

Joy and Challenge - Mission work in downtown Kobe

Outreach meetings every Saturday and Sunday that have been attended by over five hundred new people in the last three years, over 130 professions of faith in Christ, eight baptisms and Sunday service attendance rising from fifteen to over thirty - recent times have seen the Kobe Mission Hall transformed into a thriving evangelistic centre. Cause for rejoicing indeed! But with the joy have come challenges, as JCL Mission Partner Dawn Bolton tells us:

Our staff team has grown, with four additional Korean workers. Still, discipling those who have accepted the good news of Jesus is a big challenge, especially in this area.

They struggle to be free from things that bind them to their former life

Many of those who come to the Mission Hall are at a very low point in their lives, and accept the gospel eagerly. But they often find that although

they are made new in Christ their immediate circumstances remain unchanged. They struggle to be free from their former life - from heavy drinking, bad company and scars from the past which still control their way of thinking and relating to others. They have to find a way to live faithfully in that world - and it's not easy! How can we,



Joy as Kenji and Koichi are baptised



Dawn (sitting, second from right) and the church family on the retreat

their brothers and sisters in Christ and pastoral team at the Mission Hall, help them to take hold of the freedom that is theirs in the Lord?

One thing we have found God uses is our annual church retreat. For many of our new believers just getting away for a few days from their life situations is a tremendous relief. But there's also the chance for more permanent change.

This year we decided to have a longer, three day retreat and focussed on healing and freedom in Christ. We gathered in a beautiful peaceful place outside Kobe.

Downtown Kobe, where the church is, can feel pretty desolate at times so a change of scenery can be a blessing in itself. The retreat centre has a small lake, delicious food and very cheap accommodation.

Twenty eight of us took part. With so many people, a full programme and

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dormitory accommodation it was not the kind of retreat centred on an extended quiet time with the Lord! Nevertheless, he met with us there, both individually and as a group.

We began to see God work through the church family. Spending twenty four hours together, people were beginning to trust each other and share things - something that really doesn't come easily in this society. In one of our sessions we thought about the things which keep us "chained", and stop us from taking hold of the freedom that is ours in Christ. People spoke honestly

about their struggles with fears about the future, dependence on medicine to get them through the day and inability to

let go of past hurts. We made a paper chain link for each of these things and then joined all our links to make one big chain, which we vowed to give to Jesus. In the evening we had a barbecue, after which we destroyed the chain on the bonfire.

For once God had our attention for more than just a couple of hours. I believe that all of us were challenged by the retreat to recognise the things that bind us and commit them to Jesus. We finished with the wonderful testimony of the baptisms of two men, Koichi and Kenji (names changed), in the lake. Koichi is a recovering

alcoholic who has had a troubled life. When he first came to the Mission Hall and heard the gospel he found he couldn't stop crying. That was in April and he hasn't looked back since. Kenji is a former company employee who

was struggling to find meaning in life. He came to a screening of "The Passion of the Christ" at the Mission Hall and, as he watched the crucifixion scene, the cross took on a personal meaning for him. So we finished the weekend with thanksgiving and celebration!

We praise God for the work he began at this year's retreat. Please pray with us that we would know his complete freedom and victory at the Mission Hall as we try to help each other and to reach others still.

*Dawn Bolton
JCL Mission Partner, Kobe*



Do you know any Japanese struggling in their Christian life whom you want to help? Giving them a good book in their own language could be a real encouragement.

One of the greatest challenges for Japanese Christians is **how to relate to Buddhist family members** and explain their faith sensitively. Author Hirokazu Matsuoka faced this challenge. His father was a Buddhist priest and he trained to become a priest himself, so his family were angry and uncomprehending when he became a Christian.

In "**The Buddhist priest who became a Pastor**" he tells how his search for truth in Buddhism led him surprisingly to Jesus. Writing with understanding and sympathy for Buddhists, he talks about how churches should relate to them and contrasts some key areas of Christian belief with Buddhist belief. We have a fuller English summary of this book available for those who would like it.



