

# Being His Hands

Mission Report & Prayer Requests: Mito, Japan

Joel & Kristin Osborne and Hiroaki & Megumi Akahoshi



*(Left) A big annual festival in Mito is the Plum Blossom Festival at Kairakuen Park; (Right) Ready for lunch after worship*

## SPRING HAS COME! Let's be ready for it...

- After a long season of winter in our lives, we sense the hopeful new season God is preparing ahead -

Mito is historically famous in Japan for its plum trees and has a festival in February to celebrate the blossoming season. Now in full bloom, while driving to the church, these words from scripture came to mind: **“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19a)**

The prophet is speaking God's word to His people, the nation of Israel who awaits the end of their Babylonian captivity and urges them to turn back to God and be filled with hope as God does something that has not yet happened, a great display of His loving kindness and incomparable mercy.

While I (Joel) hesitate to incorrectly apply this, I do think the Holy Spirit brought the word of God afresh and filled me with hope.

The ‘winter’ of the pandemic brought an end, or at least a huge pause, to many things in our lives, our church and ministry, and even globally. Yet I can see how it was necessary in what God needed to do within, and to prepare for us for what's next.

Perhaps some of you may feel, like us, that the sudden jolt forward is a bit daunting. A new year in Japan starts in April, and as the calendar begins to fill and as we wake globally from our slumber, from our winter, it is time for us as the people of Jesus to lift our hearts and voices: **“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** And then, we must follow those prayerful words with Spirit-led and empowered action in our cities and nations globally. Join us in doing so!



## Jehovah Jireh: Our Provider

What began as setting up a way for Kristin to visit John & Kelly in Edmond when she led 20 ICHS students to Ada, OK for a 2 week exchange program ended up being two weeks for me (Joel) to go as well and for my mom to join us from Canada.

At the beginning of the year, Tintern Church shared that our support has consistently dropped through the three years of the pandemic for many reasons. We shared this need in our last report and asked you to pray and to help in some way.

Since then, **The Springs Church of Christ** invited us (*along with the Tintern congregation*) to be a part of their full-time missions ministry and with this comes a myriad of blessings including increased financial, spiritual, and relational support and connection. We join with mission families literally across the globe on each continent. This was shared with their church family on February 12, during their missions month, just a week before we left for OK, and we (Kristin & I) were able to join in their Mission Sunday and meet with and be prayed for by the Missions ministry team over lunch (*as well as by the elders and mission team during worship*). I (Joel) was able to participate on a mission panel during the adult bible class on Feb 26 when they had their big Mission Sunday (*where we also enjoyed hearing my brother John preach that day*). They will also maintain support this year for the Akahoshis, for which we are also truly grateful. ***With this will bring some changes to where & how support is received in the US, so please see those important details on the last page of this report.***

In addition to some rich time enjoyed with John & Kelly and their kids and with my mom, I also got to meet with several people in Oklahoma to reconnect, share about our work in Japan and Cambodia, and about our need (*didn't get pics with everyone though*). ***I am happy to share that we have over half of our needed support already committed.*** I also got to meet university students from IC doing an exchange at Oklahoma Christian University, some of whom will visit us at Mito church upon their return because of their time at OC and with the churches there in Edmond. Meanwhile, in Japan, Mito church rallied together to fill gaps during our 2 week journey and to welcome **twelve students from Ibaraki Christian High School**, many who are Kristin's students in her classes or in her club. They joined our worship on February 26 and March 5, and some have indicated that they will come again throughout the month.

As we said, all of us brings a sense of something new and we are hopeful and thankful to our God who provides in every way and at all times with what we need to participate in the mission of God and living out His inbreaking Kingdom more fully.

# Mito Church & Ministry / Family News

*- In preparation for a new year beginning in*

*April, we patiently*

With the change of each fiscal/academic year, Mito Church used to experience a large 'shift' as people moved away and new people arrived. We haven't had much of that since 2020, but in addition to the Paradillo family in January, we are sending **Yoshiki & Manami Sugitani** to Osaka and **Diamond Sippo** to America with our blessing and prayer that God will use them in His Kingdom work as they set up life and work elsewhere. We are sad to see them go, and thankful for all the ways they grew and served in our midst.

