

# An Adventure Across the Seas



*Back in home waters*

**For much of our 110-year history we have been keen to reach Japanese everywhere, not just in Japan. Those who live overseas and then move back to Japan, often known as returnees, are the focus of this issue.**

Did you know that around a quarter of a million Japanese move abroad each year to work or to study? And did you know that they are much more likely to hear and respond to the Gospel during this time? In fact, it is estimated that up to half of Japanese who become Christians do so whilst overseas.

For many Japanese living overseas is an experience marked by newfound freedoms. With fewer pressures to conform, they often find it easier to express their opinions and emotions. They may have more time to think and to try new things in a culture which places greater emphasis on relaxation and individuality. Away from social and religious obligations, it can be less daunting to go to church and explore Christianity.

For others, life overseas can be stressful and lonely. Yet because of this they may be more open to joining church groups, such as mothers and toddlers groups, Bible studies

or social events. A loving church community can be a place where they feel welcomed and supported, especially if other Japanese are there.

## Returning is Not Plain Sailing

Moving back presents complex challenges for all returnees, and even more so if their identity and outlook has shifted while away. Back home in an intentionally homogeneous culture they may be treated as “foreignised” or no longer “pure” Japanese.

Shrine visits, prayers and offerings are seen as a normal part of being Japanese, and it is normal to live with the ambiguity of following religious traditions without knowing why. Becoming a Christian can be seen as a betrayal and it can feel very difficult for Christians to talk about their faith. Friends, co-workers

## Special Edition A focus on Returnees

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and family probably cannot understand the change, and parents may oppose a new believer's faith because it means they can no longer take part in family rituals.

Another big challenge is time, especially for men. With very long working hours and other social commitments it can be almost impossible to find time to attend church or to reflect on life. As one man said to me, "I like living in Tokyo because I don't have time to think about philosophy and religion. No-one talks about these things."

### Sink or Swim?

Sadly, these challenges can be compounded when a returning Christian tries to find a church. For example they may find that no-one talks to them when they go to church since talking to strangers is unusual in Japan, even for Christians.

Many Japanese churches are very traditional and pastor-focused, yet the returnee may have different expectations of what church should be like. If they return eager to serve, but find that there is no place for them to contribute, they can feel discouraged and even stop going to church completely.

### Helping to Turn the Tide

The picture is not all bleak. The challenges are real, but

opportunities to support and equip returnees are growing. Finding a church where new Christians can feel at home is key. Churches do exist where pastors are working to foster healthy, outward-looking Bible-based communities, and there can be much mutual encouragement and support when returnees join this kind of church.

House churches, international churches and other kinds of small fellowship groups can often be better suited to their initial situation than traditional church models. Even if there are no known healthy options in a particular area, it is possible to enjoy some form of Christian fellowship via other means such as Skype.

One of JCL's chief goals is to help new Japanese believers (and those interested in Christianity) who return to Japan from overseas. That process can begin from the first day that any of us makes a new Japanese friend, and extends to networking with Christians in Japan. Read on as we consider how to understand and support returnees, wherever we are.

opportunities and ministries to support and equip returnees are growing

*Dave Skipper*

*JCL Network Partner, Tokyo*

## What Can I Do?

**Do you have a Japanese friend who has become a Christian or expressed interest in the Christian faith? How can you help them transition back to Japan?**

● **Be a good friend** - Show hospitality in your home; this is unusual in Japan and will be deeply appreciated. Meet up to do something fun together. Spend time with them and be a good listener. Invite them to a church service, one-to-one or group Bible study, or into other settings where they can meet Christians. Give them something appropriate\* to read in Japanese.

● **Encourage and disciple them in their Christian life** - Often Japanese will take a long time studying before deciding to become a Christian. Help your friend to understand that this is not the end of a process but the start of a journey in discipleship, and that it can be difficult. Encourage them to value fellowship with other believers and to be active members of their church.

● **Discuss what it will mean to go back to Japan** - What are their expectations, positive and negative? How will they cope with pressure from family and peer-groups? Where will they find support and encouragement to grow in their faith? Discuss the differences between the culture (including church culture) they're experiencing abroad and Japanese culture.