Many Japanese Christian women are married to non-Christians - you may well know some of them. Reaching their husbands can seem almost impossible, but if you want to **encourage someone married to a non-Christian** you could consider giving them a copy of "**Rope**" by Ritsuko Nakajima. Ritsuko became a Christian at an early



age then married Tsuneyuki, a well-known professional golfer. She talks of the challenges of being married to a non-Christian and how, as she tended her own relationship with God, the whole family was affected with not only Tsuneyuki but many of his relatives eventually coming to faith. Easy reading, encouraging and enjoyable.

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

A Surprising Invitation

More and more people are going to Bible Colleges to prepare for Christian service. But have you ever thought about going to Bible College in Japan? I hadn't until one day - but I'm getting ahead of myself, let's start at the beginning...

My wife Yuko and I are JCL Network Partners. I spent three years in Japan from 2001-04 as an English teacher, then we returned to the UK to study at Bible College in Scotland, graduating in 2005. We always hoped to go to Japan someday to serve the church there. Meanwhile though, we found jobs in London with a Japanese focus - Yuko at Sumitomo Bank and I in the Japan section of Deloitte - while we prayed about the future.

Then one day in December 2007 the pastor of the church we used to go to in Japan rang. To our surprise, he suggested that the church could sponsor me to attend seminary in Japan! It would mean four years of training: living, studying, praying and sharing our lives with others at the seminary, and I would be the only non-Asian there.

I already spoke Japanese reasonably well from my time in Japan, but there were other hurdles - an interview and acceptance by both the seminary and the denomination. But from the start we both felt this could be right for us.

And here we are now at the Japan Bible Seminary in the beautiful hills west of Tokyo! Being the only western student means daily linguistic and cultural challenges for me - some of these are fun, but some are frustrating. Everything at seminary is done together by the students.



Seminary students letting their hair down at Christmas

This includes cleaning, decorating and maintenance, gardening, and even aerobics! I have been given responsibility for helping to run the library - not always easy when I can't read the titles of some of the books.



Richard, Yuko and Kazuma

Even so, God is faithful, and he gives us everything we need to keep going. It's a privilege to be able to study - and face practical ministry situations - in a completely Japanese context, and I believe God is preparing us for our future work through this training.

On Sundays we worship at Oppama Bible Church (our sponsor church) in Yokosuka, more than two hours' drive from where we live. There are opportunities to preach, teach the Bible, lead children's outreach and put classroom



Richard with the children's camp group

theory into practice. I also help with street evangelism outside the local station. This summer, I led a team from the seminary taking a group of primary-age children on a Christian camp. This gave me a chance to see ministry in a different, rural part of Japan. Through playing, talking and praying with the children, many of whom came from broken homes, I felt

something of the burden the Lord must have for hurting young people in this country.

As for Yuko, being a full-time mother to our son Kazuma (2) and getting involved in outreach to the local community keep her busy. She is thankful for these years of preparation though as ministry in Japan can be stressful work with pastors' wives just as involved as pastors. The friendships we're building at seminary will stand us in good stead in the future as well. And for now it's great to bring up our son in a Christian environment.

We are members of one of Japan's largest evangelical denominations - the Evangelical Alliance Church. When I graduate, I hope to become the first non-Asian to be ordained as a pastor in that denomination. Where in Japan we will end up only God knows!

So, if anyone ever presents you with an unexpected invitation to go to Japan don't rule anything out. Maybe God wants to prepare you for service here - among the Japanese.

*Richard Brash
JCL Network Partner, Tokyo*

From Learning to Leading

A group of Japanese women gathers at church for their regular Japanese Bible study. Their children go off to play with friends in the crèche as the group settles down to read the next section of the letter to Titus. Are we in Tokyo? Osaka? No, this is Sevenoaks, a small town of around 18,000 in Kent. The women are joining a regular Bible study meeting at a local church. Their leader, Keiko Honda, became a Christian in this country four years ago. Whilst the other small groups there discuss their passage in English, Keiko's group does so in Japanese. We asked her how the group came about and here's her story:

It's twelve years now since I moved to Sevenoaks. My son was in kindergarten when I came here, and now he's at secondary school. Sevenoaks has gone from being an unfamiliar town in a foreign country to being home.