At the same time, we welcome **Gabriel Rivera**, who has come from Puerto Rico to teach in the JET program, and **Moe Shibuya**, a graduate of IC and part of our campus ministry, into the Mito church family. Gabriel's strong faith comes from his upbringing in a healthy ministry family. Moe was involved in our mission work in Cambodia and in disaster relief when she was a student, and after a period of work and feeling some distance from God, she has gone back to school to prepare for a new career and took this time to rededicate herself to following Jesus and to be connected more intentionally to the rhythms and life in our spiritual community. We give thanks to God for both of them!

In February and March, we have continued our series through Gospel of John in conjunction with our theme, Journey With Jesus. We had two times of communion focused on the fifth and sixth signs of Jesus (healing the blind man in John 9, raising Lazarus to life in John 11) led by **Yoshiki, Ryuichiro & Jacob**. Jacob also preached for us about the adulterous woman's life changing encounter with Jesus in John 8. Two guest speakers also preached about the crowds throughout the Gospel, and about Martha, and we (**Hiro & Joel**) will preach a two part message about Mary of Bethany's journey with Jesus. We also appreciate **Takumi, Kentaro & Matt** for planning and leading our Mission Sunday as we gave generously for the mission in Cambodia.

We also began a **new time of study once a month** after worship. Members have several assigned scripture passages to read before we gather, and then after watching an episode of *The Chosen* together, we break up into small groups for discussion and learning. We already see (and hear from our church family!) the benefit of the entire body coming together in an inter-generational time of study and sharing. Studies with both of our seekers, **Rine and Tomomi**, continue as well on Saturdays and Sundays and we are currently going through key words - such as sin, forgiveness, grace, mercy, redemption, righteousness and so on. In the study with Rine, I (Joel) have begun asking **Megumi** to lead parts of it with me coaching, so that she gains confidence and experience. I am pleased with the ways I see God work in and through her to nurture and disciple the women.



**Top left:** Gabriel, **Top right:** Yoshiki & Manami, **Below:** Kanna, Kristin & Diamond try the tea ceremony, **Center:** Kristin, Moe & Megumi chat after worship, **Bottom left:** Kristin with her hosts in OK, Delaney & Mitchel, **Bottom right:** Children's worship



## Join Us In Prayer

- \* **Thanksgiving & Continued Provision** – for new supporters & a new partnering relationship with *The Springs Church*, we give thanks to God, and continue to be thankful for the *Tintern Church* and all ongoing supporters. Please pray that the remaining funds needed for the *Osbornes* in current support (approximately **\$7000 annually**) will be provided.
- \* **Easter** – we'll have a special time of worship celebrating Jesus' resurrection, including a time of fellowship and outreach (picnic and Easter egg hunt) on April 9. Please pray for our preparation, and for church members as we invite friends and family (especially young families with children) and as we seek to share the hope of the gospel message with our friends.
- \* **Nationwide Gathering for Worship** - after a 3 year hiatus, *Mito Church* will host this annual event in person on April 29 for all of our sister churches. Please pray that we will exalt God and encourage and inspire all who gather that day.
- \* **IC Campus Ministry** – increased involvement and presence with the Jr & Sr High School, and the possibility of making connections again with the university students brings both hope and excitement. Pray that we may be faithful and intentional in these relationships.
- \* **Love & Serve: Cambodia** - we will send our first team since December 2019 in July, so please pray with us and for us.



### IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR BOTH US & CANADIAN MISSION SUPPORT: A REQUEST

In addition to new or increased support by individuals and a church recently, **The Springs Church of Christ** in Edmond, Oklahoma will serve as a partnering church for the *Osbornes* in America and also provide some support for the *Akahoshis* much like the *Tintern Church of Christ* in Canada. This is a tremendous blessing on so many different levels and in so many ways!

Since 2013, **S & R Ministries** based in OK has graciously and willingly received all US based support for the *Osbornes* and *Akahoshis*, and we are so thankful to them. While they will still receive and transfer support over the next few months, **we request that all current and new US based support begin to be sent to The Springs Church** who will work in partnership with *Tintern Church* to account for all mission funding for our work.

When sending support: 1) make checks out to *The Springs Church of Christ* and in the memo line put 'Joel O' or 'Hiro A' or 'Joel O & Hiro A' or contact them to set up monthly automatic bank transfers; 2) indicate if support is for Joel or Hiro (or both, and how much in this case), 3) indicate if support is monthly or one time, and 4) give written permission to share this information with us.

Additionally, for **Canadian support**, all current and new support are requested to send express written permission to **Tintern Church** to allow us to receive support details (how much from whom) as per CRA regulations in regards to privacy. Thanks!

### 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** – [hxa04@gmail.com](mailto:hxa04@gmail.com)

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

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