reflects on the joys and challenges of praying for Japan.

It's a blessing to be a part of God's work to reach the lost millions of Japan, though it is still difficult to fathom what part we play by meeting each month. As pioneer missionary and author J.O. Fraser said, "I believe it will only be known on the Last Day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home."

Japan continues to be a place where the workers seem few and the harvest appears sparse. It seems like every technique has been tried to reach people for Christ, with little apparent results. Too often we hear of one or two people coming to faith—then decades later, they stop meeting with other Christians; the struggles of our broken world become too much to bear attending a church whose regular members are less than ten people. Then there may be some who say they are Christians, but keep their faith private.

Let's continue to persevere in prayer. May





David and Wendy Marshall over Zoom. One group joined from SMBC, including Alex and Naomi Fung, who were on home assignment.



we have the perspective Fraser had, asking people to treat prayer as a vital responsibility. “I want you to take the burden of these people upon your shoulders, I want you to wrestle with God for them.” (Missionaries, please keep us well informed, that we may pray specifically and earnestly for God to bring in His harvest!)

It has been a privilege to walk alongside long-term missionaries. To see them leave, to see some return, to weep with those who have lost loved ones, to share in the joy of someone putting their faith in Jesus—and to pray for their journeys step-by-step through challenging circumstances, responding to the love of God through His people.

It has also been encouraging to hear from short-term workers when they return and share about how their perspective on mission has changed, and how the places they’ve read about and people they prayed for have become real—they’re not just names, they are souls in need of Jesus living in a land that needs the light of the gospel.

And I’ve been delighted to hear of new ministry ventures like Samurai Projects (<https://www.samuraiprojects.com/>), which seeks to train a new generation of Japanese leaders. I invite you to join us in prayer for more good soil to receive the word of God, and that families and communities would be transformed by the gospel.

A conversation with my past self (what it's like to pray with Japan SUS)

OMF appointee to Japan Darren Hindle imagines a conversation he might have had with himself six years ago, when he first joined Japan SUS to pray.

Past: So, first things first, why is it called SUS Japan?

Present: Because it sounds like “sussing” something out, and most people join because they’re discerning whether they might go to Japan for mission or to grow in sending missionaries.

Past: Is it worth joining the group?

Present: Yes! You will learn a lot through the missionaries who share in the first hour. You will definitely be encouraged as you devote an hour a month to praying through missionary newsletters together. And I suspect that you’ll fully see how worthwhile the time was when you meet Japanese people in heaven, worshipping Jesus, partly because of the group’s prayers.

Past: And what will God teach me through it?

Present: God will teach you a whole bunch of things. He will teach you a lot of things from missionaries and their newsletters which will help you a lot when you arrive in Japan. He will also remind you that ‘nothing is wasted in the economy of God.’ That is, God can use anything and everything that happens in our journey. Romans 8:28 is still true.

From reluctant to convicted

Joe & Shirley Moormann, Japan

"Looking back on our lives, we can see how God faithfully worked on our often-reluctant hearts, drawing us into partnership with His good work in the world," Joe and Shirley Moormann wrote just before heading to Japan."

For Joe, it was one autumn evening nearly 13 years ago. While at a meeting of the University of Illinois' InterVarsity chapter, he was struck by a video for the Urbana 2012 missions conference. Raised in suburban Chicago, Joe never imagined a life beyond comfort and security. But God had been using his time at InterVarsity to change that. That evening, the video challenged him: If he wasn't willing to answer the call to go, who was he expecting to take his place?

Halfway across the globe, Shirley's faith journey began when her mother came to Christ just before her family moved from Hong Kong. Living in Australia, where language barriers and cultural differences loomed large, Shirley was encouraged by her mother to find comfort and strength in prayer, and rely on God all the more. During a trip to Taiwan through OMF's short-term mission program Serve Asia at the age of 21, God gave her a burden to reach the unreached.

After many detours, at 31, Shirley finally joined OMF and headed to Japan long-term, convicted to serve God faithfully whether single or married.

