



Colby & Theresa Weinhofer

Empowering National Leaders to plant Authentic National Churches

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A FOND FAREWELL

With the coming of the new year, we will bid farewell to our teammates, Chuck and Jan Burwell. After being in Japan for 19 years, they will be returning to California. Having lived in Ube for about 12 years, by God's grace they were able to begin the church we are now working with, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in January. The Burwells have been good friends and we have learned many things from them. They have been instrumental in the acquiring, cleaning out, and fixing up of the church's new property, and have been blessed to see God provide the Lighthouse Church with a Japanese pastor as well as the property - both, an answer to many prayers.



The Christar Japan Focus Group at our December prayer day.

While we will now be the only Christar workers living in Ube, we have joined with another couple who live about an hour away, to form the Western Yamaguchi Christar team. Since we are involved in separate ministries, the Noars will mainly provide guidance, accountability, and care as we continue here in Ube. Being somewhat on our own can be a little scary, but the people here at the church are happy to help and being a little more on our own will certainly push us into even more situations where we will need to use (and thus practice) our Japanese. We are looking forward to this transition and the ways the Lord will teach us and guide us in the coming months.

Activities Update

October was a busy month with a number of outreach events being held at the Lighthouse Church. At the end of October, we gathered at a retreat center in the mountains with our fellow Christar workers for our annual retreat. It was a very enjoyable time of fellowship and teaching from God's Word.

During the first week in November, we traveled 12 hours north to a conference center near Mt. Fuji with another co-worker for the Japan Church Planting Institute that is held every two years. With over 300 missionaries and Japanese church leaders, we explored various strategies to begin and grow churches.

December held two Christmas concerts at the church, a kids' outreach event, a couple of holiday get-togethers, and plenty of baking and cooking. At the end, we were able to take two of our weeks of vacation to enjoy lounging around the house and catching up on various odds and ends.

Our English classes and Japanese study began again on January 6th and we hit the ground running. We are scheduled to take our first language proficiency test February 2nd. While we are beginning to feel more comfortable with the material that it will cover, we want to do our best in studying for it so that we can pass it and move on to the next level.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW



Many Japanese visit a shrine on January 1st to ask for blessing for the new year.

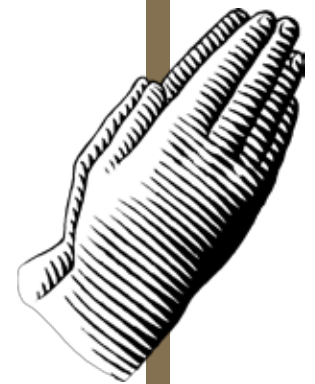
Having grown up in America, a comparatively young country, with a “melting pot” of culture, it has been fascinating to explore long-standing and deeply embedded Japanese customs. Over the New Year’s Holiday, we had the opportunity to see and hear about a number of the customs that have a prominent role in the way Japanese society celebrates the coming of a new year. Whether many people carry them out because it is actually important to them or just to keep in step with everyone else is hard to tell. Nonetheless, they are synonymous with Japanese culture and give insight into the way the Japanese look at life.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

- Please pray for the Burwells as they transition back to America. Pray that God would provide for their various needs and give them guidance for the future. Pray for the Noars and us as we work together in the coming year.
- As we study for our language test, please pray that we will remember and use correctly the grammar forms and vocabulary that we are learning. Pray that they will become second nature to us and that our understanding of them would grow.
- Each week after our English classes, Pastor Uchida teaches the students from the Bible. Some of our students have heard a lot about the Bible already, having been in the Burwells’ classes for a number of years. Others, who have joined recently, seem to be showing a lot of interest. Please pray that God would continue to open their hearts to the message of the Gospel.

Because the New Year’s Holiday focuses on closing an old year and beginning a new one, many Japanese people make a point to clean their houses and cars, lest any of the bad fortune from the last year accidentally get carried over with the dirt to the next year. The first meals of the new year are special, often specific foods are carefully prepared or ordered. Many Japanese travel back to their hometowns to visit with family and relatives. A popular decoration item that can be bought from a number of stores is called the kadomatsu. Three sticks of bamboo are placed in the arrangement and are thought to house the family’s ancestral spirits, as well as various deities.

The last time you see someone before the new year, it is polite to say “This past year you have been kind to me in various ways. Next year also, please treat me well. I hope you welcome a good New Year.” Upon the arrival of the new year, the first time you see someone, it is polite to say “The new year has dawned, congratulations. Next year also, please treat me well.” Many people send out special New Year’s postcards, thanking others and wishing them well. These are specially marked by the post office for delivery on New Year’s Day.



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