

## MISSION PRAYER

August 2021

**Attribute of God: Our rest**

**Key verse: Psalm 62:5, Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him.**

**This month's focus is on: Nick and Erin Petkoff, Mitsuo and Akiko Fujishima, Gay Hongo, Jondy Natividad, Jon and Maki Robison family, David and Yuka Mills, Richard and Keri Nakamura**

**Missionaries: Nick and Erin Petkoff**

**Country: Japan**

**Praise and requests:**

1. The last time Nick and Erin wrote we got to hear a little bit about what Nick has been up to in his ministry internship (the most upcoming thing being the suicide/depression awareness event he helped put on in July), but they haven't shared that much about what Erin has been up to.
2. The vision Erin currently has is to simply make friends and walk life with people-inviting individuals and small groups into their home, creating a space where people can open up and be silly through games and language faux pas, and through built trust and the work of the Holy Spirit, share openly about faith and life. God has already blessed Erin with a few individual ladies she meets with weekly, but she is looking at how to expand her circle to meet more people and connect them together.
3. Early in July, Erin attended her first Japanese wedding. Erin was a little worried about traveling by herself since the venue was kind of far away. However, the bride was amazingly considerate and wound up pairing her with another single girl friend of hers who lives near Erin. Like a blind date, they met up at a train station, chatted during the entire commute, sat together at the event, and even got dinner together afterward. God was definitely orchestrating the situation, and Erin is thankful to have made a new friend!
4. Nick wasn't able to attend the wedding because it clashed with the national standardized Japanese proficiency test he signed up for. ***They won't know the results for a while yet, but they would appreciate your prayers as this test only happens twice a year and he needs to pass a certain level in order to enter graduate school where he plans to continue his studies in mental health.***
5. While they had a few separate experiences, something they were able to do together recently was celebrate their 7<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary! They went to a nearby beach town to see the blossoming hydrangeas at various temples, eat the local delicacies (shirasu: tiny white fish, babies of anchovies/sardines), and be near the water. Despite the finicky weather, it was overall a successful and enjoyable trip.

**The Petkoffs thank you for joining them on their adventures, both cultural and spiritual!**

**Missionaries: Mitsuo and Akiko Fujishima**

**Country: Japan**

**Praise and requests:**

1. The Fujishimas have been in Tokyo for two weeks. They are grateful to the Lord when they think of how they got their apartment; it is in a quiet residential area with not many apartments, and though very tiny it is just what they needed and it takes only five minutes on foot to get to Akiko's mother's place. God is amazingly good! Every day they visit her mother and care for her. "...to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." (Eph. 3:20). Mitsuo and Akiko praise the Lord for His goodness to them!
2. In five days, (Aug. 7<sup>th</sup>) the Fujishimas are driving back to the peninsula to resume their ministry. Please pray they will be wise with the use of their limited time with Akiko's mother in Tokyo.

**Missionary: Gay Hongo****Music Ministry****Praise:**

1. Gay was able to visit Northern California, where her son Andrew and his wife, Meghan live. Even though she came to California for a vacation, she's always ministry-minded, too. She asked Meghan to travel with her to Southern California for a few days, particularly to minister at the church of Greg and Kennis Bishop. They are long-time friends and are now serving at Grace Covenant Church in San Diego. Gay and Andrew led worship at the morning service. It was such a privilege to be able to share their songs and testimonies and to usher in the Spirit of God as they led in worship.
2. Gay is so thankful to our Lord for providing Taylor Pagaragan to assist her in the ministry of Christian Vision. Since joining their team just this past April, Taylor has already provided valuable help in so many projects. Best of all, she can take over Gay's ministry duties so she can have extended vacation days. It is a blessing to see her connecting with seniors, youth, and children in the various ministries there at Kalihi Union Church. Taylor and Gay had the opportunity to minister together at West Oahu Christian Church. While Gay was focused on working with seniors, Taylor has a passion for youth ministry. Gay is so thankful for Taylor's servant heart—always willing to jump in and help wherever needed, always for the Lord's glory.
3. Their overseas ministry has come to a halt because of the pandemic, but they trust in the words of Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in His time." The Lord has allowed them to continue their ministry there in Hawaii and California through small gatherings, socially-distanced worship services, and online concerts.
4. Taylor Pagaragan thanks and praises God for providing a mentor for her in Gay Hongo, as well as support through Andrew, the Board of Directors, and Kalihi Union Church. They are currently working with Kalihi Union Church to continue building up the team and resources, the foundation, of the Hongo Music Center. They are passionate about using the performing arts to promote the dignity and self-worth of the people of Hawaii and especially the residents of Kalihi, one of the lowest-income neighborhoods in the United States, by providing life-enhancing creative experiences. Taylor is humbled for the opportunity to carry on the Hongo legacy of music, missions, and sharing the aloha spirit. Thank you so much for your continued partnership and support of the Hongo Music Center and Christian Vision, and she looks forward to meeting you soon!

