



# 2023 Year in Review



## Nathan Brownell - Japan

### A glimpse at what your support made possible:

#### The story of Dr. Yui Matsuda

Your support of our mission in Japan helps make the stories of people like Dr. Matsuda, who is a graduate of one of the area high schools here, possible. It was teachers related to the Greenhouse Youth Center (which we operate) who were teaching in the area schools that helped Yui on the journey to the Christian faith. The Lord has given her quite a testimony! After graduating from high school, she went to the U.S. where she graduated with a Ph.D. She also completed her medical internship. There she married a man with the last name Cornejo. Now her husband, Saul Cornejo and Yui together are leading the Japanese Christian Community Miami in Florida, which is reaching out to those either from Japan or those interested in Japan but with a special focus on those with a Spanish language background.

In December, we were overjoyed to meet again with Yui for the first time in at least four years. Not only has the Lord given her an amazing testimony, but she is eager to share it. Fortunately, the Lord is opening doors for her to share the faith at her former high school on future visits back to Japan. Now we are planning to receive a visit from a mission team from their fellowship in Miami at the Greenhouse later this year. I do not have words to express the joy of seeing the hope of the gospel take root in lives in such a way that the gospel circles the globe for the glory of God. This is a real answer to prayer!



*Above left: Yui with us; Above right: Mr. Sean Odani taught Yui during high school and helped introduce her to the Greenhouse. Nozomi and I (Nathan) are looking forward to receiving the mission team visit from Japanese Christian Community Miami later this year.*

## Sunday Afternoon Fellowship (SAF)

We have already shared, in previous newsletters, about how the Lord led us to open a monthly gathering for the graduates of the area mission schools. We call it SAF (Sunday afternoon fellowship). Now, we would like to reflect on this past year and share some more photos, to share the joy with you. We were able to host the SAF gatherings every month (except in August when we took a summer break).

It is a team effort. Each month we plan a different theme and rotate the responsibility of sharing the Bible message to help raise up next-generation youth leaders. Some months we put out many invites to all the graduates while other times we extend invitations by word of mouth. It is amazing to see how the Lord draws people to attend. Some come alone, while others bring a friend. Some come from nearby, while others fly from the other side of Japan. Some are recent graduates, while others are in the early career stage. Some are just starting married life while others are blessed with children. Some either have faced or are facing various life struggles. Some of the friends and teachers who attend are Christians but most of the attendees come from non-Christian homes and are not yet believers. This is a very uncommon type of gathering where the Christian minority is completely free to share their faith organically during conversations at a table during fellowship time. Through this ministry, hearts are being touched and some of the graduates are visiting churches, responding to the invitations of our team and the Christians who attend. This is a beautiful sight to see.



## Our challenges of 2023

### Enduring the demolition of the university's old gymnasium

Early in the year, we had to endure the demolition of the old university gymnasium located right next door to the mission house. When I say “right next door” I mean “immediately next door”—as in just a few meters away. From start to finish, the demolition of the two nearby buildings went on for six months from fall 2022 to the spring of 2023. We understand it was necessary to take down the building as it no longer met the earthquake standards and had been vacant for many years, but it was still a hardship for us.

It was particularly difficult for Nozomi who was trying to work on various essential projects from home during the colder winter season. Fortunately, some of the time she could work from Greenhouse. However, although the fellowship room at GH is somewhat insulated from the cold, the office is not insulated. The office at Greenhouse gets so cold during the winter that it sucks the heat out of you. So, she had to be careful not to catch a cold at the

office but also not to get sick from the dust from the demolition going on right next door at the mission house. Not to mention, we had to endure the noise and vibrations most weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM.

We had a somewhat difficult six months from fall of 2022 until spring of 2023. Sadly, this caused one couple who were longtime residents in one of the mission apartments to move out and buy their own place. Consequently, the university's demolition project negatively affected the finances of the missionary housing unit. That was all very disappointing because if the school had informed us earlier about the demolition, it is possible that our residents could have taken various measures to reduce some of the hardship and may have been able to remain.



### Challenges facing the missionary housing organization

One of our partnership mission organizations also had the challenge of selling a property. This became necessary because some of our partner mission groups now have other directions or needs rather than housing. Fortunately, members of the board of directors working on this project were able to maintain a “spirit of one accord” throughout the process. However, as you can imagine, it was a very time-consuming project, which required various legal consultations and detailed work. Please continue to pray for wisdom for the mission leaders, including my work as chairperson of the board of directors for the missionary housing organization.

### Please Pray

- Please pray for the precious hearts and lives of those attending SAF (Sunday afternoon fellowship).
- Please pray for all three of our sons—Ken, Ray, and Luke. We give thanks to the Lord. All three of them are believers. As you may know, our second son Ray is a graduate student at Tokyo Christian University where he is preparing for the ministry. Ray has had various internships, which have been challenging but good. Please pray that the Lord will continue to lead him. We also give thanks that Ken and Luke have been led to churches where they are actively attending and participating. Please keep them in your prayers.



*Above left: A graduation photo from our son Ray's graduation from TCU (Tokyo Christian University) where he is now a graduate school student preparing for the ministry. Above right: At Risa Suzuki's (my former student's) baptism.*

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