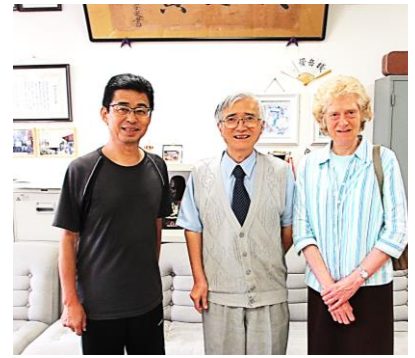




**In Japan for the Gospel
With WEC International
Shuichi and Elaine Kitamura
Prayer Letter No 183 June 2017**



A Christian repaints the cross on our roof.

Headmaster Ibe welcomes our presentation

May the Holy Spirit teach us all to use Christ's Name and His Word in intercession

for the pressing needs around us, in God's church and in the world.

Book Presentation to Schools – "I have set before you an open door." Rev 3: 8

"What a beautiful book! Such delightful paintings and poems! I will be very pleased to put it in the staff library, and I will certainly use some of its contents in my assembly speeches, and encourage my staff to use it for ethics lessons. Thank you so much." This was the enthusiastic response to Shuichi's presentation of quadriplegic Mr Hoshino's latest book to the headmaster of the first school we visited two weeks ago. (Mr Ibe, see photo.) This headmaster was already known to us from my school involvement years ago. Yes, Shuichi is back on the school visiting/presentation round, after being too occupied with other things to do any last year. Mr Hoshino still features in some school text books, so the education world remains familiar with him, and some teachers have used his material before. The big point in the presentations that Shuichi makes is that the books he chooses include Mr Hoshino's personal faith in Christ. (Some of his books only feature his paintings and poems). So it is our prayer that note will be taken of these "faith" parts, and hearts will be opened.

Since this auspicious (blessed) beginning, we have been to 10 more schools (primary and junior high), and have received a similar welcome in each place. God is still keeping this amazing door open for us, even though Shuichi's colleagues, from his university and teaching days, have already been retired for eight years (teachers retire at 60 here). Seven more visits are planned for the near future, totaling 18. More later. I go along for additional PR and prayer support! This year there has been a big turn-over of staff, and 12 of the headmasters are new acquaintances for Shuichi. So in order to gain acceptance he needs to "introduce" himself. This means a chat about all the education department personalities he knows, and our past involvement with various schools. As mutual acquaintances are discovered, the listening headmaster relaxes and the presentation can be received positively.

At each school Shuichi has also been introducing our concert (see below). The guitarist was a school drop out as a small boy, staying at home in his room as so many do, but later became a Christian and has gone on to live a useful life. (The latter doesn't often happen.) This is of interest to teachers, who often have to grapple with this problem. Since it is a church function, Shuichi intended to just give the leaflet personally to the headmasters, but the response has been: "I will pin this on the staff notice board, though I can't actually promote it." Wow! This does not necessarily mean that anyone will come, but it does show that Christianity is seen as a part of the community, and not something to be wary of, so it's OK to get involved (a little!). This is a big change for this area.

While it continues, this work occupies us from 4pm till 7 or 8pm a few days a week (Japanese teachers work late!), and with our other commitments is quite demanding for this "Darby and Joan", involving as it does a very late dinner (Shuichi's arthritis doesn't allow for us to eat out or buy prepared food), followed by a very late night, and for me an early morning. Fortunately, just now we only have two other night meetings weekly, though there are several daytime ones. We wait on the Lord for stamina and refreshment.

Outreach Concert – “...till the desert becomes a fertile field.” Is 32: 15

Do you remember that we are moving towards an outreach concert on 17th June, 2pm? It will be a guitar and vocal presentation by a couple, interspersed with sharing personal experiences in their relationship with Christ.

- Preparation so far:
1. With Jill's help we are distributing advertising house to house locally (Jill is a missionary from NZ. Carla, who had been helping us 2 days a week, has returned to Brazil for 6 months, mainly for deputation). So far Jill, Shuichi and I have covered about 600 houses (about half of our aim), involving about 3 1/2 hours walking each.
 2. Our tiny group of Christians have been stamping and folding testimony leaflets to accompany the advertising.
 3. Shuichi and I have quite a long list of personal house calls to be made to our various friends and acquaintances, to spend time with them and invite them to the concert. We have completed several. Please pray for a good response. The two most enthusiastic responses so far have since been cancelled because of other responsibilities that have come up. This happens a lot in country areas, where people's time is often not their own. Please pray for God's protection over people's circumstances.
 4. 8,000 leaflets are in boxes waiting to be inserted in newspapers nearer to the date, probably 11th. (Yes, we have quite a big population in our immediate area, although it is rural – nearly 30,000!) The purpose of this is mainly to let people know that there is a church here, and we are active! Normally, with our tiny membership, we do not have a high profile. Advertising promotes familiarity, and familiarity tends to lessen prejudice. Of course we hope for responses too.
 5. Please pray for God's blessing on each of the above, covering what has already been done, and what is yet to be done.

