

MISSION PRAYER

May 4, 2019

Attribute of God: The way, the truth, and the life.

Key verse: John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

This month's focus is on: Nick and Erin Petkoff, Jon and Maki Robison, Kuni and Sooyun Onishi, Joel and Seiko Lovestrand, Richard and Keri Nakamura, Makoto and Amy T., Jim and Terui Grace, Roy and Nancy Toma, and Morry and Sandy Mori

Missionaries: Nick and Erin Petkoff

Country: Japan

Praise:

1. Spring has finally arrived in Japan and it is gorgeous! During their spring break Nick and Erin went to several major spots in Tokyo as well as some neighboring riversides and parks just to take hundreds of pictures of cherry blossom trees. Since these trees only bloom for a few short weeks, in Japan they are often seen as a symbol of the brevity of life. For the Petkoffs it can serve as a reminder to live for what comes after. They have a worthwhile goal in life: trying to resemble Christ. They will never become perfect on this side of life, yet they aspire to do their best with the hope of someday hearing the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."
2. On one occasion they took their cat, Kupo with them to the park where she proved to be incredibly popular with a group of elderly people who showed up. It was a nice change of pace to have something that opened strangers up to them. Who knows, maybe their cat will be a secret ministry tool....
3. During their break they also had the chance to meet up with friends from the States on four separate occasions! People keep asking if they've been lonely or homesick, but they've honestly been okay in that regard, and they're sure it's because you all have been so great at keeping in touch from afar as well as stopping by to see them in person during your trips there. Thank you for your amazing emotional and relational support!
4. Nick and Erin both qualified to move onto their third term of classes which just started April 8th.
5. They both got to attend an IAFOR (International Academic Forum) Conference in Tokyo for free! There is just so much to process that an update on it will have to wait until an upcoming newsletter or blog post.

Requests: Please pray:

1. Nick's international license will expire later this summer, and since he was not able to take the test for the national license during spring break, it will have to wait until their next break, which will be close to the expiration deadline. Please pray for God's provision in timing.
2. They recently had dinner with Erin's language partner as well as her husband. More plans to hangout are being made for the next national holiday, so it's starting to look like the beginning of a beautiful friendship! Please keep Erin and Nick's relationship with them in your prayers.

Missionaries: Jon, Maki, Aki, Leon, Hugo, and Rhea Robinson

Country: Japan

- Praise:**
1. **Our sin was washed away.** What Jesus did in order to reconcile us to God was so amazing, but ultimately so visceral. But it is the joy that shines through the sorrow, and because of His sacrifice, Jon's thankfulness to our Savior is all the greater.
 2. **The Robisons' Move.** The last of the moving trucks and shipping deliveries arrived and they're in the house. The house is really nice, God is good to provide a comfortable place for them to live as they enter this new phase of ministry. So far Aki and Leon are enjoying their new school which began the beginning of April, Hugo is enjoying playtime with the pre-K/K children in their mission team, Rhea really wants to try eating. Thanks for your prayers!
 3. **The Ministry.** In April, they had their first full member missionary team meeting in the new church meeting room, which is below their apartment. It was a good time of sharing and getting on the same page with ministry goals. Making disciples was the consensus goal in their group, which church planting is a means to that end.
 4. Of course, one could say that making disciples is a means to the end that is glorifying God, though Jon has really been thinking a lot about that phrase, 'glorifying God', lately. What makes our God great compared with other proposed creators, (other than that He is actually a real God) is that He is a life-giving Father, Son and Spirit, a fountain of love that cascades down on us. This is the God that can warm the hearts of the people of Japan, and they pray, the people in Kawasaki.

