



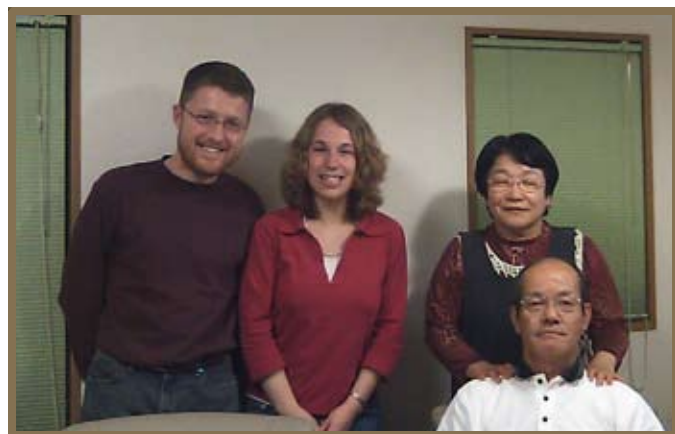
Colby & Theresa Weinhofer

Empowering National Leaders to plant Authentic National Churches

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A MOUNTAIN... HUH?

We were recently invited to have dinner with one of the women from church and her husband. She called the morning of the dinner and said she was talking with her husband and he mentioned that there was (as it would be literally translated from Japanese) "a mountain in front of their house." Colby was not sure if he was misunderstanding her or if some bizarre landscaping accident had occurred. "Hai... (Okay...)" he replied and paused, waiting for her to continue. After talking further, we concluded the meaning was that they live right *next to* (prepositions can be tricky things!) a small mountain that we might enjoy hiking up when we visited.



Us with the Masudas after sharing a fun hike and a delicious dinner.

The Masudas are very friendly people and, having studied English themselves, are good about speaking slowly and understandably for us who are not fluent in Japanese. Mrs. Masuda shared that when she became a Christian many years ago, her husband, who is not a Christian, came to her defense against her family's objections. Mr. Masuda then shared a little about his beliefs, his uncertainties about the nature of the cosmos, and how he finds the Japanese Bible sometimes difficult to understand. After talking with him about what Paul had to say about God's power as seen in the universe, Colby was able to show him where to download PDFs of a newer Japanese Bible translation that he could read.

Recent Happenings

In March, Theresa had an opportunity to spend some time outside of class with her English students. The ladies decided to have an adult dress-up party, where they helped her put on a fancy kimono (a rather complicated process) and then had lunch together.

We also recently began planning a youth outreach event for the church that will take place this summer. While we feel a bit nervous about using our shaky Japanese with teens, this will be a good opportunity for ministry and language practice. As we prepare for our oral conversation test later this summer, we are glad for opportunities to use our Japanese in practical, everyday settings.

In April, the church held a ladies luncheon. The wife of a pastor from the Christar-planted church in the next town came and spoke on refreshing the soul. Although we helped out a little, it was exciting to see the people of the church plan and execute an event with minimal missionary involvement.

Also in April, we took on our first major project with our new teammates as we organized this year's Christar Japan retreat. It was held on a small remote island about 30 minutes off the coast of Yamaguchi Prefecture called Otsushima. We had three relaxing days of sharing, discussion, and fellowship.

ALONG CAME A SPIDER...



***Theresa's little friend
right before being set free.***

We were with our language tutor a few weeks ago, when I happened to look over at Colby and see a spider crawling on his shirt. As he calmly brushed the spider away, our tutor said, "Please be careful that you don't kill it!". While most people would think nothing of killing a bug on their shirt, as Colby and I talked about it later, we noted that our tutor's plea for the spider's life was very much a reflection of Buddhism. Buddhists believe that all life is valuable as part of the universal life force. When a living thing dies, its life force is reborn as another living thing.

This being is not necessarily a continuation of its past life, but it is a new conscious being connected to the previous one. Buddhists believe that it is wrong to do harm (especially needless harm) to other living creatures. Devout Japanese Buddhists believe that a person does not have the right to take another being's life. Most Japanese do not follow this philosophy strictly, as they often eat meat; however, it is still an influential concept in their lives. It is the embracing of this philosophy over the last fifty years that has transformed the Japanese from a world military power into a very pacifist people.

While Christians do not share the Buddhist view that living things are reincarnated after death, we do believe that all living things have been made by God and thus have value. Because of this, we should share the Japanese tendency toward honoring and preserving life. Before this incident with our tutor, I would not have thought much about squashing a bug if I saw one. Recently, as I was washing a piece of lettuce, I came across a worm. Remembering this cultural lesson, I carefully extracted it and set it free outside - marveling at how good it felt to help preserve God's creation.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

- We are grateful for our deepening friendship with the Masudas. Despite not sharing his wife's faith, Mr. Masuda seems very friendly with the church people and open to discussion. Pray for him as he continues to seek the truth. Pray for Mrs. Masuda as she helps out with various responsibilities on the church board and as she continues to gently and consistently share her faith in Christ.
- Pray for good opportunities as we continue to get to know our English students. Pray that they and their families would be open to getting together for meals and that we would be able to converse well.
- Praise God for the strong ties between the community of Christar workers in Yamaguchi Prefecture. Pray that we would become more like Christ as we continue to encourage and advise one another. Pray for wisdom as we seek the most effective ways to partner with the churches that have been planted here to continue proclaiming the message of the gospel.



*Serving the church in Japan
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