

Being His Hands

Mission Report & Prayer Requests: Mito, Japan

Joel & Kristin Osborne and Hiroaki & Megumi Akahoshi



Journey With Jesus: Draw Away To A Quiet Place

- After 3 years, Mito Church was finally able to join hands and hearts in worship & rest for our retreat -

It was so good to circle up in the parking lot, pray, load up into our cars and make a familiar journey to **Plateau Satomi** for our retreat. It was a new experience to stay 2 nights 3 days and though we had 29 attendees (*a little more than 1/3 of our church family*), we agreed that Jesus was in our midst and that we drew closer to Him and to one another.

Since we hadn't had a retreat like this since 2018 (*a major typhoon in 2019, and COVID-19 in 2020 & 2021 prevented us from gathering like usual*), we also realized that it was the first time for half of us to even join a church retreat!

Three sessions of learning about Jesus and discussion groups, praise times, two activity times, good meals, bath times (*men and women separate, of course!*), free time, a quiet time alone with God, and a powerful time of communion focused on reconciliation with God and with one another made possible through Christ all made this a blessed time.

Jesus said to His disciples, *"Let us go out into the wilderness for awhile and rest ourselves."* (**Mark 6:31a**) We thank God for working to recreate us, and to bring us out of the isolation caused these past few years to be together again.



Above Top 2: gathering for the BCS anniversary celebration online in Japan, Cambodia, and Singapore (not pictured); Above: we treated the BCS staff to a nice meal after the anniversary in appreciation for their hard work and love for the students; Below 3: at the family reunion in Fort Erie, Ontario and after Kelly & Bryant's wedding in Chicago, IL



BCS 10th Anniversary (Online)

In August 2006, Joel and teammates from Sendai attended the Asian Mission Forum in Siem Reap, Cambodia, where Joel served as a worship leader. In March 2007, they helped plan and lead a youth mission for churches in Asia, and from that the Love & Serve mission was birthed in August 2008. Mito & Bedok (Singapore) churches have partnered in this mission since August 2010 and began a free English school as a part of that mission in August 2012. So we recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of BCS (Beatitude Cambodia School) on August 7. While it was disappointing we weren't in person, the benefit of doing it online was that people who have been involved in the work throughout the years could join that may not have been able to do so otherwise, including a larger number of people from both churches (*22 people at Mito church*). After a few speeches including one by Joel as the school president, BCS students did a performance, followed by a video looking back on the last 10 years, and then we played a fun game using trivia about BCS. We ended appropriately by giving thanks to God for His faithfulness. Hiro and Takumi led that time of praise and prayer.

Osbornes' Visit to Ontario & Illinois

Kristin and Joel were blessed with another chance to go in September/October to see their families and spend time with them. Joel spent a week with his mom and aunt before they went away for a week including his siblings. Kristin joined towards the end of that week, and then they stayed for a few more days before heading to Chicago. It had been 3 years since Kristin has seen Joel's family, and 3 years since Joel has seen Kristin's family. While in Chicago, they celebrated with Kristin's sister, Kelly Hanaoka, in her marriage to Bryant Nishikawa. Bryant has moved to Chicago and will start new work, so please pray for the newlyweds in this time of transition. Joel left immediately after because of the upcoming church retreat in Mito, and Kristin was to follow 3 days later, but it ended up being an additional week due to getting COVID. Despite that, we give thanks to God for the ability to travel again, something we don't take for granted. 2

Mito Church & Ministry / Family News

- It was a season of variety: some rest, some activity, and a lot of relationship growth -

August is most often a slower month. Hiro and Joel take a month away from preaching in order to rest, reflect, and study for ongoing teaching. During the month we were grateful to have 3 church members share testimonies from the seven 'I Am' statements Jesus said in Gospel of John, and Noel Walker as a guest preacher (online) preaching from Jesus' prayer in John 17 and what we can glean for our own prayer lives as a church in the mission of God.

In **September**, Joel returned the favour by preaching at Tintern during his visit to Canada while Noel was on sabbatical, preaching about the encounters between Jesus and Philip in John's Gospel and how that impacted Philip in his life and as he invited others to a life of discipleship. It was so good to touch base with the Tintern church and with others who chose to worship there the Sunday Joel preached so they could connect in person. It was also great to share about the work with people from at least three other congregations (St. Catharines, Grimsby, Beamsville) who came on Wednesday evening to St Catharines and stayed for cookies and tea after. A few others in their 30s, 40s, and 50s enjoyed conversation before and during dinner to talk about mission, being the community of Christ with neighbours, and growing in their own walk with Jesus. All of these moments were indeed a blessing. Meanwhile, Hiro and Seika (with the help of several leaders and members) kept things running in Mito. Our church also did our annual 'Silver Servants Blessing' as we give thanks for those in our church family 65+ yrs old. We prepared gifts and visited their homes to pray with them and encourage them.

