



Barton Prayer Letter

JAPAN FOR CHRIST, CHRIST FOR THE WORLD

December 2011

“The true light that gives light to every person was coming into the world.” (John 1:9)

The Apostle John opens his version of the Christmas story with these words. The lights of Christmas remind us of God’s amazing gift of His Only Son to this world that lays in the darkness of sin, fear, falsehood and oppression. It is our privilege as recipients of this light, given to us through faith in Jesus Christ, to share this light with those around us. We’re busy doing that this season in Japan.

In Sendai

Tamagawa Church of God has been seeking ways it can help churches ministering to the needs of people in the earthquake/tsunami stricken region of northeastern Japan known as Tohoku. Through a contact of Tamagawa Church’s associate pastor Tomoko Fujiwara, we connected with Sendai Church. This church does regular visitation at several temporary housing units. On December 4th after Sunday morning worship we loaded the mission van with lots of vegetables and a mountain of toilet paper, two of the daily needs hard to come by in these units built in the mountains above the tsunami zones.

It was a precious time as we delivered the goods and then had a chance to sing “In His Time” and share from Matthew 11:28. The people in these units are not Christian, but have become open to the work of the church through Sendai Church’s Pastor Itoh. Please continue to remember this relief work and those in the region who carry it on. The light of “Immanuel, God with us” is thus being shared.

At Tamagawa Church of God

On Sunday December 18th, the elementary school age children’s Sunday School held their Christmas service. Altogether we have nearly 100 kids regularly in our Sunday School program, with practically all coming from non-church families. The Kohitsuji (Lamb) Kindergarten and Tamagawa Seigakuin are the sources of these kids. As in many churches in Japan, the Tamagawa Church has a kindergarten as part of its outreach into the community. The kids come to Sunday School as part of the kindergarten curriculum, and many of them continue even when they move on into elementary school. This year, with their parents looking on, the kids once again read and sang through the wonder of the Christmas story.

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The Campus of Tamagawa Seigakuin



Surely these moms and dads saw the light of the gift of Christ shining in their faces. Still to come are the Christmas Eve Candle Service and Christmas worship on the 25th. The church has produced 4,000 fliers to pass out in the neighborhood and have distributed with the local newspaper.

At The Funeral of Haruo Murayama

Last month I asked you to pray for 79 year old Mr. Haruo Murayama. He was called home to be with the Lord on November 27th. I baptized Mr. Murayama in his home on October 22nd. His wife, who has been a Christian since her teenage years when she was a student at Tamagawa Seigakuin, had prayed for him and shared her witness through the decades of their marriage. How grateful we are that he made his decision and responded in faith to God's Spirit. Many testified to the fact that his funeral service was indeed a blessed time of sharing the light of God's persevering love.

At Tamagawa Seigakuin

Two major Christmas events were held at Tama Sei on December 3rd. In the morning the school held its annual Christmas worship for prospective students and their families. We had more than 500 attend this service, many of whom have NEVER been to church. I spoke about "The Greatest Gift." What an opportunity to shine the light of God's great love!

In the afternoon was the annual FTA/Alumnae Christmas Praise Worship Service. There were an estimated 800 who attended. I spoke in this service about the joy of homecoming. This year, many in Japan lost their homes to the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear contamination catastrophes.

Even today more than 330,000 living in temporary housing don't have a home to return to. We are reminded that Jesus gave up his glorious home in heaven so that we would have an eternal home, always there, always prepared for us.

I also shared with those at the Praise Service that just a few days before she died, Cheryl told her doctor, "I'm ready to go." When he looked at her quizzically she emphatically added, "I'm ready to go TO HEAVEN." This is the hope we share. Because of forgiveness through Jesus' cross and the victory of his resurrection, we know that we have an eternal home. In his book *In The Light of Eternity*, Randy Alcorn says, "The greatest weakness of the western church today is arguably our failure...to take seriously the reality that heaven is our home. Out of this springs...our failure to live now in the light of eternity." May the light of Christmas bring you joy in the reality of our Savior, Jesus Christ.



Praise!

Samuel Teibor Lyngdoh was born at 12:58 AM on November 25th in Beijing, China. Mother Stephanie (Barton), father Donald Lyngdoh and little Samuel are all fine. My son, Ben and I will be traveling to visit the Lyngdoh family from December 26th to January 6th. It seems that Benjamin (4 on Jan. 30, 2012) and Hosanna (2 on Dec. 29, 2011) have taken pretty well to their new brother. Labor was only about 2 1/2 hours long, and Steph left the hospital in three days, then took the train back to Qingdao the next day. Wow.



Please Pray

*Pray that the 100 kids attending Sunday School and kindergarten at Tamagawa Church of God will know that God's love is for them. Pray for the 16 who serve as Sunday School teachers.

*Pray for recruitment needs of Tamagawa Seigakuin. Entrance exams will be held February 1st, 3rd (Jr. High) and 10th (Sr. High).

*Pray for churches serving in the disaster area that they might share the love and hope found in Jesus, and for Tamagawa Church as we continue to seek ways to help.

*Pray for high school seniors taking college entrance exams. This is a high pressure, intense time.

*Pray for God's Spirit to move upon Japan. Pray for an awakening in the church and a thirsting after God like this land has never seen. Only God can do this!

Mailing Address: 7-12-22 Okusawa, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, Japan 158-0083

E-mail <barton@tamasei.ed.jp> Church of God Ministries Project 42.10037