In 2016, Joe and Shirley's paths crossed briefly—Joe was in Hirosaki for a weekend investigating OMF's work, and Shirley was just starting her second term in Japan. Knowing each other's hearts for mission in Japan, this turned into a long-distance courtship, then Joe serving in another church nearby—then eventually their wedding at Hirosaki Nozomi Church! A Japanese friend who attended said the wedding was filled with much joy and laughter.

After returning to Australia, Joe and Shirley



committed to returning to Japan in God's timing, praying that God would equip them for the work ahead while they waited. Joe began work in Shirley's home church while resuming his studies. They became new parents: Jedidiah was born in 2019 and Nesyah in 2023 (that same month, Joe obtained Australian citizenship and completed his Master of Divinity).

All the boxes were ticked, but Shirley was overwhelmed by many uncertainties over bringing their children into an unfamiliar culture. This fear was later replaced by a deep assurance of God's love and care for their children. Today, they're encouraged by all the ways God has clearly worked, hope to continue to remember how God has been faithful in the past, and pray that the Lord may use them powerfully to propel the gospel forward in Japan.



Pray for the Moormanns

- Discipline in spending time with God reading His Word and prayer
- Encouragement in language learning
- New friends in Japan, especially for their son, Jedidiah
- God's protection and healing for their mothers (both living alone and with cancer)



Expecting the unexpected

Darren Hindle, Japan

I grew up in Melbourne thinking, “Maybe God exists...” but that seemed less relevant to me than just getting by and enjoying things like video games. A big turning point in my life came in 2010. I was invited to a Friday night Bible study dinner, and after 18 months of reading and talking about God’s Word, I began to believe in Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

In 2011, I went to Japan for six weeks before Christmas to support and learn from missionaries. This was an early step in discerning whether to serve the Lord in Japan. I did and still do feel the burden for how few Japanese people have heard the gospel.

I moved from Melbourne to study at Sydney Missionary and Bible College from 2019-2021. In God’s wisdom and humor, one person who guided me was a friend at City Bible Forum, who used to work with another Darren Hindle! (A minister in

Leichhardt, Sydney.)

What I’m looking forward to

I am looking forward to understanding Japanese people better, slowly but steadily making progress learning their language and culture. I trust that God will use this humbling and prayerful process to make me more like Christ and to make Japanese friends for Christ.

I’m also looking forward to ‘expecting the unexpected,’ something I’ve learned while teaching Scripture in schools. I don’t know who God will place around me, yet I imagine that the people I’m less likely to think of may just be the people who are more open to hearing and believing the good news of Christ (1 Cor 1:26-31).

In the longer term, I am looking forward to seeing God build His church. God-willing, I will see Him do this in some of the 18 cities and over 500 towns that currently have no church.

As you can imagine, I cannot do this alone (even planting one church is a God-sized task!). So I am looking forward to meeting fellow Christians among Japanese people and workers within OMF and other mission agencies united in the gospel.



Pray for Darren and Japan

- Thank God for saving me from His just judgement. Pray that He may make me more like Jesus by the power of His Holy Spirit.
- Give thanks for friends, including Japanese friends. Pray that our Creator may give me courage and opportunities to make more friends in Japan, especially Japanese people who have not heard the gospel.
- Pray for churches to be planted in the 18 cities and 500+ towns in Japan that currently have no church, and for local Japanese pastors to lead them. without much support.

A baptism, Bible stories and an intern

Aaron and Amy Koh, Taiwan

We are church planting in Donggang, a fishing and tourism port town of about 50,000 in southern Taiwan of whom about 1% are Christian.

We focus on building relationships and engaging with people in their everyday lives. Most of our meetings take place during the week at various shops around town, as many residents run small businesses that operate throughout the weekend.

Our vision is to see a network of diverse churches in Donggang that trust each other and collaborate on evangelism, discipleship, training and missions. We hope to see this network extend to surrounding areas, Pingtung County, the rest of Taiwan—and beyond.

I (Aaron) also serve as OMF Taiwan's mobilization team leader. We create resources to help people understand, pray for and participate in God's work in Taiwan—including managing short-term trips, digital and print publications, and connecting with those interested in long-term mission. Amy is Training and Development Coordinator, responsible for communicating and organizing training events for OMF members.

