

## A Home Away From Home

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

**John 13:35**

It is widely said that the probability of Japanese people becoming Christians outside Japan is 30 times greater than if they remain in Japan. In this issue we feature stories of two Japanese churches planted in the UK: One freshly planted, and another which turned 10 years old this year.

First, I interview Pastor **Aogu Tateyama**, who along with his wife Chisato lead Ealing Christian Centre Japanese Church (ECCJ) in West London. Ealing Christian Centre is an Elim church, which in addition to its own congregation, hosts both

a Polish and a Japanese church. ECCJ recently celebrated its 10th anniversary, and Pastor Aogu (who also sits on the JCL council) talks about the past and present, as well as sharing his vision for the future of the church with us.

**Joe Townsend,**  
JCL Communications Editor

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### What is the vision for the church?

愛し合う教会・愛を伝える教会

To be a church that loves one another and proclaims love!

### What led you to ministry, and to church planting in the UK?

We attended Bible college in the UK from 2004 to 2008. Our original motivation for studying there was not actually for ministry, but as a means to improve our English! During our time there many Japanese students came to the Bible college's language school and were saved through its ministry. Through this we became very aware of the increased likelihood of Japanese people becoming Christians when living abroad.

*“The biggest challenge we face emotionally, spiritually and practically is when people return to Japan”.*

In 2007, after getting to know the situations of Japanese churches in the UK and the EU, I spent a month at a Japanese church in California. What I learnt was the differences in the history of overseas Japanese churches. In addition to the differences in

immigration history and culture between the USA and the UK, there are many more Japanese churches in the USA (especially California) than in the UK and EU and therefore more opportunities for reaching out to people. At the time, there were not many Japanese churches and not much Japanese ministry in London, where there is a Japanese population of about 50,000. I simply thought that we needed more opportunities to reach out to Japanese in London.



Pastor Aogu Tateyama (left), his wife Chisato (right), daughter Aoi and son Tsukasa



Members of ECCJ gather to celebrate its 10th anniversary

To be honest, the words “church planting” did not come to mind at the time, but my wife Chisato and I just knew that we wanted to do Japanese ministry in London.

## Why Ealing?

We researched where Japanese people were in London and several places came up. Ealing (in particular the Acton area) was one of the places in that list. The area is particularly popular with Japanese people because of the Japanese school in Acton. This attracts families who move to the UK, and this then attracts the Japanese community as a whole.



*Ealing Christian Centre, a repurposed theatre opposite Northfields underground station*

## Why the partnership with ECC?

From the beginning, I believed (and it was part of our strategy) that partnership with a local church was key for starting and continuing a Japanese church in London. I was meeting pastors and churches from all the areas on our list, asking if they would

partner with us in Japanese ministry. After I spoke with a number of pastors and churches (and did not have much success), Pastor Richard from ECC decided to help us, and our partnership with ECC began.

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*“The difficulties that Japanese people face while living abroad lead them to seek people they can trust or spend time with”*

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Through this partnership I became an official ECC pastor and we gained access to many of the church’s resources. For example, we meet in the main auditorium of the ECC building, a repurposed theatre, and we often have other ECC staff preaching in our bilingual services.

## What challenges were there in starting the church?

Practically, we needed a place to live, money, jobs, a school for our daughter, visas, and almost everything necessary for living in London. All we had at the time was the vision from God to “reach out to Japanese in London”.

However step-by-step God gradually met our every need, showing us each time that we could trust him and that this was what he wanted us to do. One particularly noteworthy example of God's provision in this process was a lady from ECC sharing the love of Christ by opening up her home for us to live in until we found our own place.

## What challenges have there been in the growth of the church?

Looking back over the last ten years, there were many challenges which all churches face at some point.

But a particular challenge for overseas Japanese churches is that people come and go. Many members of the church are not permanent residents of the UK. For example, companies send them for two to five years or students come to study for one to three years. The biggest challenge we face emotionally, spiritually and practically is when people return to Japan.



*Sunday worship at ECCJ is welcoming, contemporary and feels relevant*

Emotionally, it is sad to say “Sayonara”. Spiritually, I know that it is challenging for them to return home, especially for those who come to know Christ in the UK and then return to Japan starting the Christian life there for the first time and needing to find a church. We do as much as we can to prepare them to go back but we know from experience that there is never enough preparation for returnees.