When I first moved here I didn't know anyone and my English wasn't up to much. I felt I was fumbling my way through each day, too busy to relax and enjoy anything. But somehow I made some new friends. One of these invited me to Mum & Co, the mothers & toddlers group at a local church. I still remember to this day meeting Sarah, the Minister's wife, there. She was already in her fifties but I would see her riding around hilly Sevenoaks on her bicycle and she would wave at me and call out "Hello Keiko! How are you?" even though we'd only met a few times. I used to wonder where she got her vitality from. She was a modest person but had the ability to encourage others and though she didn't really dress up she had a natural beauty about her. I hadn't had much time for reflection since moving to the UK, but for the first time I began to sense something I wanted.

After that I joined a Christianity Explored course and

read some books by Japanese Christian author Miura Ayako and through these I came to know Jesus and was baptised four years ago. After my baptism I wanted to serve the church in some way and it so happened that Mum & Co needed a new helper so I joined the team. By then Sarah had moved away from Sevenoaks, but it was a joy to be back in the group where I had met her.

After a while word began to get around town that I was helping at Mum & Co and church members and other friends, whenever they met a Japanese woman with a young child, would say "Oh you should try Mum & Co, Keiko's there and you could meet some other mums too". As a result we now have up to ten Japanese coming along!



Keiko (second from right) with some of the Mum & Co group

I knew it would be a challenge for me

Naturally at Mum & Co we tell people about Bible study groups and several of the mothers bravely said they'd like to join in. One of them told me that it took her a long time to prepare for English studies and it was difficult to find time to do so with a small child. I really identified with this and told her that I'd had just the same problem at first. Not knowing the Bible it had taken me a long time to find the right page and I kept coming up against words I didn't know. I'd break out in a cold sweat when asked questions because I didn't understand. It had really taken quite a lot out of me trying to cope with it all in English. Perhaps I spoke a little rashly when I identified so strongly with her because her response was "Well Keiko, if you understand how difficult it is why don't you start a Japanese Bible study group?"!

And that's how our group came about. We've been meeting since January. We study along with the other groups, but in Japanese. I knew that it would be a challenge for me to lead the group and that I would need

help along the way. But I also knew that God had led me to this so I decided to go forward confidently. The church staff have been very helpful, particularly Andrea, the women's work leader. She has spent time in one-to-one Bible study with me and has helped answer any difficult questions that come up in the group.

I find the church sermons each Sunday have helped me prepare the Bible studies. I feel that each week I am being well fed on rich spiritual food and I want to share this with the group. I think the group have picked

The church staff have been very helpful

up on this and perhaps want to move on beyond the milk that I can give and so they have recently started coming along to church on Sunday. Sometimes they get spiritual indigestion (!) and complain, but we are making progress.

My time in Sevenoaks has been full of blessing. I want to share the gift of love and forgiveness that I have received from God with as many people as possible.

*Keiko Honda
JCL Volunteer, Sevenoaks*

Keiko's article is available to read in Japanese on our website - see www.jclglobal.org Perhaps her story could inspire or encourage someone you know to do something similar?

Spread the word – Japan needs you!

How many times have you heard a talk at your church about the need of Japan? What about countries in South-East Asia, Latin America or Africa? It's probably true to say that most of us hear a lot more about those than about Japan. But why is that? After all, it is one of the world's least-reached nations.

One reason is simply a lack of information. For many it comes as a surprise to find out that there is a dire need for mission to Japan – after all it is a developed country. I took up the challenge to tell our church about Japan's need earlier this year by giving a five-minute presentation during the morning service. I shared some statistics on how few Japanese are Christians, highlighted some of the barriers to becoming a Christian and the great opportunity we have to reach Japanese right here in the UK. JCL helped prepare the talk, provided me with slides and sent literature that people could take away after the service. My Minister was supportive and even quoted from a Japanese author in his sermon.

From just a simple presentation we never expected a deluge of interest, but it was surprising how many people

Perhaps God will use you to inspire others

we hadn't expected to be interested at all asked questions or took information away. We also followed up with an article in our church magazine. As a result local Christians, including outside our church, have come to know of Japan's need and of my and my wife's desire to reach Japanese. People have started noticing Japanese around them and pointing them in our direction. We have even discovered there is a Japanese mother in our church's mother & toddler group whom we never knew about! Our church has become more effective in outreach.

