

Cultivating Japanese Christians . . . in Colchester

Eileen Warner, a JEB* missionary in Japan for many years, has retired to Colchester. "Retirement" though is proving to be busy – and fruitful with it! Working in partnership with organisations like Friends International and the University of Essex Christian Union, Eileen puts her Japan experience to good use connecting with Japanese students in the city...

I contact Japanese students in different ways. One good method is to team up with Friends International who work among international students at the university. I go to their International Café, parties and outings. Whenever I meet a Japanese student I invite them home for a meal or a cup of tea - fortunately cooking doesn't have to be cordon bleu standard! I encourage them to introduce me to their friends and manage to meet about twenty Japanese students each year. Sometimes I arrange activities - a visit to the coast, a picnic, an invitation to a lunch at church. I also find that they appreciate practical help, such as help in understanding English or finding a dentist.

God has worked miracles

As we become friends opportunities arise to share my faith. I invite them to church, give them Japanese Christian literature (available from JCL), and introduce them to Friends International's Bible studies.

There are now seven former students who became Christians during their stay in Colchester back in Japan. Let me introduce you to two in whom God has worked miracles.

The first is Yumiko, a school teacher. At her baptism she said "When I came to England the biggest purpose for me was to gain a Master's degree. But as it turned out ... the most significant purpose for me to come here was to encounter...

Christ". Three things led to her decision to follow Jesus - Bible studies led by Friends International, prayer and her Christian friends. Since her return to Japan we have stayed in touch and I have sent her several Christian books which she said were a great help.

Yumiko has returned to a non-Christian home and a very busy life, but amid the problems she has found real joy in



her faith. She wrote “Today I went to a church in my hometown. Before I went to England I didn’t even know there was a church there! I felt as if the church had been waiting for me. I am so grateful ... now I think it is my turn to return the great love that comes from Jesus to other people. It is my pleasure and mission.”

Yumiko has been pursuing that mission. When I met Rika, a student at language school, I found that she had a desire for God, but was finding it difficult to understand the gospel and was fearful of her parents’ reaction if she became a Christian. So, through email, I introduced her to Yumiko, who had faced similar problems. Yumiko has been a tremendous help and as well as writing frequently, she prays daily. One day when Rika arrived at my house she said, with tears in her eyes, that she wanted to become a Christian. Rika has now put her faith in Jesus as her saviour. She will return to Japan soon, but through JCL I hope to introduce her to a church in her area.

Please remember these babes in Christ as they return to difficult situations, to very different customs and culture in



Rika (centre) and other students enjoying Christmas dinner in Eileen’s house

their own country. Our prayers can help them continue on their Christian journey.

Eileen Warner
JCL Volunteer, Colchester

* For information on JEB and its relationship with JCL see “JCL – Who are we?” on page 7.

MYSTERIES EXPLAINED – Making the Bible relevant for Japanese readers

“When Heaven and Earth began, a thing existed in the midst of the Void. Within it a deity was spontaneously produced, whose name was Kuni-toko-tachi no Mikoto, also called Kuni-soko-tachi no Mikoto. Next there was Kuni no sa-tsuchi no Mikoto, also called Kuni no sa-tachi no Mikoto. Next there was Toyo-kuni-nushi no Mikoto, also called Toyo-kumu-nu no Mikoto.”*



Often, longing to share the word of God with Japanese friends, we give them a Bible without stopping to think what it must be like to read it for the first time ever. Without help they may understand very little. And that’s where books like Miura Ayako’s Introduction to the New Testament and Introduction to the Old Testament come in.

How does that sound - relevant and approachable?

Or - more likely - mysterious, foreign and irrelevant to everyday life?

Compare it with this – “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” – and this – “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham; Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah...” Would a Japanese reader find that relevant and approachable? Whilst to us these may be familiar words from the start of the Old and New Testaments, to Japanese they probably sound as strange as the extract from the Nihongi - a Japanese Shinto text - above, with an unexplained God, a Spirit and a long list of strange names.

Written by a well-known Japanese author, these books use real-life illustrations and personal experience to help Japanese read and understand the Bible for themselves. Empathising with the reader, Ayako describes her own reaction to reading Matthew 1 for the first time and how her perceptions later changed. She goes on to unlock the content of the Bible for readers. In her book on the Old Testament she explains key episodes such as creation, Noah’s ark, Abraham and Isaac, and delves into the Psalms, Proverbs and other books of the Old Testament.