Further prayer requests for the concert :

1. A room full of people!
2. Practical arrangements to go smoothly (parking can be a difficulty, mikes, health, etc, etc).
3. The Holy Spirit's anointing on the artists Mr and Mrs Iwabuchi, and Shuichi as he brings concluding comments.
4. Protection from the Evil One, in the presence of the risen Christ.
5. A good “getting to know you” time over a cup of tea at the end.
6. Some to move on to seriously seeking the Lord. Each will be given easy-read spiritual literature to take home.

Children's Outreach – “...do not look down on one of these little ones.” Mat 18: 10

The children's outreach continues to plod along. The 7 meetings we have had this year have had attendances varying from 2 to 6, a total of 13 different children! (None of these has any Christian background.) We keep in touch as we visit the homes. Today (3rd) it was really good to have Rayna and Fuka back again, and last time to have Shizuka and her grandmother again after a long absence, especially as Shizuka (13) is now at high school. Consistent attendance is a goal we have great difficulty in achieving. We are not alone in this, in fact our record ranks quite well even among the bigger churches in our association. This is such a contrast to my early years in Japan, when it was easy to get crowds, and attendance was committed, with children buying their own NTs and song books.

We treasure each encounter, especially considering that until the last couple of years, we only had children's outreach once a year at Christmas time. Please continue to pray with us that the children will be released from other attractions and pressures, and that what they hear and experience here will take deep root in their hearts.

Conversation after a children's meeting :- Elaine: "I enjoy teaching the Bible stories so much, and the children listen so attentively, so why do I feel so spiritually tired afterwards?" Carla: "That's because it's a war!"

As we have mentioned before, the children are all offered to the Shinto spirits soon after birth, and regularly after that. Of course this goes for the adults too, who have even more regular and closer idolatrous involvement, as well as the other spiritual hindrances that are part of the life of "advanced" nations. God's word to us in this "war" is: "I am with you as a mighty warrior!" (Jer 20: 11)

Political Trends – "....to Him who sits on the throne be praise and honour and glory!" Rev 5: 13

PM Abe is trying hard to cover his suspicious behavior by refusing to call key witnesses, and destroying documentary evidence. He is able to do this because the issues are being dealt with within the government (where he has a 2/3 majority) and not by an independent authority, as is usual in most democracies.

Of even more concern to us is the resulting revelation of his further moves to involve Shinto in education, using his wife as a front. In particular there is concern about his introduction of the Rescript on Education to a private kindergarten, with a primary school to follow. This document was created at the beginning of the nationalistic era leading up to WW2, and was the directive for the brainwashing of children and teenagers, based on total submission to the emperor, and leading eventually to so much tragedy. PM Abe seems to be very persistent in getting the thin edge of the wedge of nationalistic Shinto into society somehow, and on several points has been quite successful in then increasing its presence as normal without people noticing. The roots are in the Ise Shinto temple to the sun goddess, and the network extends to the remotest mountain villages, like a spider's web. It has not yet been pulled tight, and we pray that it never will be.

North Korea of course has been causing grave concern world-wide. USA, Korea, and Japan are particularly nervous. We pray for God's restraint.

Church life – ".....the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" Mat 16: 18

Our regular congregation is : 4 committed Christians, 2 who show signs of being born again, and are moving towards baptism, 2 who are not yet clear as to their faith but attend regularly. Over the years there has been a huge turn-over as some have moved out of the area, some have died, and others have abandoned their faith and gone back into the world. We are always encouraged by a lovely sense of the presence of the Lord among us, a responsiveness to the Word of God, a co-operative spirit, and care for one another. These things are not to be taken for granted, and need to be constantly sustained by prayer, as we know from experience, because the devil doesn't like it! Shuichi preaches to this little group in the joy and enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit! Occasionally I help. We look forward to the day when "the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field."



After Sunday morning worship

With grateful thanks for your prayer partnership,

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