● **Work very hard to link them up with Christians in Japan** - Start thinking about this from day one. Get help\* identifying a Christian in Japan near to where they'll be

returning, and start a three-way e-mail friendship as soon as possible. Relationships and trust are very important for Japanese - they are far more likely to visit and commit to a church or fellowship if a warm personal connection has already been developed.

● **After they return to Japan** - Keep in touch regularly by email or Skype. Visiting your friend would be a huge blessing. Suggest or send good Christian literature\*. Ask how their life as a Christian is going and whether they have found good fellowship. Through continuing to befriend and encourage you can help them grow despite any opposition or discouragement.



● **Pray** - Pray for God to keep them rooted in him, in his grace and in the Bible. Pray for wisdom, perseverance, boldness and peace. Pray that your friend will play a part in bringing lasting hope and change to Japan (see page 8). If you don't have any Japanese friends you can still make a difference: use the articles and testimonies in this issue to inspire you to pray.

● **Take the initiative** - Don't assume someone else will help. **It may be your friendship and support that makes all the difference.**

\* If you have any questions or need some advice please don't hesitate to contact us at JCL by phone, e-mail or via our website (details on page 7). We stock books, Bible studies and other resources in Japanese and bilingual English/Japanese (check our website) and can help with appropriate recommendations. We'd also love to help you link your friend with Christians in Japan.

# What do They Say?

There is no better way to gain a deeper understanding of returnees than to let them speak for themselves. On the next three pages we have a selection of observations and reflections from Japanese who became Christians while overseas. As you read the quotes on this page and the questionnaires on pages 4-5, why not pray for these individuals and for others who are in similar situations? Remember, too, that for every returnee who continues in their faith, many others struggle to keep going or give up altogether . . .

“One day I was asked to join a students’ Bible study. At the end of study I was asked to pray. Pray?! Oh no, I can’t pray in Japanese. . . I’ve never done that. . . So the leader said I could pray in English! Ok, so I did it in English. They were just amazed and enjoyed hearing my English prayer even though they couldn’t understand what I was praying! Obviously they just enjoyed the sounds!”

*“I just wanted to let you know that I have been keeping my faith in God and attending a church here . . . not only that, but I have just recently started talking to God.”*

*“Thank you very much for the list of churches for me. It is really great, because the church I chose to go is one on the list! I am really happy with them and started making really good relationships with them already. I am lucky to be in this church which has a big heart! They really accept me as I am!”*

*“I was finally able to settle in a church nearby and have been attending the services regularly. I still have issues with my family about my faith, and I must be discrete when leaving home for attending services, but I am much happier now.”*

*“The best way to help your Japanese friends is to spend time together and pray together, and after they return home to keep in touch and keep them up-to-date.”*

*“I often miss the time in the UK where we had deep fellowship, so being able to attend a Bible study with other returnees once a month is a great encouragement for me. We are able to share about our experiences and our various needs. Because of this I am able to overcome every month.”*

“After returning to Japan, I have kept my faith through the support of Christian friends. From them I always learn how Jesus supports them, and this helps me see how Jesus also supports me. To tell the truth, it’s sometimes difficult to follow Jesus, because sometimes I don’t understand why he gives me such hard situations.”

*“I often have a lot of events to attend to on Sunday so I am unable to go to church. Unless there are other Christians around, it is very difficult to speak about God.”*

*“Most of the church members are extremely busy so they don’t have much time to meet for prayer or Bible study.”*

*“I felt that the church I visited was stiff and formal! And too particular about rules!”*

*“The memories I made with my host family overseas and Bible verses I received from friends in the church there have helped me to continue following Jesus after I returned to Japan.”*

*“As time went by the people at church started to demand a lot from me and criticised my way of living, so I gave up going there. Now I am looking for a church again, but so far I cannot find one that suits me. But I never forget what God did for me. I thank God every moment of my life.”*

*“When I returned I felt that people at church were rather gloomy, but now I feel that way too. I find it stressful to adapt my faith to that of the church.”*

*“On Sundays I watch church services live on the internet so I am able to hear sermons at home. It’s great for people like me who can’t physically attend church.”*

*“It has become abundantly clear that it is difficult to openly practice Christianity whilst living with my family. At the moment, I am using various devotional materials to keep me refreshed and staying on course.”*

## Profile: Kazue Evans, employee

**Kazue studied in the UK for one year, returning to Japan in 2009. She now lives in Osaka and works in Kobe.**

"I go to an international church called Jesus Lifehouse Osaka, where I got baptised. I heard about Jesus for the first time when I was in the UK. My friends kept telling me about Jesus and were so patient with me although I didn't quite respond at the time. However, a seed was surely sown into my heart, and I'm so thankful to my friends who took me to church and kept on encouraging me. My life turned around since then! Now I'm married to my amazing husband and we go to church together every week. I can't wait to see more Japanese young people getting to know Jesus!"