Practically, the number of people attending the church is difficult to sustain, which you can imagine brings many challenges. However, over the past 10 years God has been faithful in providing new members of the church as others move on.

### What kind of people come to ECCJ?

There are many young families and international-marriage families in the area, so we get a lot of those. However we don't only attract people from the immediate west London area, but also from the north and south of London.

### What sort of activities does the church run, both for the members and also for outreach?

On Sundays, in addition to our usual services we occasionally hold special family services and bilingual services (translation via audio devices is available in our normal services, but for bilingual services the sermon itself is in English). During the week we also have cell group meetings at various times and places.

Our outreach activities include English classes, J-Home (our baby and toddler group), men's outreach (a monthly pub trip and occasionally other activities such as go-karting) and various special events.

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“Japanese people tend to want to know why Christians are different and what they believe”.

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### What sort of reasons do people have for coming to ECCJ?

People start coming to the outreach ministries I mentioned above and will often then also start to attend the Sunday service regularly. In general, I think people are looking for a trustworthy Japanese community that feels like a family.



One of ECCJ's regular events: making mochi!

### How do they hear about the church?

After 10 years, word of mouth is the main way I think. People often also find out about us online, e.g. through Facebook or MixB (an online platform providing living information and advertisements for expatriate Japanese in various countries).

### Do you see any trend in what leads seekers to the Gospel?

The difficulties that Japanese people face while living abroad lead them to seek people they can trust or spend time with. When those people are Christian, Japanese people tend to want to know why Christians are different and what they believe.

### Are there any particular stories which would encourage people?

A few years back, one lady joined us for only three months. She attended Sunday services and our Alpha course (which she was not able to finish). She did not have any Christian background but God somehow brought her to us. She went back to Japan without becoming a believer but we introduced her to a church near her home in Japan anyway. When she went back to Japan she went to this church and eventually she became Christian and was baptised!

### What is your (God's!) vision for the church in the future?

Our future vision for the church remains the same: to love one another and to proclaim love! “愛し合う教会・愛を伝える教会” But we also hope that the next generation will carry on loving each other and the community here.

Furthermore, now that over the past 10 years we have had a couple of hundred people already return to Japan, we hope to see something start over there, for example church planting.

We would also like to do Japanese ministry and plant Japanese churches in other EU cities that do not yet have a Japanese church or a Japanese Christian Community.

Ultimately, we want to proclaim the gospel to Japanese people wherever they are, to the ends of the world!



ECCJ's quarterly report, bearing the church's logo

# United in Christ

**In the same year that ECCJ celebrated its 10th anniversary, God led JCL Mission Partners Katsutoshi and Yukiko Shimizu to plant South London Japanese Church in Sutton. Katsutoshi shares the story with us.**

*“Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”*

**Genesis 12:1**

This was the word of God that I had at a New Year worship event before I left to work in the UK in 2010. I became a believer in a Japanese church in Los Angeles and since then had always wanted to serve in ministry among Japanese people living abroad. Although business was the reason for us moving to London, I felt that this was an opportunity given by God and that he had sent us.

After I arrived in London, I was engaged in various kinds of ministry for Japanese people and eventually I decided to dedicate myself to work for the Lord on a full time basis. I returned to Japan, resigned from my company, and started studying at a seminary.

Now I have finished my three-year course and have been sent back to London by Sakae Bible Church (a member of the Japan Evangelical Church Association) as a missionary to the Japanese people here, and also to those elsewhere in the UK and Europe. During my time at the seminary in Japan, some of the people with whom we had shared the gospel in the UK became Christians. I came to share the idea of church planting with those who were serving the ministry, and we decided to establish a Japanese church in south London.

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**“Although the members come from various backgrounds and are all unique, we have started our church with a vision to be united in Christ.”**

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During my time living abroad I became more aware of the many unique differences that individual Christians have and how these differences can make it difficult for the church to be united. Through my various experiences I learned that we must stand firm upon the core evangelical beliefs in order to build a church.

It is much more likely for Japanese people to become Christians while living abroad than at home in Japan. Some say that it is up to thirty times as likely! However, sadly, many of them lose their faith when they return. Although there may be many reasons for this, I think these returnees need proper, Bible-centred discipleship training before they go home. Moved by these circumstances, we came to share in our vision of church planting and established South London Japanese Church at Easter this year.

