



FALL 2020

Dear Partners & Friends,

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. Psalm 28:7*

What an incredible adventure our 2020 Home Ministry Assignment (HMA) turned out to be! Our planned seven-month HMA started in December 2019 and extended to 10 1/2 months because of the Corona Virus pandemic. It has truly tested our trust and faith in God's sovereignty, goodness, and faithfulness, changing our "Home Ministry Assignment" into "Homeless Missionary Aid" because we had to move ten times during that time! Over and over we saw God's people offer housing and transportation: sometimes people we hadn't met, and sometimes with little advance notice because of cancelled flights.



This HMA also deepened our appreciation for our supporting churches who, though COVID-19 canceled many opportunities to reconnect in person, encouraged us with their assurances of continued prayer and financial support. As our time to return neared and three of our flights to Japan were cancelled in succession, not only were our needs met, but in God's plan those delays gave us time to clear out Gary's mom's apartment after she had a series of strokes, and to help her transition to a care facility very near her church.

When we left Japan in December 2019, we knew we would miss the 2020 seminary graduation in late March 2020. Also scheduled in the spring was the first-ever two-week church planting intensive training by City to City Japan (CTCJ) which was finally executed in October, adapting to the restrictions and requirements of COVID-19 precautions. Sixteen church planters gathered for the onsite and online combined training, community building, and learning! Though we couldn't be there in-person, from what we observed online and from feedback evaluations of the training, this turned out to be an even better learning experience than what was expected for a first-time attempt! What a joy to see leaders we helped train years ago now become excellent trainers themselves for the next generation of church planters!

City to City  
Japan  
Church Planting  
Intensives with  
16 church planters  
& their wives  
October 2020



A second major event for us this fall was Gary's Sonship Part I course with nine students at the Christ Bible Seminary in Nagoya, which is about the theology of our adoption in Christ. It's not the first time he's taught this course, but it is the first time to be offered online by Zoom. The blessing is that he could teach from Hawaii! The challenge is doing so online versus in-person, which we all know is less satisfactory for both teacher and students.

To recap, here are items for praise and prayer to bring before our Lord:

- Praise for Gary's mother's transition into her new care home and prayer for her ongoing adjustments to a new setting, therapists, and hopefully reconnecting to her church family soon.
- Praise that, though the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted much of our schedule and expectations, God fulfilled His plans and purposes for us in amazing, surprising, and beautiful ways! Our prayer is that God would continue to help us have open hearts to learn and trust him in these uncertain times and new normals so that His work in and through us would grow and flourish.
- Praise for God answering our desire and vision to see the next generation of church planters and church revitalizers raised through trainings like the CTCJ Intensives and the CBS Sonship course.
- We praise God that we could gather the necessary paperwork to be able to return to Japan, arriving on Monday, November 2nd. We tested negative for COVID-19 twice in the process, and are in quarantine until mid-November, praying for continued good health, and working from home.

Finally, we'd like to end this letter anticipating a particularly meaningful Thanksgiving Day worship service in a park with our team. We are profoundly grateful to our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who provided for us every step of this journey, and goes ahead of us as we move into a still-uncertain future of COVID-affected ministry. Thank you so very much for coming alongside and journeying with us both in prayer and with words of encouragement through this challenging and unpredictable season of our lives!

*Lois & Gary*

Gary & Lois Watanabe

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