If you wish more people shared your love and concern for Japan why not ask JCL for help to do something similar? If you can't give a talk yourself perhaps they can suggest someone who could help. It may be a small work in God's master plan, but who knows where it could lead - perhaps God will use you to inspire a new generation of missionaries!

*Matthew Orchard
Westbury-on-Trym Baptist Church, Bristol*

We would welcome more volunteers to tell their church about Japan – if you think you might be able to help, we'd love to hear from you!

Our church near Bristol ▼



A Passion for Mission - JEB's Legacy to Nagao

My name is Koichi Kawamura and my wife Yasuko and I serve at Nagao Christ Church, in the small town of Nagao in rural Shikoku. Our church is part of the JEB and, like most churches in the group, was established by JEB missionaries (note: for information on JEB and the JCL connection see "JCL - Who are we"? on page 7).

Nagao's prosperity grew from its Buddhist temples and its Buddhist roots remain strong so we believe the church's presence in the town is very important. Our vision is that there will be revival in the area and, with this vision in mind, last year we set up a new church in neighbouring Takamatsu called Hallelujah Church Takamatsu. My daughter Makiko and her husband Teppei lead the church. Teppei is a gifted musician so music plays a big part in church services and in outreach. The church is taking on something of an international character as they now have Brazilians and Philipinos in the congregation. Services are joyful events and include music, dance and lively worship.

This summer Yasuko and I attended the JCL Japan conference for the first time. Coming to the UK was a moving experience given that our church was founded by British missionaries. I thanked God for them as I recalled the love and sacrifice of the many people who worked to bring the gospel to Japan. Now though I believe it's time for us Japanese, with your prayer support, to show the same passion for mission and to build

I believe it's time for us Japanese to show the same passion for mission



Giving and receiving encouragement at the JCL conference

new churches in Japan. We hope that you will continue to pray for us and support us as we do this.

Everyone at the conference was so warm and welcoming that we felt at home. We were able to talk with many people over tea and at mealtimes. From young to old we were struck by how everyone seemed to be hungrily seeking the Lord. We had discussions about all sorts of things, from how to reach Japanese men in the workplace, to the most effective ways of telling others about Jesus, to telling each other how we were going about mission in our respective situations.

One theme that kept coming up was how to help Japanese - be they businessmen, families or students - who had become Christians in the UK and were returning to Japan. Many people said how hard it seemed to be for these people to settle in church in Japan and they thought this was a big problem for the Japanese church. Often it seemed that people found churches in Japan to be lacking in freedom, openness and joy and wished that churches would show more of the true freedom that is found in Christ.

Many talked to us in Japanese or helped with interpretation so the language barrier was no problem. We both felt we learned a lot by coming to the UK and it has really renewed and fuelled our desire for mission. We look forward to working with you for the expansion of God's kingdom - and if you are ever in Nagao you're always welcome at Nagao Christ Church!

*Koichi Kawamura
Pastor, Nagao Christ Church*



Crowning the new church in Takamatsu

What's new?

Japan's new government Please pray for the new government of Mr Yukio Hatoyama following the landslide victory of his Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). There had been increasing disillusionment with the political system and with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which had enjoyed over five decades of virtually unbroken power. The vote expressed hope for change rather than hope in the DPJ, who have responded with ambitious plans for re-structuring the political system. Pray for positive changes that will benefit the people of Japan and lead to more fertile soil for the gospel.

European Japanese Youth Retreat Edinburgh 19-21 March 2010. Over the past five years, the retreat has established itself as an uplifting and fun event for young Japanese in Europe. Along with other Japanese leaders, JCL's Yuki Williams is again helping to organise next



year's retreat. Do you know of young Japanese who might benefit? Get in touch and we'll supply details for you to pass on.

All Nations Returnee Conference Saitama 19-22 March 2010. This conference is aimed at helping Japanese who became Christians whilst overseas. Over 400 participated this year in the first such event. It was a roaring success with a tremendous atmosphere and opportunities to connect with others from the same part of Japan and to re-connect with old friends. Know any "returnees" in Japan who might benefit next year? Ask us for details.