Missionaries: Kuni, Sooyun, Shion, and Maray Onishi

Country: Japan

Praise:

1. The Onishi family returned to Japan almost 2 months ago, and feel adjusted. Thank you so much for your prayers!
2. They joined the JEMS retreat at the end of March. It was a great realization that they are a part of this amazing community of missionaries in Japan. It was a great time of connecting and praying together for each other and missions in Japan.
3. The Onishis have an intern helping them for two months. Her name is Kyujin and they met her two years ago through SHINE JAPAN (an outreach in Tokyo). She has been serving with them since March, 2019 and will stay with them until the first week of May.
4. In April was the beginning of a new school year and a lot of new starts! They began their Sunday service as a local church in April with their first Sunday service on Sunday April 7th. Even though it was a soft launch with their core-members and their friends, they were so grateful for God's faithfulness. Thank you for your prayers and support always!

Requests: Please pray:

1. For a building for their church plant. They have to book rooms every week and it is not easy to find venues for their Sunday service. Please pray!
2. For the summer mission trips. They have four teams coming to their church from May to July. May God give them wisdom to utilize these teams to accelerate God's mission in Japan through their ministry.
3. For the unity of the members of their church. May God give them clear vision and direction to build His church in the area that God will send them!
4. Thank you for praying for Kuni's parents. They are doing much better but they need to ask you guys to keep on praying for them and the transition of their church.

Missionaries: Joel, Seiko, Akari, and Leo Lovestrans

Country: Japan

Currently on home assignment

Praise: Thank God for:

1. safety in their travels. Since the last week of March was spring break for their children, the Lovestrans decided to travel down south together. They had arranged to be in a morning worship service on Sunday and they had a full day's drive between Chicago and Charlotte, NC, so they left after school on Friday and drove as far as Indianapolis. The next day they hit a pothole on the highway (again!) and had to replace two tires, which delayed them by a couple of hours. They are thankful they could find a tire shop open on Saturday afternoon.
2. opportunities to connect with supporters. On Sunday they enjoyed seeing members of the Japanese congregation which Joel pastored years ago at Carmel Baptist Church, as well as his former boss and his wife and some members of the Chinese church he used to pastor. These dear believers have a heart for reaching the Japanese and have been partnering with them for years.
3. Chances for Akari to explore Christian colleges. The Lovestrans spent six hours at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA with their daughter Akari, getting a tour of their large campus. They spent that night with the family of an old college friend of Joel's from St. Paul Bible College. The next day they met some more friends from the college as they made their way back down to Charlotte.
4. In Charlotte they met with a ninety-year-old woman who has faithfully stood by them over the years and shared with her what God has been doing in Sendai. From Charlotte they traveled on to Joel's parents' place in northern Georgia to spend a few days with them. Then it was up to northeast Tennessee to visit Fellowship Baptist Church of Bluff City. It had been many years since visiting this church and they welcomed the chance to reconnect with them.

Requests: Ask God to:

1. Continue to sustain their church in Sendai and provide all the financial support necessary to return in June. Currently they are about 85% supported.
2. Allow them to make good use of their remaining time in the U.S.

Missionaries: Richard, Keri, Alisha, Brandon, Hanna, Kayla, Nathan Nakamura Japanese Diaspora

Praise and requests:

1. The Torii gate has become a symbol of Japan. It signifies leaving the profane (world) to enter a sacred place. Some believe that one is cleansed as you enter. Most of these gates are painted red as red is considered to be the color of the sun, fire, and life. There are two major religions that use a "red gate" as part of their beliefs, Shintoism and Judaism. Is it possible that there is a relationship between the two? We know the story of Israel's deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. The last plague had the Jews using the blood of a lamb to paint the door posts red in order to protect the firstborn from the Angel of Death. Those who obeyed God's warning were saved and delivered from death to life. The Israelites were reborn/set free from the bonds of slavery. The events of Exodus happened over 2200 years before Shintoism began. Many scholars are concluding that the ancient Japanese were somehow influenced by Judaism (by way of the Silk Road) because there are so many similarities with Shintoism (shrine layout, clothing, arc, words, etc.). If so, then hidden within the meaning of the Torii is the message of the Gospel.
2. As we celebrate Good Friday and Resurrection, we are reminded that Jesus died on the Passover, the very festival that remembers the red gate. Now, it is the blood of Jesus that covers us as death passes over all who believe and gain eternal life. Through His blood, we are cleansed and by faith, we are born again. Praise the Lord!
3. Hanna is finishing up her first year at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, Canada). What a great experience she is having- A roommate from Egypt, a great dorm, new friends, and she even tried rugby! Hanna's desire is to go into nursing and eventually, midwifery. She worked very hard this past year. No they just heard she was accepted into the nursing program! They are so excited for her. **Please pray with the Nakamuras as they look to the Lord for His provision.**
4. Part of Richard's ministry with SEND is to promote and bring awareness to the needs of missions, especially for Japan. Being an official instructor for **Perspectives in World Missions**, Richard has been invited to speak at many churches in western Washington. Often times, the classes have several churches and pastors involved in the meetings. Most recently, Richard was flown to Anchorage, Alaska. What is amazing was the sincere interest and prayers for Japan wherever he goes. **Please continue to pray for revival amongst the Japanese people.**

