

Being His Hands

Mission Report & Prayer Requests: Mito, Japan

Joel & Kristin Osborne and Hiroaki & Megumi Akahoshi



Hand in Hand: Journeying With Jesus Together

- Celebrating God's Work Through The Gift of Marriage -

Wisdom is shared in the book of **Ecclesiastes**, **“Two are better than one...”** it begins to say (4:8). I'm not necessarily convinced the author is speaking of marriage, and I think this passage is just as applicable to the single members of our church family whom I celebrate and cherish, however I do think we can glean something good from this text for those who choose to take the journey with Jesus and serve in God's Kingdom together.

Our two families have received numerous blessings from God through the relationships we have formed individually with Misaki and Kentaro, watching both of them come to faith in Jesus and joyfully surrender their lives to Him, meeting them both as students in our campus

ministry at Ibaraki Christian University, serving together in Cambodia, and now in their work as elementary school teachers and core members of our church. Hiro and I studied with and baptized both of them, and now we share in the joy having officiated their wedding on July 17.

Join us in giving thanks to God, and asking God to bless Kentaro & Misaki! I have done premarital counseling with them from April through June. They chose to have their wedding infused into our worship on Sunday because they want their marriage to be a lifetime offering of worship to God, and they wanted to share the gospel with their family and friends through their wedding, and this testimony: **“A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”** (4:12)



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JOURNEY WITH JESUS



Above Top: logo for this year's theme designed by Israel Ramirez (a former church member now living in the US); *Above:* our group who shared in prayerfully discerning this year's theme; *Below:* some of our seekers and bible study groups on Saturdays & Sundays



Journey With Jesus

In February, we spent a few days in prayer seeking God, pouring over and dwelling in the word, waiting for His guidance as we discerned this upcoming year (*Japan's fiscal/academic calendar is April to March*).

Hiro shared this from **Colossians 2:6**, **“Now that you have welcomed the Anointed One, Jesus the Lord, into your lives, continue to journey with Him and allow Him to shape your lives.”**

Those in our shared servant leadership affirmed this word, and our theme for this year: **“Journey With Jesus”**

Using Gospel of John (*Joel's favourite!*), we will preach about the encounters people had with Jesus and consider how Jesus is revealed, how they are changed, and then reflect on how we can change and invite others to encounter Jesus and join in this journey as His disciples. Also, for fourteen weeks scattered throughout the year, seven testimonies will be based on Jesus' seven 'I Am' statements, and seven communion/offering reflections will use on the seven recorded signs in John's Gospel. *Please pray that this will be transformational, and will bear fruit in our lives and in the lives of those with whom we seek to share Jesus.*

Reaching Outwards To Seekers

Since December, Joel and Megumi are studying most Sunday afternoons Ryuichiro's girlfriend, **Rine**, and Kanna has also joined us in that study. After doing an overview of biblical narrative and gospel message, we have begun studying the Gospel of Luke.

Hiro and Megumi have started a bible study this Spring with Mizuki's girlfriend, **Tomomi**, on Saturday afternoons, and they are being joined by Mizuki's sister, Ayaka.

Mizuki and Ayaka's mother, **Tamae**, and their younger sister, **Emika**, often go to the Akahoshis to help during the studies, and all four of these ladies (Rine, Tomomi, Tamae, Emika) join us in worship, so we continue to pray for and connect with them. Kristin's student, **Ryoka**, (*not pictured*) is now a high school senior, and she comes to worship occasionally as well. *Please pray for all five of these seekers.*

Mito Church & Ministry / Family News

- In this report, we hope to share a glimpse of some of the daily work of God in our lives -

So much has happened, and while **Bible studies, prayer groups, and mentoring** continued as usual, each month seemed to happen so quickly before we could finish a report, so we'll try to give a snapshot summary of our lives and the ministry of Mito Church:

MARCH: we bid farewell to **Atsushi & Mari Tsuneki**, thanking them for 12 years of ministry as they transition to life and work in Ome (near Tokyo). We celebrated **Inori Osugi's first birthday** with several other young families.

