



Barton Prayer Letter

JAPAN FOR CHRIST, CHRIST FOR THE WORLD

January-February 2012

Volume 03

Twice Thrown Away, Twice Retrieved

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:1-2)

Jesus is in the business of saving. When others grow weary, when others give up, when others lose hope, Jesus is there to lift us up out of the mire and set our feet on the rock. This is not only good news, it is the *best news*. The woman at the well, the Syro-Phoenician woman, blind Bartimaeus, Mary Magdalene and so many, many others...not only did they get a rough deal in life but they were judged and forsaken by those around them. *Twice thrown away.*

By the way, I have a new guitar. Well, it is not new, but new to me. I got it out of the trash at school. Our business manager had found three guitars in the neighborhood trash, picked them up, kept one for himself and threw the other two, which had parts broken and missing, into the school trash. *Twice thrown away.*

I found them, fixed them, gave one to Tamagawa Church for the youth room, and kept one. *Twice retrieved.*

On January 30th, Tamagawa Church of God once again visited the Kirigasaki Village temporary housing units in the mountains around Onagawa, a town swept away by the March 11th tsunami. I played my "new" guitar as we sang with these unreached folks "In His time, in His time, He makes all



Kirigasaki Port
The tsunami rose to the arrow.

things beautiful in His time...." Then I gave a short talk from John 3:16, and told them about God's love that continues to seek and to save the lost.

The Campus
of Tamagawa
Seigakuin

I told them how thrilled I was when I first heard music come once again from this "twice retrieved" guitar, a guitar that had been thrown away two times but was now once again fulfilling the purpose for which it was made.

Then we prayed with them, that they might not lose hope and that they might learn to trust in the One who does not give up on us, the one who saves us and restores us to the purpose for which we have been made.

A Calling Restored

The next time I played my twice retrieved guitar was at the national pastors' meeting, held February 6th-8th. The theme for this year's study was "calling". I was privileged to give a brief message for the opening worship.



Winter Pastors' Retreat

After sharing about my twice retrieved guitar and the visit to Onagawa, I reminded the pastors of a famous Japanese poem entitled *The Canary That Lost Its Song*. While the early verses of this poem suggest throwing it away, burying it, or beating it, the final stanza exalts that "a ride on an ivory boat on the moonlit sea will help the canary remember its song."

(continued on page 2)

After a rich time of study and retreat, "a ride on the moonlit sea" you might say, the pastors closed the three day retreat by singing the canary song together. *Twice retrieved.*

Please pray for the 24 ministers serving the Church of God in Japan as they fulfill the purposes for which they were called.

Coming of Age Day

January 29th was a special day of celebration at Tamagawa Church as seven young people turning twenty years old this year were prayed for in a service of recognition of their "coming of age". The church uses this Japanese national holiday, "Coming of Age Day", to invite back to church young people who have gone to kindergarten here or been in the Sunday School program at one time.

Please pray for these contacts restored, that these young people might be reconnected to the church. Also, thank God for the testimony shared that morning by Miss Tomika Koike, a Christian young lady in the Tamagawa Church.

Tamagawa Seigakuin Entrance Exams

If you want to know how to pray for Japan, you really need to know about school entrance exam season. January and February are the months when all levels of schools throughout the nation conduct examinations to select students for their schools. Though compulsory education is provided through 9th grade, kids at any level can take tests to get into academically higher ranked schools or private schools with whose educational philosophy they (or their parents) agree. These tests are not only important for the students, but for the stability and status of the schools.

Keeping with tradition, Tama Sei held its junior high exams on February 1st and 3rd, and its high school exam on February 10th. Two things, about this year's exams—1) we have a great group of kids coming in when the school year starts in April, and 2) we came up short on the number we hoped would enter. The latter fact, of course, affects the finances of the school. Still, we are thankful to God for the 141 kids committed to start junior high here (160 was our goal) and we ask you to join us in prayer for them.

As always, most of them are not Christian, though this year we had 20 kids recommended by their pastors, which is more than usual and shows the regard for the Christian stance of Tama Sei. All students are required to go to church through their three years of junior high. Please pray for them and for the churches and Sunday School teachers who will be welcoming these kids, many of whom will be going to church for the first time in their lives.

Praises!

How grateful I am for being able to go with son Ben to Qingdao, China to visit daughter Stephanie, her husband Donald and their family over the Christmas holiday. These



days were meaningful for us all as we reconnected as family. I was especially

thankful to get to know new grandson Samuel and read many stories to Benjamin (4) and Hosanna (2).

Important Note: I hope to send this Prayer Letter to as many as possible by e-mail. If you are receiving a hard copy but have the capability and don't mind getting the e-mail version (brighter layout! :), please send your e-mail address to me or Park Place Church of God. Thank you!!

Please Pray

***Pray** for Tamagawa Seigakuin's high school graduation on March 15th. Most students (80%) enter four-year universities. Pray for these 183 girls as they leave the shelter of Tama Sei. Pray that the spiritual education received here will remain their guiding light.

***Pray** for the Japan Mission Staff spring staff meeting to be held March 28th-30th. This is an important time of refreshing, refocusing and recommitting.

***Pray** for the publication of Cheryl's devotional book *Steady Till Sunset* in Japanese. The great news is that the translation work has been completed! It is now being laid out and prepared for printing. I hope to have this done by April 1st.

***Pray** for revival to come to the nation of Japan.

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