**Missionary: Cornelio (Jondy) Natividad****Country: Japan****Praise:**

Having an OTM (On the Mission) basketball camp in Ito was something Jondy had envisioned ever since he met the basketball coach in Ito. With Covid last year, Jondy didn't see it happening anytime soon. But God opened the door this summer! Jondy knew that if he did move to Japan, that he could eventually become the liaison for OTM and connect the ministry to his network...which is what has happened! Praise God!

**Requests: Please pray:**

1. As Jondy was able to personally introduce Mike and OTM to his old basketball coach in Ito, pray that this will be a start of a fruitful relationship.
2. This was a barebones OTM basketball camp with just Jondy and Mike. Pray that all will be protected from Covid as it was a holiday weekend and there were a LOT of out-of-towners and tourists.
3. Pray that continued bonding took place and for the players to remember what was shared about faith and God.
4. Pray for the salvation of Coach Kobayashi and his wife, Mari. They have become genuine friends with Jondy. They know that Jondy is a Christian and the coach's mother is a member of the church Gospel choir, even though she's not a believer. There were plenty of interactions throughout the camp, over dinner, etc. Pray their hearts would be open and that seeds were planted in their hearts.
5. Please pray that coach and his wife would become open to attending the church in Ito, especially since he already knows the pastor and the congregation.

**Missionaries: Jon, Maki, Aki, Leon, Hugo, and Rhea Robison**

**Country: Japan**

**Praise:**

1. The Robisons celebrated their family's birthday, which was Jon and Maki's 13<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They are thankful to God for his blessings over the years.
2. In mid-July, Jon preached at the House of Grace church plant. He gets to preach again in two weeks and it's been a positive development for him to continue preaching from an outline rather than a manuscript. It shows some progress in his Japanese studies, which he has prioritized this year.
3. Speaking of Japanese studies, Jon took a national proficiency test again (the 6<sup>th</sup> time since 2007), and he feels like he's seeing improvement. The goal has always been to preach in Japanese (the number of pastors in Japan is projected to decrease at a somewhat alarming rate in the coming decades), so it's cool to see progress from his first time around 6 years ago in Iwate prefecture. **Your prayers for continued growth are appreciated!**
4. At the end of July, they had Vacation Bible School at House of Grace. Though it was a modified program due to the current COVID state of emergency, they expected about 20 kids and their parents over a 3-day program. **Your prayers for families to come closer to faith in Jesus Christ are appreciated!**
5. Jon visited a Buddhist Temple as part of an assignment for an online seminary class for World Religions. He needed to visit a place of worship outside the Christian tradition. This worked out well enough, because one of the boys on Leon's baseball team is the heir to the local priesthood at a branch temple of Shin Buddhism. Shin Buddhism is similar to protestant Christianity because instead of trying to achieve enlightenment by one's own merit, one simply needs to repeat or chant a prayer to Amida, an enlightened person who had so much merit stored up that he built a paradise in the afterlife and allows any who call upon him—trusting in his merit—to enter. Jesus claimed to be God and gave His own life for ours, whereas Amida did not claim to be God and did not sacrifice himself on anyone's behalf. Jon doesn't know the answer why Japan is still at 1% Christianity, but he's sure that it's an interesting piece as he prayerfully considers what it is to be Japanese, and also what it is to be a Japanese Christian. **Please pray for leads to share the gospel in a loving way.**
6. If you are a student, you are about to enter the next grade, which in Aki's case puts him in Middle School. Leon, being in the Japanese school system (finishing in March, starting in April) will continue 3<sup>rd</sup> grade after about a month vacation. Hugo is in the middle of his final year of pre-school, and Rhea will enter pre-school next April.
7. Over summer, the kids will keep playing baseball as best as the team can navigate during the state of emergency, and they'll take a family trip to some missionary cabins near Mt. Fuji. Some neighbor/baseball friends will likely join them for a few days at the missionary cabin, which is great because they have been praying for the right time to share the gospel with them. **Please pray for continued relationships to develop and spiritual interest as well.**