Now, about 20 people, including children, gather and worship God together. Although the members come from various backgrounds and are all unique, we started our church with the vision of being united in Christ. In this inaugural half-year, we have started to hold regular prayer meetings and Bible studies. We are enjoying communal meals as God’s family by having picnics or barbecues. We are now preparing for various outreach activities but first we want to get into the Japanese

community by building networks among the local Japanese. We plan to host a mothers and toddlers’ group, a porcelain painting class and tea and cake parties, among other things. In particular, Christmas is a great opportunity for evangelism and we have already started to pray about this. Please pray for our work so that many Japanese in this land can come to know our Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

**Katsutoshi Shimizu, JCL Mission Partner**

**If you would like to receive regular prayer updates from the Shimizus, or other JCL partners, please contact us (email [info@jclglobal.org](mailto:info@jclglobal.org) or write to us using the address on page 7).**



*Katsutoshi and his wife Yukiko*



*The congregation at the church’s foundation service*



*Pastoral Ordination and Installation Service*

# The Power of God's Word

*"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation."*

1 Peter 2:2

**Hunger for God's word changes lives. Below is the testimony of Miori, whose first encounter with the Bible filled her with a desire to know God more. It is not merely a testimony of salvation but also a testimony to the power of scripture to draw us in and leave us hungry for more!**

The first time I had any contact with Christianity was when I read the Bible with Richard and Yuko Brash in September 2017. Soon after I came to study in Edinburgh, my English teacher invited me to go on a church walk, and that was when I met Richard and Yuko. They seemed like nice people, and because they were bilingual in English and Japanese, I decided to join a Bible study with them. I'm not from a religious family. Growing up, I never touched or even saw a Bible, and so I had no confidence in the existence of God, let alone about Jesus Christ. However, from the day I first read the Bible, I was fascinated by God's words and I wanted to know his Gospel. Maybe it was just instinctive.

I have always been my grandmother's girl and I was very close to her. But she passed away in the summer of 2016 and so in my sadness I was happy to accept an almighty and loving God. It's not that God was a replacement for my grandmother, but I wanted to know an absolute, everlasting, all-powerful, all-knowing God who loves the world. Also, when I faced the sadness of bereavement, I was comforted by the passage of time and by the people who consoled me. When I learned that both time itself and all the people I love are God's creation, I was grateful for my grandmother and to God for giving all these things.

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**"from the day first read the Bible, I was fascinated by God's words and I wanted to know his Gospel."**

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The Bible is of course full of many words, but when I read in John's gospel 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", I felt the power of God's Word. I thought it was wonderful that I could know about God and what he has done through the Bible. As I continued to participate in Bible studies my understanding of the Bible gradually became deeper. This knowledge of the Bible also led me to the conviction that God exists. As it is written in Matthew 7:7 ("seek and you will find"), when I sought God as an unbeliever, he gave me the opportunity to believe. I'm so grateful.

It was the death of Jesus on the cross that was the most important factor in my coming to faith in Christ. At first, I couldn't understand this at all and I couldn't fathom how Christians could know peace in their hearts from the words "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). In our Bible studies, Richard and Yuko explained this carefully and clearly and I gradually realised that the love of God far exceeded what I had imagined. What a wonderful love it is that God should not overlook all the sin that he is angry about -



Miori Akaeda

sin that must be punished - but that he himself should be willing to receive the punishment for human sin!

There are other reasons why I came to believe in Jesus. One reason was the movie 'The Passion of the Christ' that I watched at Richard and Yuko's place. The movie shows Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, his crucifixion, his death, and his resurrection. Maybe because it was a movie, it was very powerful and quite easy to follow. At the time I watched the movie, I didn't understand exactly how it was related to God's love, and the crucifixion scene was so harrowing that I could hardly watch. Even so, I thought that I shouldn't look away from the death of Jesus because I had learned from the Bible that it was a death for us. I believe in the saying "The punishment fits the crime". So when I saw Jesus suffering so much pain, I felt how great and heavy my own sin was. And just as I felt that I had to look at Jesus' death on the cross, at the same time I thought that I must also confront my own sin.

