



"KNOWING THEREFORE THE TERROR OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN..." 2 COR. 5:11

NEWS FROM NAGOYA

✧ a smith
family
update ✧

VOL. 10

DECEMBER 21, 2017 – MISSION UPDATE

Baptism Now Saves You

by Brock Smith

"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven...." 1 Peter 3:21-22

Japan is God's country. That's right—I didn't mistype—it is not the country of gods, but the country of the true and living God of the Bible. With all the barriers here, with all the struggles and trials, with all the resistance and indifference, there are still the brightest of moments. The Lord Jesus, Who is at the right hand of God—is saving souls in Japan and is building His Church.

The above photo is of a very scenic place in northern Japan called, 鬼押し出し園 (pronounced *oni-oshi-dashi-en*), which means something to the effect of "the park where the demons pushed it out". It is the magma-rock remains of a huge volcanic eruption of Mt. Asama a few hundred years ago. Like most things in life, the Japanese have turned it into a way to make money and have stamped their identity on it, with shrines and temples scattered throughout the acreage of the park.

The Japanese of old thought the demons in the earth caused the eruption. But it was the Lord Jesus, Who is in sovereign control of all things, whether in Japan or the rest of the world, Who



permitted Mt. Asama to explode in 1783. He watched it erupt from heaven, just as He watched us on that day this past fall as we took photos of its beauty. 200 years have passed, but these same rocks point to the creative power & control of the living God and His Son, Jesus. The evidence is the same; it is how it is interpreted which makes all the difference in the world.

The same misunderstanding is there when the Japanese view one of their own being baptized. The Japanese unbeliever sees only that *the demons pushed it out*—in other words that for some bizarre reason, their own countryman has sacrificed being Japanese by being baptized into

this foreign God named *Jesus*. To them, Jesus is not Japanese; He is a foreign God, a *demon* intruding on their soil. Obviously, they are missing the mark. But what they mean by the fact that Jesus is not Japanese, is that He doesn't fit their mold. In Japan, everything has its place and everything has its mold. To them, Jesus has no place here. When they view their own being baptized, they view it as an irreversible event, much like the explosion of a volcano. There is no compartment to place it in, no mold into which it fits. Its *bara-bara*—like the scattering of lava rocks on the slopes of Mt. Asama. Once more, they are missing the point completely.

This past year, we had the privilege of playing a part in the salvation & baptism of Mrs. Obata (pictured here in the center). After many years of gospel meetings and Bible studies with Mr. & Mrs. Kobayashi at Ichishi Assembly, the Holy Spirit used me to point her to a key passage of Scripture which made all the hard work & pieces fall into place. She was born again that day, personally receiving the Lord Jesus as Savior and soon followed through in obedience to baptism.

Unlike what the Japanese seem to think, there is nothing magical about the waters of baptism. They don't make you a Christian. It is the genuine heartfelt repentance & faith in the Lord Jesus—like that of Mrs. Obata—which saves. Baptism is just the eruption of joy & testimony which follows; the peace of mind and declaration of a good conscience towards God

Help From Above



Charlotte Royal – a former missionary to Japan. She came to help us for 3 weeks as soon as she heard about our needs.

This third year in Japan has been truly amazing. With every trial comes abundant blessings; what seems to be a death blow by the enemy can be transformed into a miracle of God. This past summer was a time of traversing a dark valley, where we could hardly even see our outstretched arms before us. Every day was full of unknowns. We thought we would lose our baby girl who is now 36 weeks along.

After having lost our 3rd baby in January of this year through miscarriage, we entered the summer with another trial; 12 weeks into Kelly's fourth pregnancy, the waters surrounding the baby mysteriously ruptured. Kelly was hospitalized for 9 days and Brock was faced with caring for the children 24/7 while we waited to see what the Lord would do.

During this time, countless saints all over the world heard about our situation and prayed earnestly for us. In short, the Lord heard and answered—He spared our daughter's life and somehow did the impossible. Even the unbelieving Japanese doctor whom Kelly regularly sees has confessed that it was a miracle!