**JCL: What did you like about returning to Japan?**

**Kazue:** The best thing that happened to me since I came back to Japan was that I found such a brilliant church in Osaka, where I am serving. I am so excited that lots of young Japanese people are getting to know Jesus and are having their lives changed by him.

**JCL: What were some of the toughest things for you when you returned to Japan?**

**Kazue:** It took a while to find a church where I could feel at home.



**JCL: What were your impressions when you first went to church after returning?**

**Kazue:** The people at the first church I visited were much older than me, and no-one talked to me after the service. I found the church I currently go to on the internet, and I loved it from the moment I first stepped into the church!

**JCL: What things most helped you to continue following Christ after you returned to Japan?**

**Kazue:** Going to church every Sunday, joining a Lifegroup and hanging out with my friends.

**JCL: What are the best ways that people overseas can help their Japanese friends before they return home?**

**Kazue:** Invite them to church. Invite them to any fun events. Invite them to everything! That's what my friends in the UK did and it really helped me.

**JCL: ... and after they return home?**

**Kazue:** Keep in touch with them even if they haven't been to church. One day they might go if you keep encouraging them.

**JCL: What are the best ways that Christians in Japan can help new Christians who have returned from overseas?**

**Kazue:** Invite them to church! They are looking for communities where they can belong.

## Profile: Rika Takahashi, nurse

**Rika studied at university in the UK, returning to Japan in 2010. She now lives in Kitakami city, Iwate prefecture.**

"After experiencing the March 2011 earthquake my faith was challenged and I seriously thought about giving up my faith. Seeing the hell-like aftermath, I cried out to God, "Why did you not stop the tsunami? This is too much!" I was so upset that I threw my Bible against the wall and couldn't read it or pray to God. But thanks to many prayers from Christians, I was able to take the Bible in my hand and read it again. I have made the decision to get baptised during this year's Christmas service. My family are still against my faith, but I have made the decision never to separate from Jesus."

**JCL: What did you like about returning to Japan?**

**Rika:** Being able to meet my family and friends, eating Japanese food and speaking Japanese.

**JCL: What were some of the toughest things for you when you returned to Japan?**

**Rika:** Looking for a church. I experienced some culture shock and felt homesick for the UK for about six months. I was busy with work all the time.

**JCL: What were your impressions when you first went to church after returning?**

**Rika:** I felt that it was stiff and formal, with too much emphasis on rules! Also, I had a hurtful experience the first time I went to church in Japan, after which I felt like I never wanted to go to church again.



**JCL: What things most helped you to continue following Christ after you returned to Japan?**

**Rika:** Christian friends I made while in UK supported me by email and telephone when I was feeling down. I learnt about the church situation in Japan and that helped me to overcome my aversion to church here.

**JCL: ... and what things made it difficult?**

**Rika:** It was hard for me to continue going to church as a seeker while my family were against my faith. I didn't hide from my family that I was going to church, but I didn't know how to act around New Year, funerals and *Obon* (traditional Japanese festival to honour the spirits of one's ancestors).

**JCL: What are the best ways that people overseas can help their Japanese friends before they return home?**

**Rika:** Accept them warmly. Many of them will be lonely from living in a foreign country. Also, take a lot of time when ministering to them.

**JCL: ... and after they return home?**

**Rika:** I often thought about giving up my Christian faith, but during those times I received frequent phone calls and emails and was able to think twice about giving up.

**JCL: What are the best ways that Christians in Japan can help new Christians who have returned from overseas?**

**Rika:** To understand the differences between churches abroad and churches in Japan. To not think that it is a necessity to get used to Japanese churches. For them to warmly welcome people.