Missionaries: Makoto, Amy, Mia, and Samuel T.

East Asia

Praise and prayer:

1. After almost 6 years in one place, they are planning to move this summer to a new city. The reason for their move is more personal and family related. They have loved living and serving in the city they are currently living, but ever since they returned from the US last summer, they've felt God prompting them to consider other options. So they've been praying about the possibility of a change.
2. They still have a big heart for their country and want to keep serving there. But thinking long-term means also considering what the best setting is for their whole family (including education options, fellow team members, environment, etc.)
3. They've appreciated all the ministry opportunities and teaching opportunities they've had in their present city. They will definitely miss the friendships they have built there, but after much prayer and consideration during this past winter and spring, they've come to the decision that this is how God is leading their family.
4. This summer, they plan to move to another city. They're excited for new beginnings and that they will be closer to the coast. They'll be joining together with some fellow teammates and look forward to getting involved in new ministries.
5. They would love to receive your prayers for their family as they get ready for this transition. Especially for Mia and Samuel as they change schools and say goodbye to their friends.

Missionaries: Jim and Terui Grace

Country: Japan

Praise:

1. April 30th marked the end of an era in Japan. May 1st, Emperor Akihito stepped down and his son, Crown Prince Naruhito ascend the throne. With this, the 31st year of the Heisei era closed and they entered the **Reiwa era**. Since the Heisei era has covered the Graces' entire time in Japan, Jim and Terui feel the significance of this change along with the nation. As long-term OMF missionaries in Japan, they were asked recently what changes they have seen in Japan during this time. Two incidents came to mind, which for Jim, illustrate a few of the significant changes that have happened in Japan over the Heisei period.
 - a. **Japan has become more international**
-the first incident occurred when they went to a baseball game in the US where two Japanese players, Ichiro Suzuki and Hideki Matsui were playing on opposite teams. In April, Ichiro retired, but the Heisei era has seen the rise of Japanese sports figures on the world stage. It is not just in sports- Japan has become more international in many areas of life from the number of foreigners living in Japan to the food that you find in the average supermarket; that's a change that has progressed over the Heisei era.
 - b. **Japanese feel less safe.**
The second incident was over 20 years ago, Jim and Terui were talking to their next door neighbor when they lived in Sendai in northern Japan. This was after the Kobe earthquake in Jan. 1995 and the sarin poison gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the cult Aum Shinrikyo in March that year. These two events so close to each other changed Japan. People began to worry about the negative effects religion could have and so the perception of religion changed. Concern for privacy also increased. But the change has not all been negative. A sense of volunteerism and giving in Japan, which had not been there before, developed in response to the natural disasters during the Heisei years.

Of course two things have not changed in Heisei- God's love for the people of Japan and each person's need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and to respond to the gift of salvation and the call to discipleship!