A highlight of our term has been seeing one of our long-term friends finally get baptized after ten years—around her birthday, to signify her new life! We have been meeting her and her husband each week to read the Bible and pray.

It has been a joy to have new opportunities to regularly share Bible stories with local business owners. I also had a Taiwanese Bible college student as an intern for a year—the first time I've had another man to work alongside with our whole time in Taiwan!

There is also the consistent slow joy of seeing God grow those we meet with at our house church and other small groups. We have been reminded that gospel work in Taiwan requires a long-term (decades) commitment to see fruit.



Pray for the Kohs and Taiwan

- Pray for the extension of a network of churches in Donggang to surrounding areas, Pingtung County and the rest of Taiwan. Pray for good collaboration on evangelism, discipleship, training and missions.
- Give thanks for new opportunities to regularly share Bible stories with local business owners. Pray for enthusiasm and curiosity about God, who has been active throughout history.
- Pray for Aaron and Amy as they meet with Taiwanese Christians in their house church and other small groups. May there be abundant fruit from their ministry.

Mission in the margins

Gus and Audrey Chan, Taiwan



Gus and Audrey serve among the marginalized in Taiwan. Audrey leads the Pearl Family Garden (PFG) team in Taichung, who minister to sex workers, and Gus is involved in local church-based ministry with children, men and families of addicts. Both Gus and Audrey also serve with the OMF Taiwan mobilization team in welcoming short-term workers.

Highlights: *Teammates, Tea and Transformation*

Gus: Seeing Brother G (an older gentleman in our men's small group) getting baptized after much spiritual warfare and challenges.

Audrey: Too many highlights, but I have to say my teammates! The unity and way we support, struggle and pray together. The way God provided them at just the right times with just the right people for the needs that popped up each time. I've been learning this truth in more living color—that God really does take responsibility for the ministry: of me, others, everything.

Another highlight was the way that God brought about PFG's first partnership with a local church, and healed the heart of one of the pastors there through her participation in our first ever Christmas outreach party. (She had come from a family broken by her father's constant affairs with women in the sex industry.)

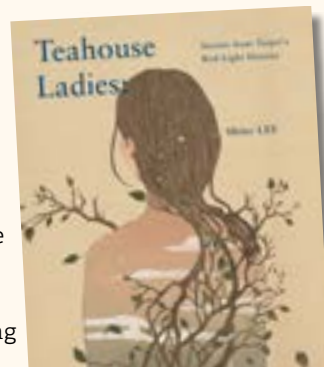
It's also been a joy to see the English translation of stories from PFG be released: real stories with a real God who comes to live with and love people in messy places. I hope that more people will come with eyes of compassion and empathy for the women featured in this book, and that God will bring light and life to the church through these new ways of seeing.

Tips for mission in the margins

Take the time to really get to know the people on the margins in your neighborhood right where you are. Pray for God to give you the privilege of having genuinely mutual friendships, as opposed to trying to "help" them. Look for what He is trying to do in you through these friends. How does He show you more of the love and grace He has for you through them?

Read good books about serving among people on the margins. Here are some that I (Audrey) have personally found helpful:

- When Helping Hurts
- Reading the Bible with the Damned
- Serving Tea: Stories from Taipei's Red Light District (English translation of PFG's book 茶室女人心).



Pick up a copy today at omfbooks.myshopify.com/products/serving-tea-stories-from-taipeis-red-light-district



Pray for Gus, Audrey and Taiwan

- Pray for rest, recovery, better balance in life. Pray for the Lord's help as they work on recalibrating habits of thought and heart, to serve in the strength He gives.
- Pray for Gus and Audrey's churches and partners, whom they love and appreciate deeply, to be encouraged as they spend time together.
- Pray for their preparations for speaking engagements and travel. Pray for safety as they cover two countries and four cities thousands of miles apart during home assignment.
- Pray for the Lord to encourage and richly bless the work of the PFG Taichung team back in Taiwan, as they continue to reach out to women without much support.