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**"I gradually realised that the love of God far exceeded what I had imagined."**

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*Miori's Baptism*

Later, I read a poem by Japanese Christian poet Genzo Mizuno (which Richard and Yuko introduced to me) called 'As Much As That'. I felt great sympathy when I read Mizuno's poem, and when I thought of Jesus suffering punishment, pain and death as much as that for me, I felt that I simply had to believe. I understood then also why Jesus had to be a human being, so that he could show us such suffering as God's only Son in a way that the invisible God himself could not.

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*"I thought it was wonderful that I could know about God and what he has done through the Bible."*

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I'm a very sinful person. There was so much sin in me that I was afraid that if my sins were forgiven, there would be nothing of me left. But from the Bible I learned that if all the bad things in me are taken away, that's not the end, because God saves me so that I can go forward in the right direction, knowing that God will lead me. So, I'm full of sin, but I now neither hate myself nor act as if my sin is not a big deal. Instead, I've found peace in my heart from Jesus Christ.

About four months after I started reading the Bible, I also started going to church services, an Alpha course and various other church events. I didn't yet call myself a proper 'believer', so when I introduced myself to new people I told them, "I'm not a Christian, but I read the Bible and I do believe in Jesus".

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*"I now neither hate myself nor act as if my sin is not a big deal. Instead, I've found peace in my heart from Jesus Christ."*

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At the Edinburgh Japanese Church some Christians told me "God is waiting for you", and so I began to wonder why I wasn't a Christian. But I couldn't find a reason. Shortly after that, I knew that I wanted to believe, I wanted to be saved, and I wanted to walk with God forever; so I told Richard and Yuko that I wanted to become a Christian, and we prayed together. I was so happy that I could repent. I am currently going to both an English language church (Chalmers) and a Japanese language church, but to be honest, I can't understand the English sermons because of the language barrier! Even so, in the church there are so many lovely people that I want to keep on coming. Every day I thank the Lord, I trust the Lord, and I want to deepen my faith through the Bible.

**Miori Akaeda**



*Miori with JCL Mission Partner Richard Brash*

## Japan Weekend Conferences

Those of us who gathered for the 2018 summer weekend conference had a special time of fellowship and sharing together and especially hearing from our visiting speaker Makoto Fukuda, from Grace City Church Tokyo. If you are interested in listening to audio recordings of some of the sessions, please drop us a line.



The next Japan Weekend Conference is planned for **19th-21st July 2019**, once again at **All Nations Christian College**, just north of London.

We are delighted that **Pastor Akira Sato of Fukushima First Baptist Church** has accepted our invitation to be our main speaker. You may remember he planned to be here in 2017 but sadly was prevented at the last minute by a serious injury that left him in hospital for some months. We are pleased to say he is now fit and well and keen to give it another go! His church was drastically affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, being the nearest church to the stricken Fukushima nuclear reactor. The church family has an amazing story of how God led them from place to place as refugees and both provided for their needs and led them to a deeper understanding of what it means to be brothers and sisters in Christ in Christian community.

**Pray** for Pastor Akira as he prepares for the conference; for the JCL team organising this weekend; and for others who will serve through leading workshops, playing music, sharing, etc. Finally, please pray for many interested in

Japan to participate. If you are interested and want to be sure of receiving more details when available, be sure to contact us!

## Movements – past and future

JCL Mission Partners **Katsutoshi & Yukiko Shimizu** are now living in Sutton where, together with a core team of friends from their previous assignment in London, they have begun earlier in the year a Japanese fellowship, known as the South London Japanese Christian Church. You can read more on page 4.



Network Partners **Paul & Ruth Cooper** have just returned to the UK after Paul's assignment with a Japanese company in Tokyo. Paul is still with the same

company, back again for a period in their London office where he had worked since graduation. Please pray for them to resettle quickly in the UK as a family and for adjustment also to life with a new member, expected to arrive in January 2019.



Mission Partners **Stephen & Yuki Williams** plan to be back in the UK for a stint of home assignment from the beginning of 2019 and will also be taking time to

consider longer-term plans. Please pray for a good time of refreshment and for God's wisdom as they consider the future.

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Two mission partner couples **Richard & Yuko Brash** and **Tim & Ai Williams** (in Edinburgh and London respectively) are also praying over and working on plans for the future, in particular with a view to returning to Japan during the latter part of 2020. Pray too for them, and also for others



potentially involved in these plans, to know the Lord's mind regarding their next steps, and that he would open the doors of his choice regarding their future service.