**Missionaries: David and Yuka Mills**

**Country: Japan**

**Praise:**

1. Online Student Fellowship- This is a very casual time of conversations about life and God is Scripture. Kingdom Conversations- because so many fewer students come into JIodge, they have much more opportunity for deeper and longer conversations. This has been great! ...and tiring. Please pray for their endurance and alertness!!
2. Son Chapel- Their ministry at Son Chapel continues with taped messages and monthly (socially distanced) gatherings at a community center.
3. Personal discipling-although this has always been a part of their ministry, it has become deeper and somehow better during this COVID time.

**Please pray:**

1. Please pray for their continuing ministry through Jldodge. David just finished building out a coffee roasting work station. They are seeking more direction from the Lord about the future of their roasting efforts. Please pray with the Mills for wisdom; for a clear vision and insight into God's heart for this place!
2. They are experiencing a third wave of Corona virus infections in Japan. Because of this as well as personal things such as Yuka's parents continuing to need some additional help, the Mills have decided to postpone for yet another year, their overdue trip back to the states. They very much appreciate your prayers for wisdom in planning their next trip at the right time.
3. David finally received an appointment in July to receive his vaccination! He should be fully vaccinated including all the wait times by early August. Yuka is still waiting to get her vaccination eligibility ticket.
4. The Mills ask for prayer for friends of theirs who are going through a seriously difficult time. This couple got married a little over one year ago and they now have a six-month old baby. The mother, who struggled a lot with depression for years before getting married is now in a serious depression and has been hospitalized for more than a month. Her husband is taking care of the baby on his own and he, himself has been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder and is now being treated with medication. Yuka has gone to the doctor appointments regarding his wife as an interpreter because the husband's Japanese is not sufficient for that. They have taken some toys for the baby and delivered food a couple of times. And, of course, they pray for them.
5. Please pray for their financial support. They PRAISE GOD and thank you all for your prayers and financial support these past years. God uses those to sustain them and keep them there. But recently Yuka and David have discovered that they are now about \$1,500 short of their needed monthly support. Thank you for your prayers for them as you consider whether God would lead you to partner with them.
6. And please, as always, pray that God will provide many opportunities to share His love and His good news with others!

**Missionaries: Richard and Keri Nakamura****Japanese Diaspora****Praise:**

Richard shares about Naomi and Bob Sheller's baptism. Naomi was born and raised in a nominal Christian family in Japan. As a young girl, Naomi attended Sunday School where she learned about the Creator God and some of the famous stories such as Noah. She attended Christian schools where she became familiar with Christianity. The seeds were planted in her heart at that young age. As an adult, she lived her life without faith, and hardly thought about God or Christianity at all. But God has His plans and purpose.

After marriage and moving to America, she joined the Hokkaido group where she met Naomi Fujita who boldly shared her faith. She joined the Lighthouse Bible study and began making many Christian friends. She attended the Niiyama Bible study, and later joined Richard's Sammamish community group studying, praying, sharing, growing. Her hunger to know Jesus grew exponentially and on a chilly October 2020, she received Christ by Lake Washington. PTL!

At the same time Naomi's interest grew, her husband Bob befriended a local pastor and he started to attend the Meadowbrook Church. Naomi said to Bob that she would wait to get baptized until he was ready, so that they could be baptized together. On June 26, 2021, Richard had the privilege of witnessing both get baptized in Lake Sammamish. It was God's plan and perfect timing. So many people had a part in their testimony. It was wonderful to see the body of Christ working together for God. We each have our part. Many of you have been praying for the Nakamuras, which means that YOU also had a part in bringing the Stellers to Jesus. Thank you all for your faithful prayers, support, encouragement, and friendship throughout the many years. PTL!