After Kelly was released from the hospital on modified bedrest, Charlotte Royal—a former missionary here from the State of Georgia—met a huge need, offering to come over and help

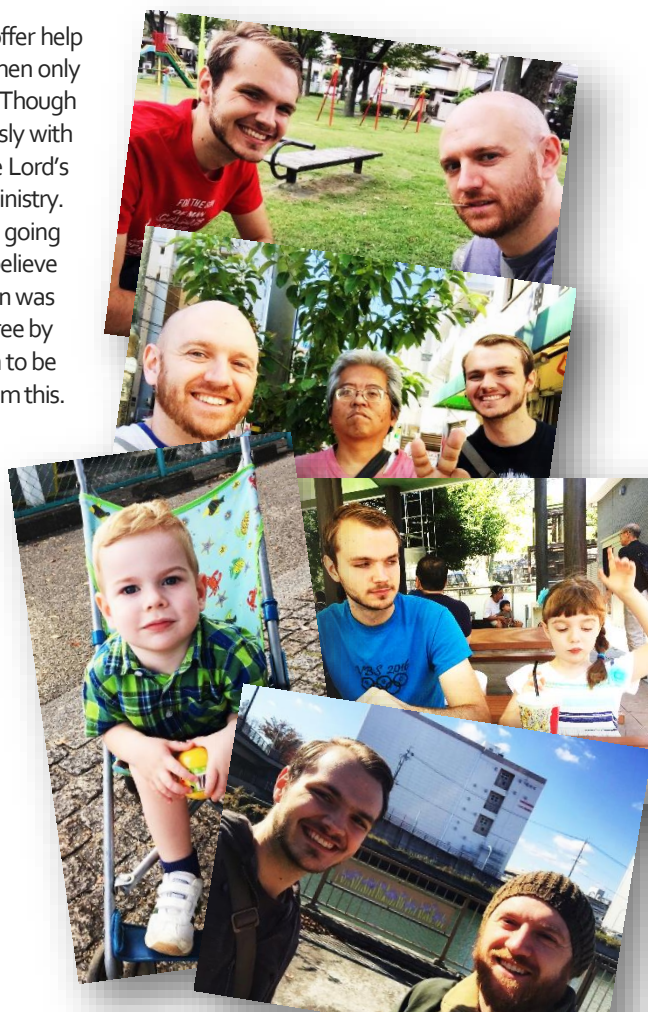
without hesitation. At that crucial time, she was able to do so much for us! From playing with Evangeline and Zion, to cooking and cleaning, she allowed Kelly to continue to rest and recover and for Brock to return to areas of ministry. As a teacher of the Japanese language to online students, she made a big sacrifice, still having to work remotely from our apartment on certain mornings. Evangeline still plays with the paperdolls that Charlotte made for her, and Zion still occasionally calls out at random times, “*Sha-wit, where are you?!*” We are forever grateful for the service and sacrifice of Charlotte!

About a month after Charlotte left, Luke Wood from East Tulsa Bible Chapel came over to offer help with the ministry and practical things. He did this at his family's and his own expense, even when only three days earlier his family had just returned from adopting his new sister, Joanna, from China. Though by this time Kelly was permitted to resume fairly normally activities, Luke helped tremendously with errands and dishes. Further, because he has a huge heart for the Japanese and is seeking the Lord's face on coming here full-time to minister, he was able to assist in many aspects of Brock's ministry. Before Kelly's pregnancy complication, Mrs. Obata had just been saved and Brock had started going out multiple times a week to do street ministry and distribute gospel literature. We very much believe that part of the reason behind this trial was because of the strides forward we had made; Satan was striking back since one of the millions who had been in his sinister grip on Japan had been set free by the light of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mrs. Obata had been born again and was soon to be baptized; the forces of darkness were intent on stopping any momentum that would come from this.

Enter Luke! Not only did Luke help by ministering with Brock, he also went out on his own when Brock was busy with preparing messages for Hanamachi & Ichishi Assemblies. Overall, from October to December, there were 7 messages Brock needed to prepare. Luke was also able to travel with Brock when they went to Ichishi to minister, when they went to the Annual Saga Hot Air balloon festival, and even up to see Tim & Christiane Marcy for a brief visit. Luke also traveled to Tokyo twice to visit a larger assembly and meet the young people there. In the end, Luke not only helped us immensely, he was able for his future decision-making to get some vital experience and knowledge about Japan that he could not do otherwise had he not made the sacrifice and come. We are tremendously thankful for our time with him, for his family's sacrifice and for the new friendship we now have. The children still consider him an uncle and Evangeline often asks (after praying for Luke to keep learning Japanese) when he is coming back to Japan. “*Godspeed,*” we say! And we offer thanks to our Father, Who sent us help from above and enabled us to pass through that dark valley with helping hands.



Luke Wood – a future missionary to Japan in God's will. Luke was able to stay for 3 months and help us in many ways.

