



Missionary Update

Seima & Naoko Aoyagi

December 2015

Dear Friends and supporters,

Merry Christmas!

It is December 25th, Christmas day in Japan. But Satoki and Akari went to school this morning, and commuting train is pack with men going to work. Yes, Christmas day is a normal working day in Japan.

When I came back to Japan, I missed Christmas experience in States. But this year, I feel different. Last night, at our first Christmas Eve service at Grace Harbor Church, I preached from Luke 2:7-20, the most famous Christmas story in which shepherds meet Jesus.

I preached how the first Christmas was insignificant for people's eyes. It was certainly not a holiday, but a normal working day. People did not know what was happening. The birth of Jesus was not payed attention. Some people even refused to give a room for the pregnant Mary. But that seemingly insignificant event made a drastic impact on the shepherds who met Jesus. It is told that "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20). Even the hard reality of their life did not change much, the Christmas reality brought an unfading joy to them. Now, what did they do the next day? Scripture does not tell, but I assume that next day was the normal work day. They kept watching and feeding the sheep, working hard outside. But I think that their experience was different from yesterday because they saw Jesus. They kept having joy in their heart, in the midst of life difficulty. The authentic Christmas experience, to me, is to taste the Christmas reality even in your normal day, because "the Savior has been born to us; he is Christ the Lord." Merry Christmas to you!

Christmas Sunday and Baptism

We had our first Christmas service since the launching of our weekly worship. It was my humble joy to see 111 people came to our Christmas service and 23 of them were non-Christians. But what made me so excited was that I was able to baptize two wonderful ladies.

Donna answered to the alter call at a gospel music concert 12 years ago. But she was not connected to a church made her faith faded away. After experiencing the great earthquake in 2011, she became afraid how she could protect her kids if there was another earthquake. In searching the peace, she noticed that she should come back to her faith again. Just about the time we started weekly worship service, Donna started to attend our church, and her faith grew from an inch deep to a mile. It was my joy to go through bible study and baptism class with

her and saw her growth. The testimony she gave on that Christmas Sunday encouraged many other non-Christian moms who also are filled with unspoken worry about raising kids.

Miwa first experienced Christian community when she was studying in US at a Christian university. She became interested in and even was wanting to become Christian, but the lightning-bolt experience she was looking for never happened to her when she was in States. As she started to attend out church, she came to understand that how God calls could be different from person to person, and God has been faithfully leading her to the faith even it was gradual process. In her testimony, she was encouraging other non-Christians there to notice a possible slight work of the Holy Spirit calling them to Christian faith.

I want to let you who has been supporting our work know that because of your support and prayer, they found a spiritual home. God's kingdom here in Japan even it is slow, but it is expanding.



Christmas Eve Service

We had our first Christmas Eve service last night. As our church has a vision to open another worship site in a next neighborhood, called Tsukishima (where I live), we had the Eve service in that neighborhood. Even it was Thursday night, a normal work day, a lot of Japanese came even from local community. We did lessons and carols with organ and violin. Roger and Rachel from Community Arts Tokyo helped us a lot. The place was filled with about 100 people, and many said that the service was touching. To me, the highlight was when Towa stood and read scripture with a strong voice even with a weak leg.



Please Pray

- For Towa's continuous recovery through daily activity and rehab visit.
- That our family be dependent on the Lord more and more.
- For Grace Harbor Church as we are in the process of reformatting our small groups.
- For new contacts through outreach events that we keep friendship and be able to introduce Jesus to them.
- For our new church that we not only grow in number but also into the maturity as followers of Christ. Pray that we help their growth through community groups and discipleship meetings.
- For me as a pastor that I can lead in a godly manner.
- For more church planting happening in Tokyo, the world largest city yet with only 0.2% Christians!

Blessings,
Seima