## Profile: Yumiko Mitsumizo, will be a student at theological school

**Yumiko spent two years in the UK, returning to Japan in 2008. She currently lives in Sasebo, a rural town in Nagasaki prefecture.**

"I think I must have had many difficulties since coming back to Japan, but the more I understand God's love the less my difficulties and worries have become. I have had such great joy and peace since I changed my first priority from worldly things to the Lord! God made me realise how many Christians have been praying for my faith. I know I have been supported by godly Christians' love through their faithful prayer and many e-mails, letters and gifts. All of these have strengthened my weak faith."

**JCL: What did you like about returning to Japan?**

**Yumiko:** Being able to see my parents, relatives, friends and former students. Belonging to a church and meeting godly people there.

**JCL: What were some of the toughest things for you when you returned to Japan?**

**Yumiko:** Stopping visiting my mother's remains at the temple. I had been going there regularly for more than 20 years. Refusing to sit and pray in front of the family altar at gatherings such as *Obon* or New Year. I couldn't talk freely about what I believe in the class at the state school where I worked.

**JCL: What were your impressions when you first went to**

## Profile: Shinichi Shibata, scholar

**Shinichi worked as a businessman for many years but has just embarked on a second career in academia. His wife has been a Christian for a long time, but he became a Christian a few years ago in London.**

"I started attending a Japanese service in the church my wife had been attending (in Tokyo). I was warmly accepted there, but somehow I couldn't get used to the style of service. Six months later, I started attending an English Bible Class organised by the same church, where I felt much more comfortable. For a while, my wife attended the Japanese service and I attended the English service, but we decided to become members together in the English congregation. We are now actively involved in church activities and we feel blessed. In addition, we maintain a very good relationship with the members of the Japanese congregation."

**JCL: What did you like about returning to Japan?**

**Shinichi:** Meeting old friends, eating good food and speaking in my native language.

**JCL: What were some of the toughest things for you when you returned to Japan?**

**Shinichi:** Lack of work-life balance because of long working hours and long inefficient meetings. Frequent earthquakes and typhoons.

**church after returning?**

**Yumiko:** They were very friendly and welcoming to me.

**JCL: What things most helped you to continue following Christ after you returned to Japan?**

**Yumiko:** Receiving e-mails and letters from the person who guided me to the Lord in England. Meeting faithful Christians in Japan, reading the Bible and listening to Christian radio programmes on FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Company).

**JCL: ... and what things made it difficult?**

**Yumiko:** Being so busy with work ate up my time and energy for following Christ, and working on Sundays made it impossible to attend church.

**JCL: What are the best ways that people overseas can help their Japanese friends before they return home?**

**Yumiko:** Pray to the Lord for them. Meet up and chat with them regularly. Ask about their worries and give them advice.

**JCL: ... and after they return home?**

**Yumiko:** Pray to the Lord for them. Send e-mails and have regular contact.

**JCL: What are the best ways that Christians in Japan can help new Christians who have returned from overseas?**

**Yumiko:** Pray to the Lord about how to support or help them. Talk regularly if possible about each other's faith or difficulties. Exchange e-mails.



**JCL: What were your impressions when you first went to church after returning?**

**Shinichi:** There was a warm atmosphere.

**JCL: What things most helped you to continue following Christ after you returned to Japan?**

**Shinichi:** I appreciated the casual atmosphere in the English congregation.

**JCL: ... and what things made it difficult?**

**Shinichi:** Due to other engagements it was not possible to go to church every Sunday.

**JCL: What are the best ways that people overseas can help their Japanese friends before they return home?**

**Shinichi:** Introduce them to a church that will suit them well in the area where they will move back to in Japan.

**JCL: ... and after they return home?**

**Shinichi:** Follow up whether they have settled well into the church they were introduced to.

**JCL: What are the best ways that Christians in Japan can help new Christians who have returned from overseas?**

**Shinichi:** Listen to new Christians to find out how they feel. Be generous in trying out new ideas. Hold a session for existing church members about understanding and dealing with returnees.



# JCFN - Helping Returnees Flourish

**“God is at work among Japanese.” This has been true throughout history. “Japan’s Christian population is less than 1%.” This too has been true for many years. However, in recent times the door has been opened wide for Japanese to be reached with the gospel outside Japan.**

JCFN, **Japanese Christian Fellowship Network**, was begun in 1990 by a handful of students who became Christians while studying in the US and who shared the same concerns about returning to Japan.

