

# Japan Missions Update

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When our family came back to Japan in 2020, a particular passage stood out in our minds: John 15:1-8. In this passage, Jesus promises that if we are seeking to be fruitful, we need simply to ask and he will provide what we need to that end. So, we have asked, and (as always!) he has kept his word. We have seen so much fruit here in Matsudo, and especially so after the last few years. Since we returned from furlough at the end of 2023, the church here in Matsudo has roughly doubled in size to around 40 people who regularly attend (most are Christians, some not). There have been five baptisms, and a lot of spiritual growth among our members. That last point is so important to us. When we see our brothers and sisters grow in the fruits of the Spirit - when we

see forgiveness in hurt, patience in suffering, self-control where once was self-indulgence, gentleness where once was anger, and other things like these, we know that God has been at work, and it gives us great joy. This is always the challenge as a church grows in number! As we grow in number, we also want to be growing in faith and love. By God's grace, we have seen that happening. Certainly we are not without our challenges, but our God is much greater than any challenge we face. Praise him for his goodness!



*A photo taken after a Bible study with Ryoya and Aya Sasaki. The Sasaki's were baptized in Fall 2024, and have been zealous in their faith ever since. We have a discipleship study with them once a month. They showed up one day to worship and said, "We want to be baptized." Wow! A humble reminder of how God is working all around our city even when we do not see it. They have two boys, and a third baby on the way!*

*This photo was taken after our first ever church retreat. It was such a treat to have this weekend of fellowship and spiritual growth together. Everyone had such a wonderful time together and we are excited to do more in the future. We are currently working on another one this year, and it is my hope that in time this will become an opportunity for people to invite their families into our community in a low-pressure way.*





*This photo was taken after our new brother Danny was baptized in August 2025. Danny is from Northern Ireland. He is married to a Japanese woman (who is not a Christian but has come to worship several times) and has three children. Danny has been incredibly zealous in his faith also, and has been a blessing of encouragement to our church. He also is a good example of how international our little community has become.*

*This photo was taken after our sister Yuki was baptized, on the same day that Danny was baptized, in fact. Yuki is from China, but has lived in Japan for a number of years. Aside from Japanese members, our next largest group by nationality is Chinese. Yuki (like many of our Chinese members) has many challenges here in Japan, but she is always faithful in her attendance and has been a great blessing to our church.*



Sometimes we look at what God has done here over the last few years and can't help but be in awe. Our hearts are filled with gratitude, firstly to God for all he is doing and allowing us to participate in, but also for partners in this kingdom work like the Deerfoot Church of Christ. Your support and prayers play a vital role in this work. We are grateful to you, and trust that the Lord will lay it in your account before him.

# What's Ahead

As we look back at the last several years, our hearts are filled with gratitude and joy. As we look forward to what's coming, we are likewise filled with excitement! There are two big things on the horizon for the Matsudo Church of Christ.

## New Building Project

The big project which has been taking up a lot of our time and attention over the past year is preparation for a new building. Our church building is 60 years old, and over those 60 years God has done so much good through it! However, it is showing its age, with a number of significant problems. Most notable among those is that the foundation has weakened and poses a threat not only to our church but to our neighbors (who, in Japan, are literally mere feet away from us on either side). Additionally, our current building can only seat about 40 people max, so when everyone is in attendance, the worship hall is absolutely packed. During the summer especially, the heat becomes nearly unbearable, and some of our older members cannot attend. This new building will be a big deal for the Matsudo Church of Christ. Very few churches in Japan have been around for 100 years. The new building will make that future a real possibility, Lord willing. This project is an investment in our future.

*Our current church building here in Matsudo. You can see how close we are to our neighbors! Because it is on an incline, the building was built on an elevated platform which was then leveled out. Unfortunately, the wall on the left side is bulging, and is at risk of collapse, especially with the many earthquakes we have, along with rainy season and typhoons.*



## Associate Minister Luke Obata

Also this year, as of this month actually (April 2026), we are taking on a new associate minister, brother Luke Obata. Luke graduated this spring from Tokyo Christian University with a master's degree in theology. His grandfather is a well-known minister here in Japan, and his uncle is also a minister. So he is part of a wonderful and rare legacy of Japanese ministers, and we are very grateful to have him joining our congregation.

Luke's help is quite literally a God-send! He will especially be focusing on serving our Japanese members, but he also has many more connections here compared to me, and we really believe he is going to bring many blessings to the church here. More importantly, this is a Japanese church, and in the end we believe it is best for them to have a Japanese minister rather than an American missionary. Luke's position sets up the church for a new generation. And, along with the new building, we believe God is setting up a bright future for the Matsudo Church of Christ.

Have we said how grateful we are for God's provision? He is so faithful to his people! Of course we have participated in this work, and it is an honor to do so. But the work of building the Kingdom is God's. He has done all the heavy lifting! We praise him for all his work, and for allowing us to be a part of it.

*A photo taken after Luke and Leslie met for lunch in December to discuss the possibility of Luke working at Matsudo. He was in conversation with several other congregations, but after prayer and consideration, he decided to work with us. He has a very bright personality, and we are excited to see how God uses him here! Please be in prayer for him and for Leslie as he mentors him over the coming years.*



## Photos



*Our sister Nao (right) with Fumika (family friend), who we hope will one day follow Jesus!*



*A photo from our local summer festival - an important event for getting to know neighbors.*



*A draft plan for our new church building. This is the most recent as of this writing.*



*Inside view of the new building. Our current building can hold ~40, this one can seat ~100!*



*Sharing a meal with friends in the community. None of these are Christians - but dearly loved!*



*Photo from Oct. 2024 after three baptisms. See the final image to see how we're growing!*

## Thank You!

As you can see, God has been busy in Japan and is preparing the Matsudo congregation for more work to come! And yet, he has done and is doing that work in part through your partnership. Your support for this work is a spiritual investment that pays spiritual dividends back into your account. As Paul said to the Philippians, "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit." (Phil. 4:17) So as God empowers us to bear fruit here in Japan, he sees your partnership, and you receive credit for it! Isn't that incredible!

As we continue this work, we ask for your continued prayers for us, for the whole church, and for each member of the church, as well as for the many people in our community who we hope will one day choose to follow Jesus.

We hope we can see you all again soon. Until then, may the Lord keep you safe in his care, and make you fruitful for his kingdom as well.

Grace & peace in Christ,

*The Taylor Family* (Leslie, Sara, Cambria, Madeleine, Boston)

