

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph. 3:6)

In this new year, our church begins a sermon series on the book of Ephesians. The core focus of this letter is 'the mystery of God - building and becoming a new community in Christ, which is the church.' This is why the early apostles spread the gospel outwards, not only to the Jews but also to different ethnicities. This wasn't easy to accept and understand at that time. Through the book of Acts and most of Paul's letters, we gradually understand what the mystery of God is in these end times. This mystery is to allow Gentiles and Jews to become citizens of God's kingdom together through the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Bible tells us that this gospel is for all nations, so we must proclaim it to the whole world. However, sharing the gospel among all nations is not an easy task. There are many examples throughout missionary history of how the gospel has transformed the values of certain regions, leading to the progress of those countries and areas.

However, the concept of becoming a new community in Christ is difficult to understand or accept when it comes to missions in Japan. This is because Japan is not a very diverse society. Although the Japanese government has recently been working to promote opportunities for foreigners to work in Japan, the average Japanese person is still not very accepting of foreign cultures. Looking at Japanese history, Japan is a relatively exclusive country. Because Japanese culture itself is vibrant, they do not feel the need to accept foreign cultures, as foreign cultures are not necessarily better. We see immigrants from many different races all over the world; for example, Chinese people can be seen all over the world. Immigration is about aspiring to a better life. However, relatively few Japanese people live abroad. Most Japanese people believe their country is good, so they have no desire or need to move. I recently saw a news report that only 17.5% of Japanese people have passports, meaning that most Japanese people have never been abroad."

Although having experience abroad doesn't make one more open to multiculturalism, establishing a church isn't necessarily about emphasizing diversity. However, God calls us to be His people, representatives of His kingdom in our regions and countries. This means we may differ from local traditional cultures, especially in aspects of religious worship. Being called means living as kingdom citizens, no longer conforming to secular values and customs. This, to some extent, can lead to multicultural outcomes. In the American church scene, this is often seen as a beautiful picture: people from different races and cultural backgrounds become one family through Jesus Christ's salvation, forming a new community. Such a concept might seem foreign to Japan. Please pray for the churches in Japan, asking the Lord to send a revival and renewal, bringing breakthroughs in the Japanese Christian community. Also, pray for Japan as a nation; in recent years, economic needs have pushed the government to open up to more foreign workers. We pray that this will change Japan so that the gospel can be more easily understood and accepted by Japanese people.



Went to New Zealand to visit my parents in December, at the New Zealand beach.



Ministry Update :

- In this new year, our team will undergo many changes. A couple who came to Japan for a mid-term mission (one year) will complete their term at the end of March and return to the United States. We are deeply grateful for their dedication and contributions over the past year, and we will surely miss them.
- Next, our team leader, the Swenson family, will also be returning to the U.S. in July for a one-year home assignment. Additionally, another missionary family will return to the U.S. for two months. We are also planning a two-week trip to Australia to visit Jennifer's parents. There is a lot to prepare and arrange in the coming six months. Please pray for the many changes ahead in our church.
- This year, Gary's main ministry will still be preaching on Sundays. However, since the translation co-worker will also return to the U.S., Gary must try preaching entirely in Japanese. Please pray for his preparation.
- Gary will continue leading the Bible study group supporting Denen Church, the church we served in during our first term. He has also been invited to preach at Denen Grace Church at the end of March. Please pray for the growth and development of Denen Grace Church.
- After April, we may have the opportunity to do a one-on-one Bible study with a seeker, Mrs. Y. She has been exploring the faith for many years but still struggles to believe. However, she remains interested in studying the Bible. Please pray for her and her family that the Lord's love and the Holy Spirit's work may open their heart to accept Jesus.
- Recently, we have had the opportunity to share more one-on-one with our Japanese Christian. Please pray that the Lord will use us to help them grow spiritually. (Photo 1: Mr. Kosuke, Photo 2: Miss Y)
- In addition to serving in the church's children's Sunday school and participating in the school's PTA activities, Jennifer has also been helping organize the school's 75th anniversary celebration, which will take place in early April.
- Jennifer also occasionally fellowships with the church sisters. Please pray that the Lord will use her to encourage and help them grow in their spiritual journey.
- Jennifer hopes to continue using arts and crafts as an outreach ministry this year.



Family update and prayer request:

- We are grateful for everyone's prayers, which allowed us to visit New Zealand last December to see our parents and celebrate my father's 80th birthday. Please pray for God's protection over our parents so that they may have a peaceful and healthy retirement life in New Zealand.
- Please continue to pray for Caleb's health and that he can keep up with his studies. We have finally received the referral letter and have taken Caleb to a pediatric specialist. We are waiting for his blood test results and pray that we can know what are the issues with his digestive system.
- Also, please pray for Caleb's spiritual growth so that he may continue to share and testify to God's love among his non-Christian classmates and friends.
- Please pray for Abigail's spiritual growth daily. May she be a good influence among her classmates and friends.
- Please pray for Jennifer's Japanese language learning, and her physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.
- We plan to visit Jennifer's parents in Australia for two weeks at the end of June. Please pray for the arrangements of this trip and that everything will go smoothly.



Financial Update

- In the new year, the mission's financial reporting system has been updated. Looking at the new year's budget, we are still short **USD \$750 each month**. We understand that long-term financial support is not easy. We ask the Lord to provide all that is needed. The battle on the front lines requires logistical support. In this new year, would you consider partner with us?
- If you feel call to partner with us financially, please click the following link to begin your donation. <https://give.worldventure.com/>
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