October seemed like a very full month with preaching, teaching seekers, mentoring young Christians, and juggling lots of sweet but sick babies in the Akahoshi household (as well as rearranging Kristin's return due to COVID). Much of our personal ministry is 'table fellowship' whether that's in our homes, in the homes of others, or elsewhere. In these three months alone, we have counted at least sixty people with whom we've shared time, meals, and meaningful conversations that all help deepen relationships. Some of them were coworkers, friends from years gone by or new friendships being formed, church members and their families. Likely half of the people are not yet followers of Jesus.

This is significant because trusting relationships seem particularly important for growing a community of faith, and for maturing together in our faith (or beginning that journey of faith). It's organic and takes a lot of time, patience, and intentionality but the fruit is more long lasting than having a bunch of programs or activities. At the same time, as a church, Mito is praying that God will give us wisdom as we look for ways to more proactively partner in our city and witness gospel transformation in the lives of people here.



Above Top 2: Akahoshis visited Shinohara san and Osbornes, Ryu & Rine visited the Hirashimas; Below Center: Hiro & Joel praying a blessing over some of our 'Silver Servants'; Below Bottom: after 3 years it was good for Hiro, Seika & Joel to share time with Dwight & Josephine Albright, longtime missionaries & supporters of the mission in Japan



Join Us In Prayer

- * **Apartment Next To Church** – we've been asking you to join us in praying for the complex next to our building. We've seen and been able to warmly greet a few of the families with small children. Perhaps this doesn't seem like a big step, but in a nation that is adverse to 'religion' and so afraid of cults, being a friendly neighbour is a good step.
- * **Our Neighbours** – the Akahoshis have been slowly growing a friendly relationship with the Furuya family living next door who have 3 children, and the Osbornes have a good relationship with the Tachibana family living across the street. Please pray for these two families.
- * **Rine, Tomomi, Mayu, Tamae, Emika, Mei, Hikari, Runa** - these are all people we love who are at various stages in seeking to know Jesus. Please pray for them by name and ask God to use all of us in the Mito church family to genuinely share the love of Christ.
- * **Kristin & Megumi** – continue to pray for both of them as they work at mission schools and seek to be the light of Christ both to coworkers (most of whom are not yet followers of Jesus) and for the children and teens in their care.

Above: Manaka paints a picture at the retreat during activity time and enjoys every minute of it; Middle: the whole family at Manaka's Sports Day Festival at Keisen Kindergarten in Oarai (where Megumi works); Bottom: discussion groups at the retreat helped us to connect through sharing spiritually



SPEAKING AT IBARAKI CHRISTIAN JR & SR HIGH

God continues to work through Kristin, Matt, and others on campus at Ibaraki Christian. The impact they have as teachers is fun to see and hear about from a distance.

Recently Joel was invited to speak (four times!) at their special monthly worship, and he chose to use the Parable of the Wise & Foolish Men in Matthew 7 as the text for his message, 'A Strong Foundation For Life.' Kristin and Matt received a lot of positive feedback from staff and students alike, who mentioned that it was understandable, applicable, and timely. In fact one student said to Kristin, 'He spoke truth. It is hard to live that way in Japan, but it was good and it was true.'

Special thanks goes to Hiro who helped A LOT with how to say it all in Japanese, to Kristin who helped process the best way to share the gospel in a way that speaks to the questions, hurts, and needs of the listeners, and to Seika for doing some recording and editing for one of the messages. Glory be to God, and may fruit be born from the seeds planted!



Your Partnership & Participation

Financial support can be sent to, or given online through:

IN CANADA

Tintern Church of Christ, Attn: Tintern Asia Mission
(Joel & Kristin Osborne/Hiro & Megumi Akahoshi)

4359 Spring Creek Rd, Vineland, ON Canada L0R 2C0

Phone: (905) 563-6311; <http://tinternchurchofchrist.ca/>

Email: tinternchurchofchrist@gmail.com

IN AMERICA

S&R Ministries, Inc, Attn: Joel Osborne/Hiro Akahoshi –
Japan/Cambodia Mission

PO Box 563, Edmond, OK 73083

For questions or more information, please contact us at:

Joel Osborne – joelsensei5@gmail.com

Hiroaki Akahoshi – hxa04@acu.edu

We can also communicate via Facetime and Zoom.