

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

We pray that the Lord has blessed you during this past year and that He will continue to bless you in the year to come! The Lord has been good to us this past year (as always!), which was full of travel, transitions, and projects.

In January, Dan brought eleven years of pastoring Osaka International Church (OIC) to a close with four joyful baptisms and a nice sendoff party from the church. Looking back over our time at OIC, we rejoice that God blessed the ministry with about 60 baptisms, all of those Saturday and Sunday messages, thousands of small group meetings, and many people sent out to other ministries. It was a privilege to serve as pastor at OIC. We will miss all of our friends there, but we do get back to visit from time to time. Our most recent visit was in October when we shared a few words at OIC's 40th anniversary celebration.

From February through May we were in the U.S., the longest time we have been away from Japan since we came in 1996 - it is described in a separate article.

In June, we returned to Osaka and engaged in our various projects, meeting with friends and ministry contacts, and visiting various churches to learn more about the churches of Osaka. (Pastors don't get many chances to see what other churches are doing.)

In October, we made another quick trip to the USA to visit Larry and for Dan to see an orthopedic surgeon about his right knee, which needs total joint replacement. Since returning from that trip, we have been worshipping with Abide Calvary Chapel Osaka, a church plant led by Joseph Totsis, Dan's former associate pastor at OIC.

Now we are running behind on Christmas preparations, as you can tell since you will probably not get this letter until after Christmas. Pardon us for being late; we are praying that you will have a very lovely Christmas and a blessed New Year!

In Jesus' love,

Dan and Karen

Texas Travels and Trials

For February through May, our "home base" was Fort Worth, TX, but we didn't sit still much. The focus of this trip was to visit Dan's son, Larry, regularly for a season. Larry, sadly, is still in prison in Texarkana, with visiting only on weekends. It's a four-hour drive, so our weekly routine was to drive to Texarkana Saturday morning, visit Larry, stay at a friend's house, worship at CC Texarkana, visit Larry again, and drive back to Ft. Worth.

During the week we looked for opportunities to work on retooling skills needed for our ministries. Dan took three side trips: twice to attend Christian writers' conferences, and once to visit the International Ministerial Fellowship (IMF) home office in Minneapolis. He is now in a correspondence-based writing course with the Christian Writer's Guild to further strengthen his skills and mentor him through his book project. And Karen discovered that Dallas is full of programmers, so she attended a variety of tech user group meetings and a big programming conference (LoneStar PHP) to refresh and expand the coding and web development skills that she uses in support of many ministries here in Japan. Between these events, Karen tried to begin applying all the new things she was learning while they were fresh in her mind, and Dan got started on his book.

Unfortunately, as Karen was driving home from one of those Dallas tech meetings at night on April 1st, our borrowed car was hit from behind by a hit-and-run driver. The car spun and crashed into a concrete highway barrier; it was totaled. Karen was hurt, but we thank God that

her injuries were not too serious; although the experience still lingers in her mind, her body was mostly recovered after a few weeks. This accident was a reminder of how we cannot take anything for granted. We are always dependent upon God's love and mercy for all things.



In October in Arkansas, we got on horseback for the first time in about 25 years, which particularly for Karen was way too long to wait! We hope to return to the Bar 50 Ranch - it was very refreshing, and unlike most commercial riding places we are allowed to go out on our own.



Abide CC Osaka's 1st anniversary was in November - a few more people than usual, but even on a normal Sunday the church plant is doing well.

Back to Hiroshima

On August 20th, record-setting rainfall hit Hiroshima, where we lived and ministered for our first 6 years in Japan. Several huge landslides tore into mountainside suburbs, and once again disaster recovery of digging mud out of houses was needed. Dan's knee and back would not have put up with much physical work, but Karen went for the month of September. Her main job was management of a volunteer center coordinating church-based teams of volunteers and housing those from out of town (similar to what we did in Iwate in 2011), but she did get to go out with the teams a few times, digging mud out from under floors and around houses. This also gave her a chance to reconnect with Fukushima-cho Church, where we served when we were there. She worshipped with them all month and gave the pastor's wife a break from weekly organ duty a couple times. They are struggling, as Pastor Nagashima and most of the church members are getting elderly.



Karen in a team of mud-slingers



Volunteers at the Center worshipping to Karen's praise DVD to start a meeting

OIC WEBSITE HACKED

Along with Ebay, Target, Adobe, AOL, Sony, JP Morgan Chase Bank, and many others, we also got hacked in 2014. No personal data was compromised, but hackers managed to insert evil code into the OIC website (probably to use it as a spam sender). Karen still supports the OIC website and she had already begun work on a new site, but after the hack attack, it became a top priority. Karen redesigned the tech, and Dan helped by re-entering 300+ sermon links. (For techies, the bilingual website was using Joomla with Joomfish, and is now using Wordpress with WPML and a lot of custom code.) You can see the new site (almost finished as of this writing) at oicjapan.org.



People packed into our condo in January for the baptism of three OIC people in our bathtub; a fourth was baptized another day.

The First Book Project

After years of wishing there were more and better choices of evangelistic books for Japanese, Dan has started writing his own evangelistic book, especially for Japanese men. The English version should be finished next summer and the Japanese version a bit later. Thank you for praying that the Lord will lead so that the book might bring glory to Jesus.



Fukushima-cho Church singing with Pastor's ukulele after lunch, and then the interment of a church member's ashes at the church grave. This church manages to make grave visits uplifting - we all helped pull some weeds and clean it up, then the men rolled the stone enough to put the urn in, then we sang a hymn and prayed. A relaxed atmosphere with no stigma, cameras welcome.



Prayer Points

1. Pray for the Lord to lead as Dan writes an evangelistic book for Japanese men.
2. Pray for the Lord to help Karen with wisdom for developing websites and databases to support various ministries.
3. Pray for our health, and especially for Dan's knee joint replacement surgery, scheduled for January 6th in Richmond, Virginia.
4. Pray for Osaka International Church (OIC) and for the Abide Calvary Chapel Osaka (Abide-CC) church plant.
5. Pray for Pastor Nagashima and the congregation of Hiroshima Fukushima-cho Church as they, along with many churches across Japan, face the problems of aging.
6. Pray for Dan's son, Larry, and for the grandchildren.
7. Pray for Japan and for all of the missionaries and churches ministering in this land.



A Final Word from the Word

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

~ Jeremiah 29:11 ~