God sends many Japanese to different parts of the world for study, work, marriage or travel. However, the real reason he sends them is to work in their hearts. For various reasons, Japanese outside Japan are 30 times more likely to respond to the gospel than those in Japan. Those that do will return as disciples of Jesus Christ to share the Good News with their family and friends. In other words, they are sent back as well-equipped missionaries to their communities. They already know the language and culture and have relationships with people there.

We are so grateful for non-Japanese people abroad who are reaching out to Japanese, introducing Christ to them, discipling them and sending them back to Japan. I can’t stress enough how effective this is.

However, there is another important side to this ministry. If there is no follow-up when new believers return home, then 70-80% of them stop going to church within 2-3 years. Ministry to overseas Japanese is effective but we all need to keep in mind the importance of their return. Preparation for this should begin long before people actually return. In fact, it begins on the first day they’re met. In other words, it is YOU who prepare them!

You can take them to a Japanese church in your area if there is one, or introduce them to Japanese Christians. JCFN can help you locate them. Introducing them to Christians and churches back in Japan is another thing we can do. Best of all, teach them how to walk as disciples in Japan. There is a Bible study guide called “Returnee Workbook” which deals with many important issues about

transition. Please download this from our website and use it. I could write many pages on practical things to do before their return, but you can read more on the website [www.jcfn.org](http://www.jcfn.org), or you can contact JCFN directly at [ushq@jcfn.org](mailto:ushq@jcfn.org).

Those who continue to grow as believers in Japan are those who know how to develop their relationship with God. They understand the importance of the body of Christ. They know how to relate with God through prayer and the scriptures. These basic but important aspects of discipleship are keys to their walk once they return. We urge you to mentor or disciple them one-to-one if possible. We realise your time with them is limited, but for them to know how to read the Bible on their own and to share Christ with others is vital. When the time comes to return, even for the holidays, we are here for you to help your Japanese friends. We need to work together so that they won’t just survive but thrive as followers of Christ in Japan.

In Japan, we are ready to welcome them. They can attend small groups, regional meetings, seminars and conferences where they can not only build a network with other believers, but also be disciplined by God. We are also starting virtual small groups using Skype so that those in rural areas can participate. If there is no small group in the area, we will start one with them.

Please do not be afraid to share Christ with Japanese. Your friendship and genuine love for God and for them will make a lifelong impact. Please also remember that one day they will return to Japan. Please contact us so that we can help them find Christian community, church and small groups. We are eager to welcome them back to Japan. They are not alone! It is such a blessing and honour to be able to serve Japanese people across the ocean. God bless you!

*Setsu Shimizu  
International Director, JCFN*



# What's New?

**Returnee Conference** - As we were compiling this edition of JCL News, staff and volunteers at JCFN (see article opposite) were busy preparing for the third All Nations Returnees Conference for Japanese returnees (ANRC, 22-25 Nov) in Shizuoka prefecture. Pray for lasting fruit in the lives both of returnees and of those concerned to help them grow as disciples of Christ, impacting others and the society around them.

**JCL Mission Partners Stephen & Yuki Williams** are

planning to host a Returnee Retreat at their church in Shigaraki in spring 2013 for those in and around Shiga prefecture. They will be working in this venture with missionaries in the Shiga area from the mission WEC International. Please pray for Stephen & Yuki and the other missionaries as they plan this retreat and that many would come and find it a real help and stimulus to their faith.



**Rev. Dr. Denis Applebee** - If you knew our dear brother Denis you will be sad to know that he passed away on 16th September this year, aged 84, having been diagnosed with a brain tumour some months earlier. Denis always conveyed a picture of serene joy in our Lord and, while being sad at our loss, we can also rejoice at the unimaginable joy he will know in the presence of the master whom he loved and served so faithfully over many decades.



Denis was JEB/JCL Chairman from January 1997 to summer 1999, wisely and graciously overseeing a crucial period of transformation. He continued as a JCL Council member until 2004, and spoke at many JEB/JCL conferences until relatively recently. Denis served full-time for many years with World Gospel Mission (WGM) as a Missionary Pastor until his retirement in 1996. He also served as chairman of WGM UK for 16 years before stepping down from that role in 2004.

**Japan Conferences in the UK** - we had a great

weekend conference in September in the beautiful English Peak District with Jonathan and Rie Wilson of CRASH Japan. Plans for 2013 and 2014 Japan conferences are under consideration - e-mail us if you'd like to make sure you receive details.

