

MIKE & ANNIE GAITHER

Missionaries to Japan

Taking the Gospel "...unto the uttermost Parts of the earth." Acts 1:8



Spring 2009

Konichiwa From Japan

It is Spring in Japan and the cherry blossoms are opening and splashes of white can be seen on the slopes of the mountains. A favorite place to visit is the Kintai Bridge which you see on our letter head. People from all over Japan come to celebrate the cherry blossom festival. The banks of the river are lined with these beautiful trees as well as the park where people gather to picnic and children play and millions of pictures are taken of the delicate flowers that adorn the trees. Musical groups perform in the park and on the banks of the river there is a flea market. Japan's version of the soft serve ice cream is a very popular treat for everyone. Ours too!

Last Fall we were given the opportunity to attend the ICA Pastor's conference in Indonesia and we added on a few days to celebrate our 44th wedding anniversary exploring somewhere we had never been before and witnessing the great spiritual need of a land still basically unreached. We were on Bali which is 85% Hindu and every where we went we were surrounded by temples and indicators of the peoples practice of Hinduism. Visiting the countries of Asia is over whelming. Great populations with little representation of Christ, if any. We have much work to do. Japan is less than 1% Christian and the need is constantly before us. Our church focuses on both the Japanese community and the international community that lives and works here in Japan. Our greatest joy is watching God work in our midst overcoming cultural and language barriers. Spiritual growth is often impeded by the extended family and the cultural control they exercise. Progress over these obstacles is slow and difficult. Patience and prayer gives God the opportunity to work. Yoko wants to be baptized but husband at mother's instructions says, "No!" Now four years later, husband is watching children so that Yoko can attend church functions, husband attends church fellowship functions and mother is reading the Bible. Slow? Yes, but God is working in the hearts and lives of the entire family and many friends also. Our Church Christmas party was attended by almost 30 Japanese family members and friends who are not Christians. Attendance at the Wednesday Bible study for the Japanese ladies has doubled this past six months.

Fall also was a personal challenge for us. Just before we left for Indonesia, we were told that the owner of our house was returning to the area and wanted his house back. God showed us to a house that is bigger but also cheaper. At first, it seemed to be no end to the obstacles we faced in procuring the house, but we watched God overcome every one of them. It took many days to pack and get moved to the new location but we had much help from every one in the congregation to include the unsaved husband of our piano player (Japanese) giving his time and energy to make sure we get packed and moved properly. We see the evidence of the hand of God in the lives of the families we have touched. What joy we have experienced.

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Our new address is: Hassaka 2-11-13
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The world has been experiencing some economic turmoil and we have been experiencing the affects both from home and here in Japan. The dollar to yen rate has dropped further impacting our economic stability. Some have just dropped their support others have reduced it, very few have communicated the change and each month comes with surprises. But in spite of all the difficulties, we have witnessed many who have renewed and even increased their support and when we called for help for our move, a few gave a lot to help us. We decided to remain on the field rather than come home on furlough hoping to reduce expenditures. But we do need your help in maintaining our support. If you would like to join our support base our account number in Springfield is 236 869 4. To those who have stood fast and even given more when the need was there, we want to express our thankfulness for your faith in us and your faithfulness in standing with us to reach the multitudes of the lost. To two churches in particular we are especially thankful for the help that enabled us to step out and get the move done. Your extra giving will always be remembered as coming at the time of greatest need.

We have discovered over the years that God is in the midst of the difficulties we face. Looking for Him will keep us afloat; looking at the storm will cause us to flounder. A phrase that we picked up somewhere in our travels, "When you can't see His hand, trust His heart." He loves you and will see you through.

In His love and Service


Mike and Annie