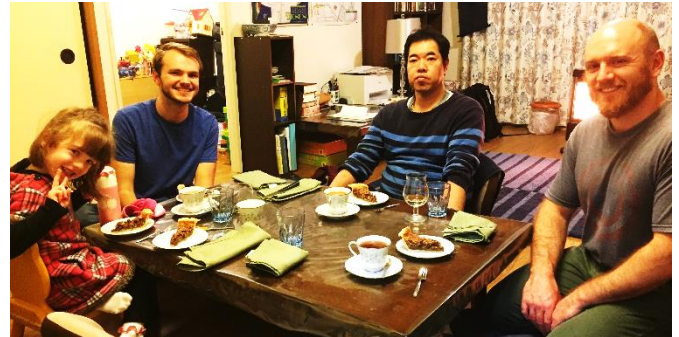


Ministering As a Priest the Gospel of God

We are all called to be *royal priests*, according to 1st Peter 2:9. In this regard, it differs from our role as a *holy priesthood*—which is our responsibility *Godward*. As royal priests, we have a responsibility *manward*—to proclaim to our fellow man “the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”. The Apostle Paul says it thusly: “...ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:16).

There are many ways, many different ministries, many servants—but all called to the same purpose: “to proclaim the excellencies of Him”. Whatever we do, in all things we should seek to make Him and His glory known. No situation is beyond the realm of use for the Master. Our service to Him is an offering—if we are doing it as such—and we should pray like the Apostle Paul that it may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Though Christ Jesus is the One to build His Church, He has bestowed responsibility, stewardship, privilege and honor on us all to partake with Him in His great work. There are two extremes to be avoided in this—just like in most doctrines. Some would say that no matter what they do, Christ *will* build His Church. It is true that in the end, *that Church which is His Bride* will be presented to Him spotless and blameless, and He will have fulfilled what He said He would do.

The extreme view that we have no role or responsibility in the matter must be avoided. The other extreme is that it *all* depends upon us; if we fail, He fails. This too cannot be the case, for there will be a beautiful Bride one day, prepared for the Bridegroom, the Lamb. Again, like the doctrines of the Trinity, or salvation, we see this fine balance. In regards to proclaiming the gospel, it is a work of God, but man has a stewardship or responsibility to fulfill it. The gospel was not given to angels to proclaim, but men—the very recipients of the grace it declares that is in Christ Jesus. We are best fitted to minister the gospel of grace because we are the very ones who have tasted and experienced it.



Mr. Kawakita – He made contact with us after receiving a gospel tract



Bro. Kishikawa – Saga ministry

As the Apostle Paul put vital importance on his role & responsibility as a minister of Christ, more and more I am being convinced of the same. If the greatest missionary to ever live was hoping that his offering of the gentiles to God *may become acceptable*, how much more should we, who stumble along in the trail he blazed?

This past year has been a year filled with many opportunities for ministry. Our work has ranged from continuing to teach at Hanamachi on a regular basis, to being invited to nearby Ichishi Christ Assembly for special teaching meetings and gospel work. We have continued to seek to win one

unbelieving Japanese male to Christ. “Lord, please send someone.” is a prayer many of you have been praying for nearly the whole time we have been in Nagoya. We are happy to report that this prayer has seemed to be answered. We were contacted this September by a Mr. Kawakita—a man who received a gospel comic from me one day this past summer when I was distributing them at an intersection south of our home. He is a man who suffers from mild schizophrenia, and has many fears. Though he doesn’t yet seem to grasp His needs and His lost condition before a Holy God, we pray that he continues to seek the only true healing which restores, satisfies and saves.

Kelly’s ministry has also expanded. Evangeline’s preschool is run by the oldest protestant church in central Nagoya, and Kelly regularly attends the monthly evangelistic Bible study which the pastor of the church hosts for the mothers of the preschool children. Though still limited by the language barrier, Kelly been able to witness there, even to the point of ‘making’ the pastor and his wife who host it share their personal salvation testimonies, which many long-time attendees had not yet heard. Also, by the help of the saints at Hanamachi, Kelly was able to put down in writing, the story of this current pregnancy. Kelly has given these to the preschool teachers, as an encouragement to their faith, and to many of the preschool mothers, almost all of whom are unbelievers. Also in the daily errands of life, when Japanese ladies approach her to ask about the baby or touch her belly, she has had the privilege to hand out this tract to them which tells the story of this miracle, of the True God’s power and redemptive grace. She has already passed out nearly 100 of these little tracts. Lord willing, we will be able to update the tract after the baby is born and continue handing them out to anyone who stops to admire her!