Could you help? Do you long to see more Japanese come to Christ? Could you help make that a reality by giving regularly? Outreach work through JCL needs more people like you committed to giving for work to continue. Could you help? Please use the enclosed response form or contact us.



Movements Two JCL Partners have recently moved from the UK to Japan. *Yoshiko Kojima* is back in Kobe with her daughter Mami after nearly seven years leading work among Japanese in Milton Keynes. Please pray for Yoshiko's health, the main reason for her return at this time, and for Mami, applying to a Kobe university for a course in translation and interpreting. *Timothy Williams* is now in Hiratsuka, south of Tokyo, where he is studying at Bible College while integrating with his new church, where he hopes to help develop the young people's work. Pray for his quick adjustment and for good relationships that will be key to his effectiveness.

Date for your Diary 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 is 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 JCL conferences at www.jclglobal.org/news/conference/

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JCL – Who are we?

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

Calligraphy, Cookery, Cherry Blossom and Children's Groups - reaching the Japanese Community in Edinburgh

You might remember reading about the start of a Japanese church in Edinburgh in the Spring 2008 edition of JCL News. It's hard to believe, but the church celebrated its second anniversary in September and has become well known locally. But meeting together on Sunday is only one way the church connects with Japanese in the city, as Yuki Williams tells us.

It's amazing how many people in Edinburgh have connections with Japan or know Japanese people. Take Stephen for example, who lived in Japan for six years. He comes to the Japanese church and translates the sermon from Japanese to English so that any non-Japanese there can understand. Or Heidi - a teacher who often brings Japanese students along to church services and events. Then there's Jun, from Hong Kong, who studied at Belfast Bible College and now wants to reach other East Asians for Jesus. He also invites Japanese students along. Sam, who is Japanese, plays the guitar for us, whilst another Stephen plays the piano. The church is a real joint effort.



The church often meets in people's homes for fellowship

As you can tell, the contribution made by other believers is really important to us. We want to make as many local Christians as possible aware of the need of Japan so we hold "Japanese Experience" events every few months at local churches, talking about Japan and having fun with origami, calligraphy and enjoying Japanese food. The response has been good and through these evenings I've got to know more local Christians. Just recently the pastor of one church had two Japanese join an Alpha course and he sent them along to our church so they could hear about Jesus in Japanese.

When it comes to getting to know more Japanese we've found that mid-week activities are a great way. The mothers & toddlers group is a good example. Around

It's the chance to be able to gather and speak Japanese that draws them

twelve Japanese mums come and we meet twice a month. We have Japanese toys and books for the children whilst the adults practise calligraphy and origami. As much as anything I think for many of these women, who are married to non-Japanese, it's the chance to be able to gather and speak Japanese that draws them. Some of them struggle with cultural issues and may be lonely. Gradually they have begun to share their problems with me.

As we have got to know each other some of them have started to come to other church events, such as the monthly Korean cookery class. A group also came along to several afternoons of entertainment we ran at the Faith Mission café during August, culminating

Baptism was not an easy decision - there was family opposition

in an evening on the theme of "What do Christians Believe?", when the gospel was explained in Japanese. Please do pray for these women, and for me as I get to know them and try to help them.

I must tell you about our young adults group too. This meets for social events once a month. They have been on walks, outings, held a cherry blossom party and a Korean barbeque. As well as the young people at our church a number of other young Japanese come to this so it's a great way to get to know more people. Then there's the Japanese Bible study group which continues to meet each Friday, and our weekly Japanese language class, to which some of the husbands of the women from the mothers & toddlers group come. Who would have thought that Japanese outreach in Edinburgh could be so busy!

The most wonderful events we have celebrated to date though have to be the three baptisms we've had in the last year. Yumi was baptised last August, Kohei's was one of three baptisms in the last year

last September and Hisae just recently. All three of them come from non-Christian families and baptism was not an easy decision as in some cases there was family opposition.

Please do pray for them and their families. Pray too for many others to follow them and commit their lives to God here in Edinburgh!



Yuki Williams
JCL Mission Partner, Edinburgh