



Moshi Moshi!

A Prayer Letter from the Ellricks

December 2007

Dear Friends,

Holiday greetings to you! We aren't sure if this will arrive in time for Christmas or not, but regardless, Merry Christmas! It has been a year and a half since our last Moshi Moshi, but yes, we are still here and doing more and more ministry all the time. We can't tell you everything that has happened since our last letter, but we'll try to capture the highlights.

In our personal lives, the biggest change is that we moved, to our own place! The story is on the back page. So please note our new address and phone number below, as the post office will only forward for another four months and the phone company has already stopped giving the new number (and even when they were doing it, the message was in Japanese!).

Osaka International Church (OIC) continues to grow both in numbers and maturity. In 2007, five new believers were baptized (all Japanese young people!), and 30 new members joined the church. The Alpha and small group ministry is flourishing, with groups meeting somewhere pretty much every day of the week, all of them led by lay people. We're even making our own book - a 252-page bilingual gift book called "A Walk with God" that contains the Gospel of Luke, photos, and selected other scriptures. It is already at the printshop and will hopefully be done in time for Christmas.

Grapevine Cell Church (GCC) is still trying to find the right combination of outreach, meetings, and the Lord's timing to see some growth. We do have two great outreach contacts who went through Alpha and are now attending our Thursday cell meeting with an eagerness to learn - praise the Lord for Yuki and Katsuhiko! The latter is a man who had absolutely no knowledge of the Bible or contact with Christianity until he found a copy of the Power For Living book we put in his mailbox, with our invitation to Alpha in it. He had only read a bit of the book when Alpha started, but it perked his interest and he has been eagerly coming ever since. He hasn't made a profession of faith yet, but he really seems to "get it". But overall, we are exploring possible new strategies or direction for the cell church, as things don't seem to be moving much - please pray!

Other ministries also continue, like our involvement with Deaf Ministries International (and Karen's study of Japanese sign language), Dan's local leadership responsibilities in MUP, Dan's consulting and training of new or potential missionaries, Karen's video work (including a new partnership with a Japanese praise music recording company to do videos for their songs) and multiple web site development projects, and other fun stuff!

May the Lord bless you abundantly!

In Jesus' love,
Dan and Karen

Outreach Takes on Various Forms

The gospel is good news, but until the people are listening they won't hear it. So in this hectic city, one must use a variety of situations, both naturally occurring and intentionally created, for people to hear the message. Both OIC and GCC have kept busy using a variety of ways to get the word out.



Naturally one method is to have interesting events at the churches that people might want to see. This photo is of the Covenant Players drama team at GCC last Christmas. Every year OIC puts on an International Christmas Eve Celebration, and we often advertise in neighborhood newspapers and such. Japanese generally associate Christmas with

churches in some form, but most have never heard the actual Christmas story. Or sometimes they hear bits and pieces but can't put it together - for example, they hear it has something to do with a birthday, but all the decorations around town have to do with Santa (nativity scenes are nonexistent), so some think it's Santa's birthday! But they are curious, so it's a great opportunity. Besides Christmas, in the last year we have had various special speakers or performers come to OIC and/or GCC: well-known speakers on topics like the Trinity and how science relates to the Bible, and performers like a singer-guitarist-songwriter and a professional-level Christian ballet company.

Then there is the method of taking the Gospel out to where the people are. Last year Paul Adams came and taught "art evangelism", using simple visuals to convey the message, which are painted on the spot on a large, portable easel. This summer the IAAF World Championships of Athletics were held right here in Osaka, so with the help of another missionary in the area we formed international teams that offered free five minutes of

(continued on back)



Dan interprets for Paul Adams; behind them is painted a "riddle" for the crowd to ponder

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Please note our new address and phone number!

Personal letters can be sent to us in Japan, but financial support should be sent to the MUP address

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MORE LABORERS FOR THE HARVEST

God is answering our Matthew 9:38 prayers for more workers in Japan. Recently two young lay leaders at OIC who are in Japan on short-term English-teaching contracts expressed their desire to stay long-term as missionaries. Amanda is from Australia, so we suggested that she contact Pioneers (who have a sending base in Australia) about getting mission agency support from them and then being seconded to us for work in Osaka. Kami is from the U.S., and very well may apply to MUP. Meanwhile, a couple who are both retired U.S. Navy officers have joined MUP and are moving to Nagoya city in January for long-term service, and at least two others are in the preparation stage: a single guy coming to work with a rural church plant project of one of our existing missionaries, and a single gal is getting final prep done to come to Japan from Canada. A few others are in various stages of considering MUP or considering Japan.