So when you’re talking with a Japanese friend about the Bible, why not consider recommending one of these books?

For more details of these and other books see www.jclglobal.org/bookshop/

* from the Nihongi, The Age of the Gods, Book I, translated by Basil Hall Chamberlain.

Asking the Experts

Have you ever wanted to get involved in outreach to Japanese, but not been sure of the best way to go about it? We asked Hiroshi Ogawa, pastor of the Japanese church in Finchley; Peter Yonge, who leads Japanese congregations in Wimbledon and central London, and Trevor Howard, who for eighteen years has worked among Japanese in Stockport, for their ideas and suggestions.

In what ways do you try to reach Japanese?

Trevor: We use a “felt needs” approach, responding to people’s needs. The Japanese community here has changed since we started and so we have adapted our activities.



Trevor Howard

Previously there were many businessmen and families and we provided cultural information classes. Now there are more Japanese women married to British men. They have less need for cultural information but want to meet other Japanese so we have a toddler group and parenting

classes which are well attended.

Take time regularly to review the kind of people you are ministering to and adjust accordingly.

Peter: We joined in outreach started by Emmanuel Church, mostly social activities for Japanese women. We later started Japanese church services which have brought in others. Now around twenty adults attend and there is a Sunday school. We have used the Japanese Alpha Course, and found that Children’s Day celebrations (a Japanese festival) in our home were really popular with families.

Do you find different approaches work better for different categories of people, eg men, women, students?

Trevor: We’ve found students enjoy coming to our home, having some food and studying the Bible in English. One woman started coming because her friends came and has recently become a Christian. Many other students have heard the gospel through this class.

Peter: Maybe we’re caught in the rut of offering activities for housewives, simply because they have more time. With Alpha though we ran the course on Saturdays for the benefit of working people. This worked well, even though it was still mostly women (those with jobs) who came! We tried evening men’s Bible studies too but normally only one person, a Christian, came.

Are there particular challenges?

Hiroshi: We haven’t yet found a good way to reach working men.

Peter: The usual ones of making contact with anyone who is not a housewife! Also, the Japanese community is quite spread out so we rely on them to introduce each other to our activities.

Have you had any really good experiences?

Hiroshi: I don’t have any failsafe method, but I believe that it’s important to build up Japanese believers so that they will then become evangelists in their own families and workplaces. The key is to help Christians grow in faith.

Peter: Ironically, a funeral! A Japanese woman aged forty recently died suddenly. Her British husband asked me to handle the service. As she belonged to an association of Japanese wives many of the members came, along with six relatives from Japan and most of our Wimbledon believers – about one hundred people in all. The bilingual service made a deep impression on many who commented on the sense of peace and hope. We spoke with many of the visitors, some of whom said they would like to know more about the Bible.

What advice would you give others thinking about engaging with Japanese in their community?

Trevor: Be sensitive to what they say, try to imagine yourself in their position in Japan and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. You will need patience and perseverance but your life will be enriched as God uses you.

Hiroshi: Be prepared to give them your time, show a real interest and love them.

Peter: Welcome them, listen to them, speak slowly and invite them home. Let them learn gradually without pressure. When they show real interest use bilingual study materials. I see Japanese saved even in English churches though with no Japanese speakers so don’t be discouraged, go ahead and try anything!



Hiroshi Ogawa



Peter Yonge

What is it like to lead a church in Japan?

What impressions are your neighbours likely to have of Christianity? How do you attract people in? We asked Hiroyuki Miyake, who, with his German wife Erika, leads Nagusa Christ Church in Wakayama prefecture, to share his experiences with us.



Hello, my name is Hiroyuki Miyake. I am married to Erika who is a former missionary to Japan. We met at church here and married in 1991. We later moved to the UK for nine months to study English and then on to Israel. We felt strongly that God was calling us there, although we did not know exactly why. In the end we were there for nearly twelve years! We used to hold English and Hebrew Bible studies in our home, and I was also involved with the small Japanese church in Jerusalem. In 2003 Israel Today magazine – a contemporary news magazine published by messianic Jews - started publishing a Japanese edition which I was asked to edit. I did this until we returned to Japan in 2007 and we now lead the JEB Nagusa Christ Church in Wakayama prefecture.



This is where we held our Pentecost service.

