

# Being His Hands

Mission Report & Prayer Requests: Mito, Japan

Joel & Kristin Osborne and Hiroaki & Megumi Akahoshi



*(Above) Some of our favourite snapshots from this year's worship, celebration and year end gatherings with family and friends*

## CHRISTMAS 2023: 'The Greatest Gift'

- Celebrating the greatest gift God has given was the focus of our Christmas & New Year's -

Likely many got to see some of the pictures posted on Joel's Facebook profile of our season of celebration. It was a time filled with lots of sweet gatherings with people and lots of good food we don't usually eat. Most of all, it was truly a time to share the good news and celebrate the gift of the Savior being given to a broken world so that we might receive the hope of salvation through Him.

**John 3:16** was our theme passage. We had **97 people** gather for worship (**51** of whom were friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, and students of church members). Several helped to make **homemade gifts and cards** with our church information for guests. Members could

take and give them to someone with whom they want to share the gospel. We had our first Christmas meal after worship since 2019, and four bags of food were taken and shared with a **homeless shelter** we help to support. It was moving to see the genuine tears that fell as people realized for the first time why Jesus truly is the greatest gift God has ever given.

The Akahoshis got to see and spend time with both sides of their families, and Joel & Kristin hosted a Christmas gathering in their home with the Akahoshis, Huans, Akatsus, and Matt, and then several other meals with other members and friends, including the Sugimoto family (Kristin's coworker and his wife and daughter).

## Three Months of Growing Ourselves & Others

*- Much of our ministry time was spent in training, teaching, networking & learning -*

In terms of ministry opportunities in November, close to 10 Mito church members went on the **Ibaraki Christian** campus together for their annual **Culture Festival**. This was the first time since the pandemic to open it to the public. The international club helped sell goods as a fundraiser for Cambodia, and Kristin also coordinated an **online exchange program** between IC & BCS students, with 8 Mito church members helping. Joel & Hiro led 7 of the 10 members of our church leadership team to participate in a **nationwide one-day leadership conference** in Chiba. It was a great time of learning and an opportunity to network with others. They also took a group of 12 members to the **UniTed 2023 Conference** on the campus of Tokyo Christian University. Road trips provide great opportunities for conversation, prayer, and mentoring.

**Hiro, Seika, and Shuhei** (*Seika's brother-in-law*) all enrolled at **Osaka Bible Seminary** to do studies and preparation for ministry. They study online on Wednesday mornings. Currently they are taking an **Old Testament survey** course. It's great to listen to their discoveries and reflections, and we trust it will be a blessing in the long term.

Joel was asked to be a **guest lecturer at Japan School of Evangelism** for the course on **Worship**. He also served as the **main speaker for this year's JSE New Year's Worship** on the theme **'Devotional Worship.'** With the help of several from Mito church, he led a time of worship in the morning and then taught a class in the afternoon. The worship was attended not only by Mito church members and teachers/students of JSE, but also is open to area wide sister congregations. Our time of worship and fellowship was rich, and especially since it had been 4 years due to the pandemic, we sensed a greater appreciation for this year. Nao Fukushima, dean of JSE, stated that the main goal this year was to help expand churches' understanding and practice of devotional worship in 2024.



*Above: Japan School of Evangelism New Year's worship;  
Below: Akahoshis visit the Suzukis in Nagoya*



**The Akahoshis** took a family trip to **Nagoya** to visit our friends **Kei & Jireh Suzuki** and their kids during the long weekend in November (the first short vacation for them for the year). The kids were excited to ride on the Shinkansen (bullet train) for the first time, and it was a good chance to see and encourage the Suzukis who returned a little over a year ago from Singapore. The kids all got sick unfortunately. Nevertheless, the time away was good. **Joel and Kristin** also did a day trip 'date' to **Nasu** (*in Tochigi, the next prefecture*) to celebrate their anniversary (*before doing a dinner celebration with Hiro & Megumi*), and that was also a good time away. Kristin was in Australia at the beginning of December for a week long school trip for the second time this year, this time in Perth, with 5 of her coworkers and 70 students in 11th grade. We give thanks to God for safe travel on our journeys in these three months too.



# 'Your Kingdom Come': Church News

- Mito Church is a young church growing in awareness of & participation in God's mission -

This year's series, **'Your Kingdom Come'** has been formational for us in our times of preaching and in testimonies in worship, as well as in private conversations and discipleship. In November and December, we focused on **'Your Kingdom Come: To All Nations, To Japan & To This City'** and we especially emphasized God's Kingdom mission and the role of the church and each of us as Jesus' disciples in sharing the gospel globally, nationally, and locally. At our **Mission Sunday** in November, **\$1500 CAD (\$1150 USD)** was given for our mission at **BCS in Cambodia**. Our outreach during these months ended up being our Christmas worship & meal party on December 24 and our New Year's Eve worship on December 31. We were so encouraged to have 3 fathers, 1 brother and 1 daughter of church members join us for our worship on New Year's Eve. It was a further confirmation that our attempts to build bridges with church members' families has been led and blessed by God.