Having welcomed **Dave Skipper** as a JCL Network Partner nearly three years ago, we are now very happy to welcome Dave as our new magazine editor, operating from Tokyo where he and his wife Heidi are working with the Innovative Ministries Team of Japan Baptist Fellowship. Dave will also handle and edit many of our other communications. Please pray for him in this role as well as for his and Heidi's main ministry of seeking to reach people for Christ through music.



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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](http://www.jclglobal.org)

# Bringers of Hope

**Let me tell you about the kinds of things experimental musicians talk to me about as I hang out with them in various music bars in downtown Tokyo . . .**

These guys are very much outside the mainstream. The community they find in music is a kind of safe haven where they can be themselves. They talk about the challenges and problems in their culture, and wish things were different. They want to feel free to be themselves, to be free from the stresses of overwork and other cultural pressures. They are dissatisfied with the status quo and are searching for meaning and identity.

I believe that these guys represent a far larger proportion of the population. They can say what many truly feel but aren't say. It seems to me that everyone knows what is wrong, and everyone wants it to change. But it is far too risky to stick out and say this publicly. It's almost as if a cultural shift is ready to happen but it needs everyone to decide spontaneously to make that shift together.

One of my friends said to me, "I want to talk to foreign people, to know their opinions on everything. I want to discover things that are unknown to me. I don't want to keep listening to the same Japanese opinions."

This saddened me because he assumes that fresh ideas must come from outsiders. I want him to see that he doesn't need to escape his own culture in order to experience revelation and new life. However, I was also excited because his comments reveal the tremendous opportunities to share the gospel with people who are hungry, even if they don't know for what.

All this gives me hope that there is a ripe harvest in Japan, especially among the younger generation.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." There are countless harvest fields, or subcultures, and every one of them needs Christians to be a part of their community, to love them and befriend them in the name of Jesus.

## **A Different Kind of Missionary?**

**Japanese Christian returnees are uniquely equipped to be a powerful, vibrant and relevant witness to their fellow Japanese.**

Selvan Anketell (JCL Director) wrote to me recently: "I experienced a transformational moment during the 2009 All Nations Returnee Conference, the first ever such conference in Japan. Seeing the hundreds gathered, and the enthusiasm so many of them had for the Lord, I realised they could be channels of tremendous spiritual blessing."

So much in the culture here has to do with whether one is an 'insider' or 'outsider' in any given context. Being

cultural insiders is one advantage that returnees have. They have the potential to help dispel the myth that Christianity is a foreign religion by modelling what it means to be a culturally-relevant Japanese Christian.

Returnees now also have this intriguing 'foreigner' dimension. Often this is viewed as a problem and a disadvantage for them, and it can be a source of outright opposition, even from pastors and parents. Returnees will still need much support in this area. Nevertheless, there is

also huge potential for positive influence to come from this individual cultural shift, a mini-reflector of the overall cultural shift that many actually want.

Returnees' exposure to a different kind of church culture while overseas can also be a great blessing and benefit to local churches who want change. A passion for serving God outside the church walls can re-energise

discipleship, outreach and church growth.

Christians are called to influence their culture and society at all levels and in all spheres of life and work. Returnees are more numerous than missionaries and are strategically placed across a far wider cross-section of society with all kinds of jobs and responsibilities. They can make an impact wherever they are.

## **Let's Pray and Encourage!**

**If 'normal' missionaries need vigorous prayer support and personal encouragement, then undoubtedly returnees need the same (see also page 2). Pray that God will provide them with all the fellowship, support and wisdom they need to persevere as Jesus' disciples.**

Encourage returnees to embrace all that is positive in their Japanese heritage while taking opportunities to share their overseas experiences sensitively. Encourage them to be confident in God's grace and in their eternal identity as children of God. Encourage returnees to pursue their particular gifts and passions for God's kingdom, knowing that God will honour them as they seek to represent Christ every day. Encourage them that they really CAN make a big difference!

Some returnees will be called to be pastors or church workers, but most will be called to many other different responsibilities and careers. We need to encourage them without placing a burden of expectation on them: they can relax and be themselves!

I am full of hope for Japan because Jesus is the King of kings. People from every tribe and tongue will bow down before him. He is waiting patiently for the salvation of many. His is the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

*Dave Skipper  
JCL Network Partner, Tokyo*