We both enjoyed living in Israel and the UK and experiencing different cultures and perspectives. This has helped us to be more objective about Japan and the Japanese church. I have realised that there are different types of Christians and styles of worship and that some things I thought of as biblical were merely cultural. For example, Japanese churches sometimes say the order of priority should be God first, church second and family after that. Yet Paul says “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” (1Tim.3:5). It certainly helped broaden my horizons.

Japanese people are not brought up with the notion of just one God - they see it as a negative thing

Living in Israel also helped to reinforce my faith and bring the Bible to life and has been a great help in explaining the Bible to others.



... and for games

I realised that God has been working throughout history. Now that we are back in Japan though it is wonderful to be able to use my gifts to serve the Japanese church directly and this gives me great joy.

Nagusa is in a relatively rural area of Japan. As is often the case in rural areas people hold more closely to tradition – in Japan that means Buddhist and Shinto tradition. I think this is one reason why people are rather wary of Christianity here and tend to keep their distance.

There is a big Buddhist temple near the church as well as the biggest Shinto shrine in Wakayama prefecture. Not only that but Jehovahs Witnesses are also very active and are based just three minutes’ walk from the church! On top of this the Tenri sect (a Japanese cult) has a temple and main office nearby.



We then invited family members to join us for a barbeque ...

In general Japanese see Christianity as a foreign religion that does not show proper respect to one’s ancestors (this is an important aspect of Japanese Buddhism). Many think of church as a place for weak people or for those who are struggling in life and so keep their distance. Also, Japanese are not brought up with the notion of just one God – the Shinto religion has many gods and the idea of there being just one God is foreign to them. In fact they see it as a



We talked about hobbies in our English class and learned how to dress in a kimono

negative thing, as exclusive and self-righteous. They like to compare religion and salvation with a mountain - it doesn't matter which side you climb up, everybody will eventually reach the top.

This means we have to be active and inventive in making contacts and reaching out to people! So, for example, I attend the neighbourhood council where I am responsible for a unit of ten households. My tasks include disseminating information about meetings or local events, and arranging cleaning of the gutters three times a year. It is a good way to get to know our neighbours. The church also offers English classes for adults and children. One young couple who have been coming to these are keen to learn about our faith - please pray for them. Each year we hold two special outreach events - such as an Easter play - and most months we also have a special service to which church members can invite non-Christian family members.

Although people do come to these, it is always difficult persuading them to come more regularly. We have had some success in attracting newcomers though from distributing tracts in the neighbourhood, and through our website. This is how two people who have recently become Christians got to know of us. In terms of helping non-Christians to understand the gospel I have found that the most effective method is one-to-one Bible study. This gives them the opportunity to ask plenty of questions and Erika and I can take as much time as needed with them.

When we came to Nagusa the

I have found one-to-one Bible study most effective



Celebrating Christmas with lunch together

congregation was at the older end of the age scale with most of the fifteen church members aged over fifty. However, some younger people have joined us of late, including a man in his thirties and a young woman, who both plan to get baptised over Easter. They are two of five new Christians to have been baptised in the last two years.

Will you join us in praying for the work here in Nagusa? Pray that the Lord would continue to bring people to salvation here, and for the spiritual growth of new believers. From next April I have been asked to lecture part-time at Kansai Bible College in Kobe. I will have quite a long way to commute and it will be a challenge to balance my work as a pastor and my teaching work so please pray for me in that. Thank you for your support!

*Hiroyuki Miyake
Nagusa Christ Church*

- Read more about the church at Nagusa on their website at <http://www2.ocn.ne.jp/~nagusach/E4.htm> (English) or <http://www2.ocn.ne.jp/~nagusach/T1.htm> (Japanese).



◀ *Erika stars as a shepherd in our Christmas play*

Map of Japan is taken from Wikipedia, see http://commons.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Japan_with_highlight_on_30_Wakayama_perfecture_prefecture.svg

How do you decide whether becoming a missionary in Japan is right for you? With so many Japanese in the UK, would it be more fruitful to stay here? We asked Thierry Richards, who, with his wife Antonia, is going through that decision process right now.

Could you introduce yourselves and what you are doing now?

We are Thierry and Antonia Richards. We love sports, reading, people, and the Lord. We got married last year, and since then we have been working together at St. Ebbe's Church, speaking about Jesus with Japanese people in Oxford.

What led you to consider full-time outreach to Japanese?