In January, we focused on **'Your Kingdom Come: To Our Workplaces & Coworkers'**, and

this has also been good for planting seeds in relationships with coworkers. We pray that the Spirit will bear fruit in God's timing as we faithfully seek to be salt and light in our workplaces, and allow God to use our jobs as participation in restoring His creation.

**Kristin & Setsuko** hosted their **flock group** of women at our house for lunch one Sunday after worship. It was an opportunity for the older women to show the younger women and non-Japanese women how to make Japanese food. Everyone seemed to enjoy making and sharing the meal, and having a time of prayer together.

Three things we recently celebrated: **Naoya Kumakura's Coming of Age** (20 yrs old) with a blessing ceremony on January 7 during worship, **Ken & Ai Hanasaki's** announcement that they are **expecting their second child** in June, and **Mizuki Kawanobu & Tomomi Kajiyama's engagement** on December 24. Hiro and Joel began premarital counseling with them in January. Join us in giving thanks to God!



*(Left) Naoya's Coming of Age Blessing; (Below) BCS Staff @ Christmas Party in Cambodia*



*(Right) Blessings for Tomomi & Mizuki's engagement & their premarital counseling; (Below Left) Kristin & Setsuko's flock group; (Below) Daisuke, Vicki & Hikari Suzuki visited us from Taiwan (with Daisuke's mom)*



## Join Us In Prayer

- \* **Joel's & Kristin's moms** – Joel's mom had 2 falls in the past couple of months and has been wrestling with her health and recovery from those falls. Kristin's mom continues to struggle with MG. We would appreciate you covering our beloved moms in prayer.
- \* **Leadership Affirmation** - we give thanks to God for guiding the church through a discernment process to reaffirm 5 of our 7 current leaders (2 have chosen not to serve after March due to age), and we've affirmed one new, young leader. Please pray for wisdom and spiritual maturity as leaders seek to lead by example and serve with humility.
- \* **New Members & Seekers** – we give thanks to God for sending two new members, Aileen (South Africa) and Ifunanya (Nigeria), as well as a host of seekers. Close to thirty students from Ibaraki Christian jr & sr high school and some of their parents have joined us in worship over the past three months. May we be salt and light as we seek to share the good news of Jesus.
- \* **Birthdays & Anniversaries** - Kristin celebrated her birthday on Nov 22, Joel on Dec 30, and Manaka (5 yrs old) on Jan 15. The four of us also celebrated our shared 8th wedding anniversary on Nov 22. We ask you to join us in praying for wellbeing physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, and that our marriages will be strong.
- \* **Accident** - Megumi & kids were rear-ended, and the Akahoshi had to get a new van. Give thanks to God that they were physically safe, and that He provided another vehicle though an unexpected expense.



Snapshots from our birthdays and anniversary



Hiro & Megumi had to get a new van after the accident



### FAMILY NEWS: FURLOUGH 2024

We are in the beginning stages of planning a time to spend with our families, and to share in person how God is at work with those who have been supporting us. We do hope to find some people who will become new partners in prayer and financial support. This year our two families will have 3 main bases, spending about 2 weeks in each area - some of it will be rest and private time with family, and some of it will be with churches or individuals for reporting or fundraising.

Our last furlough was in 2019, and originally we had planned for our next one to be in 2021 or 2022, but the pandemic and the change in roles/leadership at Mito church influenced us to postpone until August/September of 2024. Since our last furlough, the twins were born so now we are seven instead of five, and with three little ones who will be between the ages of 3 and 5, we will have to make some adjustments accordingly.

Our tentative plan now is to be in the **Chicago** area from **Aug 2-12**, then in **Ontario** from **Aug 13-26**, and finally in **Oklahoma** from **Aug 27-Sept 15**.

We will reach out with more details as time passes, but we also appreciate your help in hosting gatherings at homes, restaurants or churches to celebrate God's Kingdom growing here in Asia, to pray and mutually encourage one another; to renew contact and to find new partners. If you would help as an ambassador on our behalf, please contact Hiro and I at our contact information written here on the right. Thank you!

### 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](mailto:tinternchurchofchrist@gmail.com)

#### IN AMERICA

The Springs Church of Christ, Attn: Missions Ministry  
21477 N. Western Ave, Edmond, OK USA 73012  
Phone (405) 285-7524; <http://thesprings.cc/give>  
Email: [info@thesprings.cc](mailto:info@thesprings.cc)

For questions or more information, please contact us directly at:

**Joel Osborne** – [joelsensei5@gmail.com](mailto:joelsensei5@gmail.com)

**Hiroaki Akahoshi** – [hxa04c@gmail.com](mailto:hxa04c@gmail.com)

We can communicate via **Facetime** and **Zoom** as well.

Check out our homepage at <http://wp.mitochurch.org>