

Dear Friends

Thank you for remembering us in your thoughts and prayers over the last few months. Since the summer, it's been quite high pace here preparing and delivering talks, and other church related ministries since our colleagues have been on home assignment. Our colleagues have since returned...



...and our focus has now shifted to Christmas outreach alongside preparing to leave Hirosaki in January for home assignment.

Encouraging moments in the past few months

A few prayer letters ago, we asked that you'd pray for a family that had started coming to church around Easter time this year. Since then they have been faithfully attending church every week and getting involved in what's going on. After spending time with them over dinner recently, we came away with having perhaps **the most encouraging moment whilst being in Japan**. The husband of the family was commenting on John 3:3.

Jesus answered him [Nicodemus], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

He then went on to describe his own experience of being born again and the new passion in his heart to study Scripture at great depths and to share that with others. Please continue to pray for the growth of his faith, and wisdom for him in how to live as a Christian in his work situation and family. We continue to pray for his wife who is still not a believer.

Another joy was seeing a local student called Sakura being baptised on 21 November. She was led to faith through a testimony given by a short term worker over the summer holidays. After sharing her testimony in front of church, she was baptised in the church baptismal tank, which interestingly is a large fish tank. Her story of coming to faith was a reminder that no matter how many times we've shared our testimony, the value of its message never changes. Sakura is now looking for full time work as she will finish university this year. We pray for her new start in life as a Christian.

December schedule

In the lead up to Christmas we have a number of events and a number of Christmas dinners we are hosting as a family for our friends. Here's what's coming up in Hirosaki Nozomi:

2 Dec Christmas Wreath making class	4 Dec: Christmas Wreath making class for children
16 Dec: Christmas cooking class	18 Dec: English café Christmas party
19 Dec: Church Christmas service	22 Dec: Christmas outreach service 1
23 Dec: Christmas outreach service 2	24 Dec: Christmas Eve service

Please pray as people hear the Christian message during these activities, and for us as a team in all the different roles we're involved in.

Coming home

We are due to arrive back in the UK on 17 January. It's been quite some time since we've seen friends and family in person, and are very excited to be coming home. We are so thankful to Belvoir Presbyterian Church for providing us with a place to live for 6 months in their church manse. Also, with the house being unfurnished, we know a lot of people have very kindly given items for us to use, and are extremely grateful to you for doing so.

Coming home is joyful, but mixed with plenty of stress. To give you an idea of the fun involved here is a brief overview of things that need done over the next few weeks:

- Paper work and de-registration to do at the city office. Japanese visas to update and re-entry permits to secure. Official translation of birth certificates for the boys' UK passports and obtaining translated versions of COVID vaccination certificates. Cancelling of contracts and bank accounts (which in Japan, means more paper work, not just a click of a button on a web page).
- Plan and initiate a moving out sequence so on the day you leave the apartment, you are eating take-away food with a plastic knives and forks, and all you have left to do is throw your last bits of waste in the bin and close the door behind you. This involves the prep of all the items in our apartment for storage in a way so that it doesn't spoil and move everything into storage space.
- Due to Brexit complications, for entry to the UK we now need to apply for a religious worker visa for Birita as she will technically be employed for her time in NI. The boys are traveling home on Danish passports, but don't have any issues as they will receive UK passports in due time.

I know for sure that the first Ulster Fry I sit down and eat, will sure be a good one!

Looking to the future

Many of you may be wondering what came of the discussions about where we might work next after our home assignment. Deciding future plans can be difficult, as we really have no idea what the future holds, like pandemics and closure of country borders for instance. If you might entertain my own thoughts on the subject for a few moments. As you all know, God's guidance comes in different ways. Sometimes being a missionary comes with the expectation of being led by some quite outstanding spiritual revelation after waiting until the last day that a decision has to be made. However, the missionary is quite the ordinary human being, and more than often, decisions just need to be made with the wisdom granted to you. I think if God did always show us with flashing lights the way to go, we might become quite silly beings and forget how to use the brain and deciding abilities than God intended us to use. It has been much the latter style of guidance this time around, with weighing up suitability and current possibilities in a prayerful manner, relying on God's gentle guidance and ability to grant wisdom when it is asked for. So, what came of all the discussions, was that if the Lord wills it, we'll come back to Hokkaido after our home assignment. It isn't yet rubber stamped so we'll have to give you the details in our next prayer letter.

However, thank you for praying for us and the leadership team throughout the process.

Sorry it's a fairly long read this time! We'll finish here with a number of items for prayer. Thank you all for your ongoing love and support.

John, Birita, Jónas & Markus

Requests for Prayer

- Low stress levels whilst moving
- Jónas especially as he processes leaving Japan
- John's talks at English café (2 Dec), kids' programme (4 Dec), outreach services 1 & 2 (22&23 Dec)
- Birita managing the house packing
- Enjoyable and special times with friends over Christmas meals
- The people from the community coming through the doors for different activities
- Our church families' growth in faith and maturity
- New missionaries waiting to come to Japan being delayed again due to borders closing, after already waiting for over a year
- Birita's last time of giving messages at Pilates and leading Sunday school during church

Photos



Sakura's baptism in church: faces blanked



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This is our latest prayer letter. If you want taken off the list, let me know! I won't be offended.

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