There are four areas which have strongly influenced us: God's word, the need we've seen, our churches, and our liking and enthusiasm for Japan and the Japanese!

A few years ago, whilst I was working as a church apprentice, an OMF missionary asked if some students could help her speak about Jesus with students in Japan. The Rector asked me if I would lead this team. That summer I saw the need in Japan - so few Christians - and realised that, even with the little we know, we can be of real use in speaking about Jesus. I also liked the country! So the next summer I returned to work with a Japanese pastor in Morioka. Antonia's interest in Japan began after she worked at a church in Sapporo during her gap year.

You are already working with Japanese in Oxford so why decide to move to Japan?

It's a difficult decision. On the one hand, Japanese seem much more likely to become Christians outside of Japan. There appears to be greater openness to the gospel, and there are thousands of Japanese here. On the other hand, there are so few opportunities to hear the gospel in Tokyo and more Christian workers in the UK. We both have experience of Japan and want to do city work. Also we have been invited to work with Grace City Church, Tokyo and we are enthused by their vision to reach city workers.

We would like to work in the three central wards of Tokyo - Chiyoda, Chuo and Minato, often described as the 'heart of

Tokyo', containing the cultural centre - the Imperial Palace; the political heartland of Kasumigaseki; and the financial heartland of Marunouchi. There is a daytime population of 2.4 million city-workers, which falls to 353,000 at night. There are only 5 evangelical churches in the area.

For our first two years, we would study Japanese full-time, attend weekly staff meetings, and help with a Bible study group. Then we would work full-time in whatever capacity was most effective - leading a church-plant, as evangelists, Bible teachers or disciplers, under Japanese oversight. We would like to start lunchtime Bible talks in central Tokyo, using the city-workers' lunch breaks to teach God's word to them.

There must be several different organisations and ways in which you can become missionaries to Japan. How did you decide on the path you are now following?

We found four suitable candidate organisations and arranged discussions and meetings with them: WEC, OMF, Crosslinks and JCL.

We were unusual, because there was a particular work which we wanted to be part of in Tokyo. This very much influenced our choice of mission agency. Our meetings with JCL excited us, because of their ethos, experience of Japan, flexibility, and their interest in the work with Tokyo city workers. We liked their personable and flexible style so we hope to become JCL mission partners.

Any advice for others who might be thinking about committing themselves to full-time mission work? What should they be thinking about?

I think we have to lay everything before God and commit to do only his will. Sometimes we want to do something and justify it to ourselves. Wanting to work in Tokyo, my danger is that I do not investigate other options thoroughly. For others I'm sure it might be the other way around, that ties in England keep them from seriously considering going to Japan.

What would you like readers to pray for?

Wisdom for all counselling us, and a heart that single-mindedly seeks the Lord's desires.

*Thierry Richards
Oxford*



Antonia (3rd from left) and Thierry (6th from left) with Japanese friends at a rugby match

What's new?

JCL's Japan Conference, 9-11 July 2010, is a great chance to meet others interested in Japan or involved in ministry among Japanese. What is God doing among Japanese today?

How can you share your faith with Japanese friends and contacts? Some sessions will be available in Japanese. Find out about the



last conference and listen to some of the talks at www.jclglobal.org/news/conference/ where information about this year's conference will also be posted as we get it.

Tillie Toner - We praise the Lord for the life of Tillie Toner and for her ministry over the decades. She and her husband Bobbie were Mission Partners, later Field Directors, in Japan and continued actively supporting the work after retirement until Tillie succumbed to motor neurone disease last October. Bobbie is now cared for in a nursing home.

New JCL Network Partners - Tiffany Liang, Sabine Scheucher and David & Heidi Skipper have joined JCL as Network Partners

Tiffany is working for a local government office in Nobeoka in Miyazaki prefecture until next summer under the Japanese government JET programme. She aims to share her faith with friends and colleagues.

Sabine is from Austria and lived for many years in Tibet and Nepal before moving to Britain in 2008. She teaches English to Japanese families in west London and goes to a Japanese church. She first visited Japan last Christmas and returns again for five weeks over Easter.

Please pray that the Lord would give Tiffany and Sabine good opportunities to tell others about him and would direct their steps now and as they pray over the future.