Transitions to local leadership in Taiwan

Peter and Mandy Denham, Taiwan

In their roles as finance manager and short-term mission team coordinator, Peter and Mandy Denham have seen God at work in the transitions of OMF ministries to local leadership and the Taiwanese church.

Much of our energy this term has been working through the transitions of our ministry teams to local leadership and administration. We wanted to make sure that it was a transition, not just an on-off switch for OMF's involvement.

Ministry among the marginalized

Marginalized and working-class ministry often needs longer periods of support than we might expect, and as missionaries, our strength is that we can give that support freely. A ministry to at-risk women or homeless people might never be self-sustaining financially, but we can help them grow partnerships with the Taiwanese church.

In May 2021, God began a process towards the localization of our Pearl Family Garden ministry, which serves at-risk women. Pandemic lockdowns provided an opportunity for more Taiwanese Christians to hear of the spiritual needs of sex workers, and to learn how they can help in practical ways. In the last few years, we have watched God use this media coverage, a book, and Pearl's transition into a local association to expand the ministry in geography and scope. Much of this growth has consisted of local Christian Taiwanese getting more involved—Pearl now has more than 50 local volunteers, in addition to missionaries and local ministry staff!



Local church leadership

Taiwan has changed during the past twenty years of OMF's working-class focus. There are more working-class Christians and more churches focused on working-class needs. Another church planted by OMF needed to have improved structures in place to keep it growing under a local pastor. We now have a few more ministries exploring the process of moving to local leadership, including the Shopworkers church. While serving in Sydney, we'd seen ministries grow up and thrive upon transitioning out of the support structures of a parent church, and now have the joy of seeing this in Taiwan.

Sending missionaries from Taiwan

We've had the joy of working in the same space as the OMF Taiwan home office. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in Taiwanese applying to serve with OMF in long-term overseas mission. We have a close-up view of the rising missionary sending capacity of the Asian church, and Mandy has had some recent opportunities to journey with and encourage Taiwanese Christians as they prepare for this work.

About Peter and Mandy's roles

Peter serves as the Field Finance Manager, where he spends a lot of time working out how to provide administrative and logistical support for OMF Taiwan's twenty different ministry teams, who each seek to see spiritually and numerically



flourishing communities of working-class Christians in Taiwan. He sits on the board of Taiwan Missionary Fellowship, which helps him to be aware of dynamics and changes in the broader Taiwan missionary community.

Peter also serves with OMF's Younger Leaders Community, helping equip and encourage younger colleagues across the world in their ministry, and recently stepped down after a decade with the International Finance Committee working with policies and system solutions.

Mandy has been serving as Serve Asia Coordinator as well as part of OMF Taiwan's mobilization team. She works with sending centres throughout OMF as well as Taiwan's various ministry teams to arrange short-term placements. Mandy also journeys with people who are exploring how they might be being called to serve God in mission.

Peter and Mandy currently live and serve in northern Taiwan, and together they have been responsible since December 2023 for care and oversight of OMF's northern Taiwan based team members. The team is changing rapidly as the needs in Taiwan change. They will conclude their time in this role when they come on home assignment.

Peter preaches monthly at the Taoyuan Shopworkers Church. To help their high school aged boys grow in their walks with Jesus, Peter and Mandy also serve at the bilingual Linkou International Church. Mandy and Hamish teach Sunday school and Luke helps the AV team.



Pray for the Denhams and Taiwan

- Pray for Peter, Mandy and their family to be able to sustain their different ministries, and for wisdom regarding future ministry priorities.
- Pray for established ministries like Pearl Family Garden and Shopworkers Church to expand to new cities, and for healthy partnerships with local Taiwanese churches.
- Pray for OMF Taiwan as the team continues to prioritize the ongoing needs for the gospel in less-reached rural areas.
- Pray for Christians looking to explore serving in Taiwan, and for Mandy as she journeys with and helps each one prepare for mission.

MISSIONARY-DRIVEN TO LOCALLY-DRIVEN MINISTRY:

10 years of praying for Cambodia

How did the Lord lead you into leading a prayer group?