Though it would seem that there has been little fruit here in Nagoya, in three years of ministry in Japan, His excellencies have been proclaimed. Over 6000+ Japanese have heard the gospel through tracts & literature and many more through other means; through personal witness, through gospel preaching in the assembly and on the streets, through hospitality & meals and through Bible studies. Mrs. Obata has been saved & baptized and believing Kana also has obeyed the Lord in baptism. We desire our prayer to match that of Paul’s; that this offering would be acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Soon to be 'Baby Outside'!

by Kelly Smith

With less than a month to go until the due date, we are eagerly anticipating finally getting to meet our new little one. We are praising God for the health of this baby thus far and praying for a safe delivery. God had been using this trial in ways we couldn't comprehend at the time back in July. Dr. Tatsuki, who cared for me during my hospitalization, explained that his daughter attends a Catholic high school when he found out that we were here in Japan as Christian missionaries. When we gave him a thank you note and a copy of the tract about the pregnancy, it caused him to open up and say that he "often feels like he wants to read the Bible", and therefore does, although he followed it up with the typical "but I am not a Christian" response of the Japanese. Of course, we encouraged him to keep reading it even though he is not a Christian! At my most recent prenatal visit, the very first thing he said was "I read the story about your daughter. I think it must be some kind of miracle," even though it had been a full month since my last appointment with him when we'd given the tract. It is a huge step for a doctor (who in Japan is considered to be on a much higher social level than the patient) to speak so frankly with us. We can only assume that, although he's an experienced obstetrician, seeing our baby survive and thrive has had a profound impact on him.



Evangeline's 5th birthday and my big belly

Another way the Lord has blessed us with help during this pregnancy and given me an opportunity for ministry is with Mrs. Nishio. She is a mother of four with her two youngest boys still at Evangeline's preschool. She regularly attends the monthly Bible study there and has said that even after her youngest has gone on to elementary school, she will want to keep coming to the study! Mrs. Nishio is not a Christian, but has been happy to have all of her children at the preschool—learning Bible verses and songs, participating in the nativity Christmas pageant—even though her original reason for choosing this particular school was that there was no uniform and they were flexible about arriving late in the mornings when she had three kids aged three and under! She has been a great help by taking me in her minivan to the big mall several times for grocery shopping trips where I can buy way more all at one time than any one person (yes, even Luke!) could physically carry back. She's offered many times to help in any way we need once the baby is born. It's been truly humbling to receive such help and kind offers of service from someone who is still quite busy with her own family. Her three-year-old son was recently hospitalized for treatment of Kawasaki disease, and she has been reading a Max Lucado book that the pastor from the Bible study has given her while she spends so much time at the hospital. She recently told me that the words of God "echo in her heart". Her son is doing well and should be discharged soon, but I'm praying that this break from the daily routine and bustle has given her much time to consider the things of God.

Last "News From Nagoya"

That's correct! This will be our last newsletter from Nagoya—not because we are leaving Japan, but because in the Lord's providence and will, He has opened up a new chapter in our ministry to the Japanese. In the will of the Lord, we will be moving to neighboring Mie Prefecture to the west of us, starting next February. Currently our visas are in the process of renewal (which is taking longer than we expected); if approved, we have found a house in a "rural" area of Tsu City, the capital of Mie Prefecture. The owners are willing to rent to us—which has been a hardship for us upon reaching Japan—and the rent and cost of living is lower than expensive Nagoya. We will be just a few minutes from Ichishi Christ Assembly, which has graciously received us already into happy fellowship. Ichishi is slightly larger than our current assembly, Hanamachi—and we estimate that it has 25-30 in regular attendance and fellowship. Ichishi also differs from Hanamachi in two other ways. There is an actual stand-alone assembly building (not scripturally necessary, but culturally vital in Japan) and our ministry will also be expanding to including preaching in English and helping disciple and teach two Filipino families. Brock intends to occasionally visit Hanamachi and help with the teaching ministry. But since Hanamachi already has three teaching brethren, compared to that of Ichishi which only has two, we felt that this was also an obvious area of need that the Lord was pointing to. Hanamachi, though sad at losing us, have supported our decision and are praying with us.

So, next year, look to find a revamped newsletter in your inbox. For now, a Merry Christmas! And please pray for these important matters:

- That our visas would be approved without any barriers or complications
- That the baby would be born healthy and strong and that Kelly would deliver in the Lord's timing and remain healthy
- That we would transition in the will of the Lord to Mie Prefecture and Ichishi Christ Assembly
- That Mr. Kawakita would continue to attend Hanamachi, though we are leaving
- That the brothers at Hanamachi would take seriously the evangelism and discipling of Mr. Kawakita and others who may attend
- That Kelly would keep in contact with Mrs. Nishio and that her openness to learn about the Bible would turn into a strong desire to know the Lord

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