2. Give thanks for missionary associates **Shao and Levene Chia's** arrival and smooth transition to language and culture study at JLCC.
3. Thanks for: the arrival of **John and Birta Timothy's first child, Jonas**, born on March 13. With all the responsibilities of new parents, pray for their ongoing language study.
4. Praise God for the final approvals for **Derek and Tracy Ulmer** (US) with their two young **children, Ridley and Asa**, and **Meeyeong Lee** (Korea). Their 3-week orientation in Singapore began May 2nd and they arrive in Sapporo at the end of May to begin language and culture study at JLCC.

Requests: Please pray for:

1. Jim and Terui's **home assignment** later this year- for preparation and planning for the 4 months they will be in the US. They will return to the US this autumn, from mid-October to mid-February 2020, and will be based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Home assignment is their chance to reconnect and to report on what they have seen the Lord doing in them and through their ministry. They are happy to think with you about dates for visiting and speaking at our church or group.
2. Several people who are awaiting final clearances to come to Japan in August. The deadline is May 13th. Due to their upcoming home assignment, Aug. is the last opportunity for new workers to arrive in Japan until March of next year.
3. A refreshing time of **celebration, restoration, and exploration** in Switzerland and Italy, **June 16-July 11**. Last year was Jim and Terui's 30th anniversary. To celebrate, they considered taking a trip, but various commitments precluded that idea. A good friend told them about Breathe in Interlaken Switzerland. Breathe is a 10-day retreat for the renewal and encouragement of people ministering cross-culturally. After Breathe, they will travel and explore northern Italy for the first week and a half of July.
4. Finally, pray that every one of their new colleagues would make (and feel like they are making) **progress in language learning**.

Missionaries: Roy and Nancy Toma**JEMS Japan Missions Director****Praise:**

1. Thank you for your prayers and support for the Toma family and for the JEMS missionaries in Japan. The JEMS Japan retreat in Nagoya went very well. Their speakers, Ron and Carol Miyake, challenged them from God's Word, from their life experiences and from their deep relationship with our Lord. The main purpose for this retreat was to equip our missionaries with some tools to strengthen their relationship with their families, with others, and with our Lord. The teachings on developing biblical priorities, listening prayer, raising up missionary kids (MK's), and "How We Love" particularly touched Roy. It was also a blessing to get to spend time with the JEMS missionaries. Thank you for your partnership in caring for our missionaries.
2. Roy is also thankful for the number of volunteers who came to minister to the kids and help out wherever they were needed. It was truly a team effort. To God be the glory.

Requests: Please pray for:

1. Steve, Miku, Hope (6 yrs. old) and Grace (4 yrs. old) as they raise support for their ministry in Hokkaido.
2. Joanna Tien as she raises support for her one year mission to Aso.
3. Vail Strazzulla as she raises support for her one year mission at the Bible Church of Tokyo.
4. Sarah Park as she raises support for her 2-3 year mission to Japan.
5. The people of Japan to come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
6. The staff at the JEMS headquarter to be in unity and filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Missionaries: Morry and Sandy Mori**Country: Japan****Praise and prayer:**

1. The Moris have moved into the adobe-roofed house located in Saitsu-machi, Amakusa. It is close to everything- the ocean, a coffee house, serving Hawaiian coffee no less, 100 yen sushi restaurants, and close to the three churches where they will be serving, not to mention, a 5 minute drive from Lily Suzuki, their missionary senpai, veteran.
2. Since they arrived four weeks ago, they have begun to see how God might be beginning to open up new doors of ministry for Morry and Sandy. Among the possibilities that they will return to in after their trip back home are:
 - a. A class of mothers whose children attend Airin Kindergarten, details of which they're awaiting. Likely, it will include a chapel time with Bible stories and an English-teaching component.
 - b. A Bible Study ministry with Christians living on the outskirts of Amakusa who have been without a pastor for over ten years and where there is no church for thirty miles
 - c. Junior high and high school English classes with a chapel time component to be held at Amakusa Chuo Baptist Church.
3. Morry and Sandy are going to be visiting Honolulu and the Bay Area over the next month and a half as they take a break to help out and visit with family and attend celebrations. They are looking forward to catching up with their five grandchildren and visiting with those in the churches in the vicinity, people like you who they thank and pray for often.