In 2014, I went to Cambodia with OMF to visit David and Jess Liaw, who we knew through a Christian club at university. When they returned to Perth, they wanted to start a prayer group and that's how we got into it. Prayer is always a good thing right, you can't go wrong!

My husband and I are both dentists. We were mentoring final year medical and dental students. We wanted to challenge them to think about mission, so we organized that short-term trip to Cambodia to give them an opportunity to explore that idea as an option for their lives. Later on, many of the students ended up praying with us in the prayer group.

How have you seen God work as you've prayed?

The changes have been huge! When we started praying for rural parts of Cambodia, it was very unreached. There were only a handful of kids and adults getting together for the youth group and women's meetings—now there are hundreds of people that gather, and people travel from other provinces to get there! And some locals are training to become preachers. There's definitely growth and fruit that's happened over the years.

Also, when we first started praying, the university ministry was missionary driven. Now, it's the local students leading themselves and the ministry is locally driven. That's what OMF is all about—missionaries preach the gospel and equip the local Christians to take over. One of the most recent missionary prayer letters asks us to pray for a Cambodia missionary movement—for locals to become missionaries themselves, and local churches to send workers out—which is amazing.

Please share one thing you'd love readers to pray for Cambodia.

A missionary movement out of Cambodia is the next big thing really. We're praying that local Christians in Cambodia can share the gospel with others. You don't have to be a superhero—missionaries are normal people who have decided sharing the gospel is important. Pray for the life and work and family of each local Christian in Cambodia and that in their own lives, they will live as missionaries too. And pray for more people to get involved in the Cambodia prayer group—that would be great!

Nat Leow
with Trix Wilkins



PREPARING PEOPLE FOR *God's Kingdom*

God carries out His deeds in the most extraordinary and miraculous ways. Amazingly, God allows humanity to take part and journey with Him.

In 2024, OMF has once again experienced another year full of blessings from God. All our Australian workers received support to sustain their ministries to build God's kingdom. He's provided to enable us to continue to send more workers where the gospel is needed.

I have recently been encouraged by the book of Nehemiah. God's faithful servant Nehemiah was saddened when he learned that the city of Jerusalem was ruined. With a faithful and prayerful heart, Nehemiah set out to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem.

It was no easy task, and even though Nehemiah was attacked and opposed by enemies, God continued to bless him and his team. The work Nehemiah carried out was much more than just rebuilding a wall. He was rebuilding God's city, God's people, and the people's relationships with God. Seeing the people of God scattered, Nehemiah drew them together.

God's city needed to be filled with people who know their God. Chapters 7-11 describe how the people were prepared before they were allocated

to live in Jerusalem. They were given the chance to understand God's law. Day after day, Ezra read from the book of the law, which helped them to understand the character and attributes of God.

When the people heard and understood God's law, they recognized their sin and confessed their sins through prayer. Then they made a binding agreement to live their lives according to the ways of the Lord, and to not neglect the house of God. They were then ready to become the new residents of Jerusalem.

These few chapters of Nehemiah touch my heart dearly. They remind me of how OMF's workers spend their lives building God's kingdom, influencing others' lives with their own as they share the good news of Jesus. It is no easy task to live years away from home, away from family and friends. Along the way, there are difficulties, challenges and oppositions.

Yet no matter what, God continues to use OMF workers to prepare His people, prepare their lives and prepare their hearts to one day enter the kingdom of God as new residents.

Edwin Lee

OMF Australia Finance Manager



A LIFETIME OF *God's faithfulness*

Katoomba Women's
Convention

On the year of her 80th birthday, we invited OMF Australia national council member Jeannette Kuswadi to share of her journey to mission and some of the ways she's seen God work. This story is an abridged version of a longer article on our website, which you can read at: omf.org/au/a-lifetime-of-gods-faithfulness



Jeannette was born in China in 1945 into a Christian family, with her grandfather being a Presbyterian minister in Swatow. Almost 74 years ago, her family moved to Australia and started to attend Lindfield Presbyterian. "Dad wanted us to be part of the Australian community," Jeannette recalls.