## 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)

# Are You Weary?

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

**Matthew 11:28-30**

**This year, JCL Director of Mission Selvan Anketell took a three-month sabbatical to rest, relax and reflect. In our next article he shares a short report of this extended time with the Lord:**

What do you do when you are “weary and heavy laden”? One good thing, in Jesus’ words (Matt 11:28), is to “Come to me ... and I will give you rest ... rest for your souls.” Often there is nothing more refreshing than time spent with the Lord, delighting in his greatness and majesty and hearing his voice as his Spirit applies the scriptures to our hearts. At a different level, another thing that can help us is to take some extended time out from our normal routines.

I was privileged and blessed that circumstances last spring permitted me a three-month sabbatical from most of my regular roles within JCL and I’m also very grateful to our operations director Ian MacLennan for his willingness to cover for me during that period.

This was actually my second sabbatical. The first was rather different - a four-year-long break from my previous oil industry job in order to work with JCL and, as you guessed, I never returned from it! Then it was last year, after 17 years with JCL, that some church friends encouraged me to take a break for refreshment and stimulation, and the JCL Council was quick to support the idea.

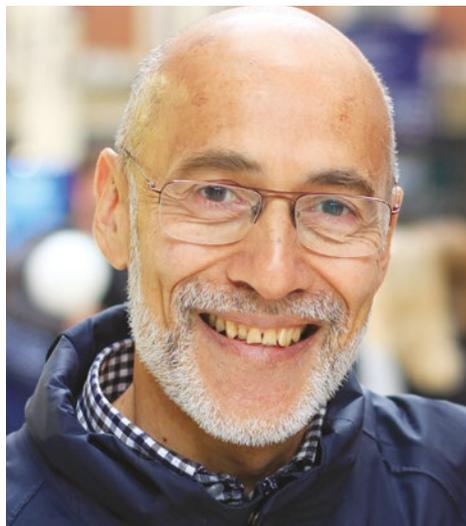
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**“Often there is nothing more refreshing than time spent with the Lord”**

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I took time out from 80% of my regular activities to allow time for extra refreshment and rest, time with various family and old friends, and study. I also stepped-up my level of exercise, covering over 200 miles on foot during May! By the end of the sabbatical I did indeed feel refreshed and eager to continue progressing JCL’s vision to help make a significant difference in the progress of the gospel among the Japanese people over the first half of this century.

The study element of my time out was geared towards this focus in two ways. One was work on the Japanese language, and this is also something I plan to continue in the coming years - the goal being to be better able to communicate with Japanese Christians with whom we hope increasingly to be partnering. The other aspect of study focussed on digging into several of the New Testament letters and also beginning a study of New Testament Greek words that relate to how we as believers



*JCL’s Director of Mission, Selvan Anketell*

engage together in community as the Body of Christ. This too is something I plan to continue, wanting to deepen biblical convictions on core principles in this area that hold for all times and all cultures. Our hope is that, with clear perspectives on these things, we and our Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ can more effectively see the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ advance among the Japanese people.

I would value prayer for God’s wisdom over how I use my time to greatest effect and for understanding and insight from him regarding these core Biblical principles, especially those that are particularly pressing in Japan. I’d also value prayer for us in JCL in developing fruitful relationships and partnerships with a network of Japanese Christians whom we can encourage and support in helping the Japanese church to sharpen its focus on these core indispensable principles, coupled with greater constructive use of the freedoms that the gospel grants us to break free of misconceptions towards what Christian community should look like.

**Selvan Anketell, JCL Director of Mission**

What about you? Are you conscious of a need for refreshment? If that is something you have sensed, is there any action you could take? Perhaps to implement some new routines that build in regular times for refreshment, such as exercise, time with family or friends, or to develop a new or existing interest.

Perhaps it is simply to follow Jesus’ encouraging words to “Come to me ...” and to take some extended time with him one weekend. Or perhaps there might be the opportunity, as there was for me, to agree with those with whom you are connected, to take some time out from your regular routines.

Why not take a moment to reflect on your own situation and on whether there is any action you might take to recharge your batteries for more effective life and service.

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