When we joined MUP, there were only three people with MUP in Japan; now there are over 30 (counting kids) and growing. Thank you, Lord!

Global Day of Prayer

Have you heard of it? It started in South Africa as a local thing, then expanded to all of Africa, and then became a 5-year world-wide event that is coming up on its third year. Ten days of prayer on various topics (often with a round-the-clock prayer watch of some sort) leading up to Pentecost Sunday, when a larger, hopefully city-wide multi-church, gathering is held, followed by 90 days of outreach in some form. (Google it for more details.) In 2007 OIC participated just as one church, but we have now formed a multi-church committee that is preparing a considerably bigger plan for the Osaka area starting in 2008. We can try to do all kinds of activities, but it's ultimately a spiritual battle. Without prayer, our community, city, nation, and world will not be transformed, so let's pray!

Outreach (continued from front page)

English practice to passersby as a way to make contacts, and we are now trying that same idea on the streets near GCC's Abeno location. And this year the Japan version of "Power for Living" (mass advertising offering a free evangelistic book, paid for by a Christian foundation) came to Japan, but people were too shy to respond to the ads individually, so the PFL folks loosened



Wall of 10,000 PFL books, and Yuko (left) and Will (right) passing them out on the street



the rules to allow churches to order cases of books for distribution. OIC ordered 2000 copies, and GCC went wild and went for 10,000! It was a lot of work to distribute them, but we are confident that they are bearing fruit.

Then there are the "seasons of life" occasions that result in chances to share the message. This year Dan has performed a memorial service and a wedding for OIC members, and another wedding is coming up in January. Non-Christian relatives at occasions like this get a chance to hear of the eternal hope we have in Christ and the Source of true love.

A Piece of Japan

It looks like we may indeed be in Osaka for a while, because we now own a piece of it! Yes, that's right - we bought a condominium this year, with money from Karen's mother's trust fund, which her father decided would be better invested in his daughter's dwelling than just sitting in accounts (thanks, Dad!). Then, when we went shopping for a place, the Lord used a tragedy for His purposes - a wonderful condo only a six-minute walk from our old place and ideal for us and our ministry had been the location of a suicide, and after sitting empty for three years because Japanese were too superstitious to buy it, we got it at a bargain price. We moved in May this year, and immediately started having meetings, gatherings, and overnight guests regularly. In November, Dad and his new wife Mari even made the journey to Japan to see the new place as well as the sights of Osaka and Kyoto.



A view of our spacious living/dining/kitchen area during a meeting

It's a little over 800 sq. ft. in size, which wouldn't be considered big in the U.S., but space is used much more efficiently in Japan. We can sleep 3-4 guests at once or have gatherings of some yet untested limit - our record so far was a potluck party with 61 people! So if you come to Osaka, you know where to stay, right?



Prayer Points

1. Pray for our ability to cope with continual time issues - we can't seem to ever get caught up on our current commitments, and some things never get done at all. One of the many things that have suffered due to local ministry demands is communication with supporters, as you may have noticed! We have many more ideas for ministry that we simply cannot even start to do.

2. Pray for Dan's lower back. This summer it "went out" for the third time in about as many years, and this time it was so severe that for a day or so he couldn't even sit up. Since then it has never fully regained its strength, and if he stands for more than an hour or so or does too much twisting, it starts hurting again. The doctor had no solutions other than a strong pain killer, but Dan had a reaction to it so he had to stop taking it. Please lift him up to the Great Physician.

3. Pray that the Grapevine Cell Church team (Will & Aukje Dykstra and us) would know the Lord's will in our decisions regarding future plans and strategies for the church.

4. As always, pray for the people of Japan, that they would know the truth so that the Truth would set them free! And also lift up the new believers, that the Lord would establish them firmly in their faith in this challenging society.

A Final Word from the Word

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Matthew 9:37-38 (NIV)