One cold rainy Saturday in 1959, Jeannette, her brother and cousins went to a Billy Graham crusade. "That night, I learned that it was not attending church, Sunday School or being a good person that made me a Christian—but repenting and giving my life to Jesus. I would be saved by grace alone."

Discipleship and OMF books

"God has blessed me with many wonderful mature Christians who have been there for me at different seasons of my life," Jeannette says. "I am a slow learner, but the Lord faithfully shows His mercy, love and kindness. He is faithful and sent people over the years to keep me on track. He is continually moulding me and helping me to change, to seek to be more like Jesus."

Chinese Presbyterian Church (CPC) youth group, Overseas Christian Fellowship (OCF) and the Evangelical Union at Sydney University became instrumental in Jeannette's spiritual growth. It was at an OCF meeting in 1970 that Jeannette met Jim, who went on to serve as the first Perkantas (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) staff worker in Indonesia.

After Jeannette and Jim married, OMF missionaries encouraged the couple. She was discipled by OMF NSW Home Secretary Eric Norgate and his wife, Jean. Another special relationship was with OMF workers Ray and Evelyn Cunningham, who served in Borneo. They were



among the couples Jeannette's youth group prayed for and supported 60 years ago! Though Ray is over a hundred now, Jeannette and Jim still see them.

Sometimes this encouragement came through OMF books. "I think I've read every biography written by China Inland Mission [CIM, now OMF] missionaries by the 1960s! One thing I learnt was that God always provides when we trust Him. When I pray, it is easier to trust Him and know that literally everything is in His sovereign control. I remember a book on pioneer missionary J.O. Fraser, who saw God change things through prayer."

Jeannette had also read two volumes of Hudson Taylor's life and mission. "His faith in God and his prayer life really impacted me. I loved his idea of 'moving men by prayer through God alone,' Jeannette says. "The biggest thing I learnt from those two huge volumes was that God is trustworthy, and He graciously answers prayer and provides. God has blessed me countless times by following Hudson Taylor's principle of prayer."

Bible Study Fellowship (BSF), which was started by a former CIM missionary, has also been significant. For several years, Jeannette has been praying with friends who lead BSF groups. "We pray for one another and have seen the Lord graciously answer hundreds of prayers."

God's answers to prayer

"After more than 60 years of being a follower of Jesus, the Lord has delighted, encouraged and surprised me by His loving care and answers to prayers thousands of times in big or usually small but significant ways."

One of the most significant ways Jeannette has experienced God's care was during the hardest time of her life—when their first son, Daniel, died after a perfect pregnancy; his head was crushed

through a forceps delivery.

"It was a terrible time, but I experienced the peace of God that surpasses all earthly understanding," Jeannette says. "Of course, I grieved and had lots of issues, but the Lord graciously provided people who prayed for me. When I felt overcome by emotions, there were women I could phone to pray for me."

After Jim finished his 4-year term in Indonesia with Perkantas, he decided to go into business. When their sons were three and one, Jim sought to start his own company. During the second year of Jim's business, a friend flew to Sydney each Monday then home on Friday for work. "God provided for our mortgage through this friend, as his company paid for the room and board at our home."

When a parent told Jeannette that her local school had some staff who were hostile towards Christians, she started praying. "Two years later, just before Joshua was due to start school, I overheard another mother talk about a Christian teacher who was moving to teach there. I felt the Holy Spirit telling me this was an answer to my prayers. Three years later, the school's new deputy principal was a wonderful lady from our own church."

Another instance of answered prayer involved a missionary couple in Thailand who had seen no men come to faith. "I encouraged our small weekly prayer group at church to pray for keen men to come to Christ. On their next home assignment, this couple told us there were now men in their group!"

As part of OMF Australia's national council, Jeannette has met many missionaries who have seen God's answers. "We've seen missionaries who were feeling burnt out be restored during home assignment and be enthusiastic to go back. We've seen God provide for financial clearance for people who were quite low in financial support. We've been blessed by sharing with numerous missionaries in our home. We praise God for all these things!"

*Jeannette Kuswadi
with Trix Wilkins*



*Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise from the ends of the earth,
you who go down to the sea,
and all that is in it, you islands,
and all who live in them.*

-Isaiah 42:10