David & Heidi, with baby Kira, plan to move to Tokyo this

autumn to work with Japan Baptist Fellowship's Innovative Ministries team. Both are accomplished musicians - Dave in electronic music and Heidi in classical violin. As well as general outreach they hope in particular to be able to reach out to "hikikomori" - individuals who, through stress or depression, have closed themselves off from all social contact with others and live sequestered in their rooms. There are believed to be around a million such people in Japan. Please pray for the Skippers' preparations, language study and future ministry.

Supporting Outreach -

We praise God and thank all those who began supporting outreach through JCL financially, or who increased their giving, in 2009. Whilst our potential

deficit was reduced, we again had to draw down reserves to meet the gap between receipts and expenditure. With the exciting growth in ministry we are seeing, we continue to pray for more regular supporters. Could you help enable work to happen by giving regularly?



Japan remains one of the world's least-reached nations, but we want to help change that. We were founded as the Japan Evangelistic Band (JEB) in 1903. Since then, through God's grace, JEB's work has led to the establishment of over 150 churches and the Kansai Bible College in Japan. In 1999 the mission evolved into its current form, adopting the new name of Japan Christian Link. JEB work in Japan is now directed independently by our Japanese colleagues, supported by JCL missionaries as required, and we have partners elsewhere in Japan too.

JCL equips, mentors and encourages individual Christians in this country and in others to reach

Japanese around them. Our partners and volunteers also share the gospel with Japanese through full-time church work, "tent-making" mission work or informally with friends and colleagues.

We are Interdenominational, with many of the main Christian traditions represented, and we are International, with workers from several different countries. We are also Inclusive, seeking to work with other organisations too. Our aim is to see a significant difference in the progress of the gospel among the Japanese people over the first half of this century. Find out more about JCL from our website at

www.jclglobal.org

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JCL – Who are we?

Testing Times

Tim Williams, son of Mission Partner Yuki and Stephen Williams, returned to Japan last August expecting to do six months' part-time theological study whilst helping with youth work and evangelism at church prior to becoming a youth pastor. All has not gone entirely according to plan ...

Soon after I arrived at Hiratsuka Evangelical Church, my sponsoring church in Kanagawa prefecture, the senior pastor called me in and said that the denomination's board had decided they wanted me to study at Bible College longer than planned – for eighteen months in fact. After that

I had expected a more hands-on role they would consider whether to take me on as youth pastor. So I had moved all the way from the UK to Japan believing that I would be able quickly to get stuck into evangelism, but it looked like I would have little time left for that!

I was really disappointed. This wasn't the welcome I had expected. Still, at least I have the benefit of training alongside Japanese church workers which should make them more likely to accept me as one of them rather than an outsider. I

should be able to understand their viewpoint better too.

In addition to my studies I do still have time to get involved with the church.

At present there is little youth work – in fact there are only two other people in their twenties coming regularly to church. Previously there used to be up to twenty five coming. We also have few teenagers as many children stop coming when they start junior high school and have to focus more on studying. So I have started a weekly youth house group where four of us meet. My aim is to motivate and inspire young people to reach out to others, and also to make this a very easy meeting to which to invite non-Christian friends. I would



Bible College students ... and Dad

love to see more such groups as numbers grow. I also help with the church's regular midweek children's club. About five children come, rising to thirty for special events like a Christmas party. We play games, sing a song then hear a Bible story. Please pray that more children would come regularly. Other church meetings also keep me busy with 6am prayer meetings Tuesday to Saturday, three Sunday services and two Wednesday midweek prayer meetings. My days are long, often stretching from 6am to 9pm. I try to get along to the



With friends in Scotland

local badminton club once a month in order to meet non-Christians. There are several people I got to know in the UK who are now back in Japan and not too far away. Most of them are not Christians so please pray that I will be able to keep the relationships up and for the opportunity to witness to them.

Despite the fact that I grew up in Japan it has been quite a culture shock coming back here – not so much in terms of the culture of the country, but of church culture. I grew up in a church planted by missionaries and I never really realised how different Japanese church culture could be. I wonder how a person with no church experience would feel at a Japanese church for the first time. I guess it has also been difficult for me accepting that the church wants me to study for a long time at their own Bible College even though I have already been to Bible College and had expected a more hands-on role from the start.

So many thanks to those who have been praying for me and for the church here in Hiratsuka. Your support is a great encouragement!



Kitchen dinner at Hiratsuka Church

*Tim Williams
JCL Mission Partner,
Hiratsuka*