APRIL: with the new year and increasing numbers of babies and children (*we have 9 children, 7 of whom are 0-2 yrs old*), **Gaku & Nicole Osugi** and **Natsumi Kawakami** began a **children's worship time**, with the help of 15 church members in that ministry. It has been good to have whole families come - *especially for a few families where one spouse is not yet a follower of Jesus*. Also, Natsumi, **Seika Kimura**, and **Mizuki Kawanobu** all have enrolled in bible courses taught by ministers from the nation's churches at Japan School of Evangelism. The church reaffirmed five who've served in the leadership team with us and added two more.

MAY: we gathered 300,000 yen as an **offering for Ukrainian refugees** and sent that to churches in Belgium and Poland who are welcoming and supporting them. We enjoyed a picnic together, followed by our annual 'Memorial Day' at the church cemetery, giving thanks for those who've gone before us in faith and awaiting our reunion. We celebrated with the **Burks family** in the birth of their son, **Ryuki Jackson**. We are also mindful of Natsumi's family as her father received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, and we intercede for them in prayer and ask for God's mercy and healing in this news. Natsumi's prayer is that her family will come to know and believe in Jesus through this struggle.

JUNE: Joel took a quick trip for one week to Canada to see his mom, aunt & sisters after 3 years (*due to the pandemic*), and it was good to have some protected time with them. We celebrate with **Yoshiki & Manami Sugitani** in their recent marriage - they chose to have a family-only private wedding ceremony in Okinawa.

JULY: for the first time, **31 students & staff at Ibaraki Christian High School and 10 Mito church members did a virtual Love & Serve** with students at BCS on July 2, followed by our Mission Sunday on July 3. This month, 320,245 yen was given for the mission in Cambodia. In addition to the wedding, we celebrated the birth of **Ken & Ai Hanasaki's first child (a son), Yuma** on July 19. **Rei & Kigen Akahoshi** celebrated their first birthday on July 20



*Above Top: at Inori's 'Totoro' themed birthday party;
Above Center: children's ministry begins at Mito church with 9 children & their families; Below Center: Yoshiki & Manami's families at their wedding;
Below Bottom: Love & Serve team from Mito Church, done virtually on the IC campus with high school students & teachers*



Join Us In Prayer

- * **New Neighbours** – a new apartment complex completed has many new families next door to the Mito church building. As we seek ways to build a bridge to them, pray that we will be guided by the Spirit to invite them into life with Jesus and with our faith community, and that we can be good neighbours in every way!
- * **Joel's Hernia** – the surgeon determined the next step is that Joel must lose a significant amount of weight before surgery can happen. This is daunting, so pray for him as he takes steps to do so.
- * **Megumi's Return To Work / Hiro's Help** - with the twins' first birthday on July 20, Megumi's maternity leave came to an end and she began working again at the mission kindergarten, Keisen, in Oarai. Please pray for the whole Akahoshi family as Megumi begins work, the twins adjust to going to Keisen daily with Megumi & Manaka, and as Hiro picks up more responsibilities in the home.
- * **Kristin's Volunteer Club** – this year there are 93 (!) students in the Jr. Red Cross and they've already done a trip to Fukushima, cleaning at Omika train station, and fundraising to help students from Ukraine come to study at the school. Please pray for relationships she builds and conversations she has with the students in her club.

Above Left: Kigen loses his battle with the udon noodle, and Rei is only mildly amused; Above Right: Manaka sheds her naturally shy self, showing her playful side at home; Bottom: Church Spring Picnic & Memorial Day @ the cemetery



SELF CARE: PHYSICALLY & SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY

Occasionally we get asked (we appreciate that some of you do this!) how we're doing physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We've seen in the pandemic and beforehand how easy it is for anyone, especially those in mission and ministry, to become empty, exhausted, and isolated.

We try to make sure we have time alone as couples, and time together to enjoy life. **Joel** continues weekly personal training with Miyagi san (see pics below) and has done so for a year now. **Kristin** also goes to the gym. **Hiro** tries to do exercise at home. Schedules are arranged so **Megumi** can get out of the house and have a break from being 'mom'. All of us are engaged in study of some kind. **Hiro & Joel** try to take time in the mornings for rest or to help around the house if they have work in the evening.

Please pray for us as we aim to honour God in this way, and try to have a healthy balance in all areas of our lives.



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.