



# A 20/20 VISION FOR JAPAN

PRAYER FOR THE JAPANESE

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### A 20/20 Vision for Japan

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you for joining us in prayer for Japan. Satan has had a stronghold among the people of Japan far too long. They remain blinded by the false religions of Shintoism and Buddhism. Men and women are held captive by the tradition of ancestor worship and the modern pursuit of materialism. God alone can break these chains that have bound this island nation for many generations.

God's desire is that no one should perish, but the reality is that there are still many here in Japan who have never heard the gospel.

Historically, Japan has been a difficult mission field. There are 126 million people, but fewer than 0.5 percent are evangelical Christians. It might be easy to assume this is the way it will always be. But I ask that you join me to call on the God of the impossible to work in the lives of the Japanese. Pray also that he will awaken the church in Japan and give them a willingness to risk everything for the sake of the gospel.

In spite of the challenges, I want you to know that God is at work in Japan. As you read the stories, please join us in rejoicing over the goodness of God and his faithfulness to keep his promises.

We look forward to the 2020 Olympics here in Tokyo. As you read this prayer guide, look beyond the facts and figures. My prayer is that God will give you 20/20 vision to understand his heart for the people of Japan, and that together, we will pray for a spiritual revival to sweep through this nation.

Donn Broeker  
Japan Cluster Leader, IMB





Eighty-year-old Mr. Rivers\* was walking down the street in front of the church on Christmas Eve. Although he lives in the neighborhood, he had never entered the church. But the Spirit compelled him to attend, and he took a seat right in front of a family who chatted with him afterward until he left. Mr. Rivers has come every Sunday since then and is even attending a Sunday morning Bible study class.

*\*Name changed*

**SENIOR ADULTS**



Japan has the oldest and the most rapidly aging population of any country in the world, with more than a quarter of its citizens aged sixty-five and older. Japanese people have the world's highest life expectancy, yet their country has one of the lowest fertility rates.

Elderly Japanese traditionally relied on care from their adult children, and three-generation households were ideal. But today such arrangements are on the decline. A new trend is for retirees to move into apartments that cater to the needs of the older generation.

Some retirees look for a new identity by joining clubs and classes for seniors. This is a key time to share the good news with them. Other seniors are interested in reading the Bible in English now that they have more free time. The church needs wisdom to meet the unique needs of this age group.

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**Pray** that more Japanese Christians will identify ways to use their churches as gathering places for senior adults.

**Pray** that mature Christians will join groups or clubs with senior adults in order to befriend and encourage them and pray for their needs.

**Pray** that senior Japanese will hunger for more than traditions in their spiritual lives. Pray for God to bring a huge spiritual harvest to seeds planted in their lives.

無量の光明と寿命をもって永遠の生命を与えてくださる仏さま。  
この像は唐銅製で、阿弥陀三尊像として元禄六年（一六九三）に千人近い信徒によって建立された。この像は、阿彌陀如来の慈悲の心を表わしている。

金剛山 境内

おさい

A few years after the tsunami, Ms. White\* began attending gatherings in her temporary housing compound. Initially she barely made eye contact. Yet she continued attending and hearing about God's love. Christians took her out for meals and shared words of life. Slowly, her countenance changed and she began to engage with people. She started attending a Bible study and asked many questions. When reading Jesus's parable of the hundred sheep (Luke 15:1-7), she said she felt like the lost sheep. Finally, when asked if she was ready to believe in Jesus, she enthusiastically said "Yes, I believe!"

*\*Name changed*

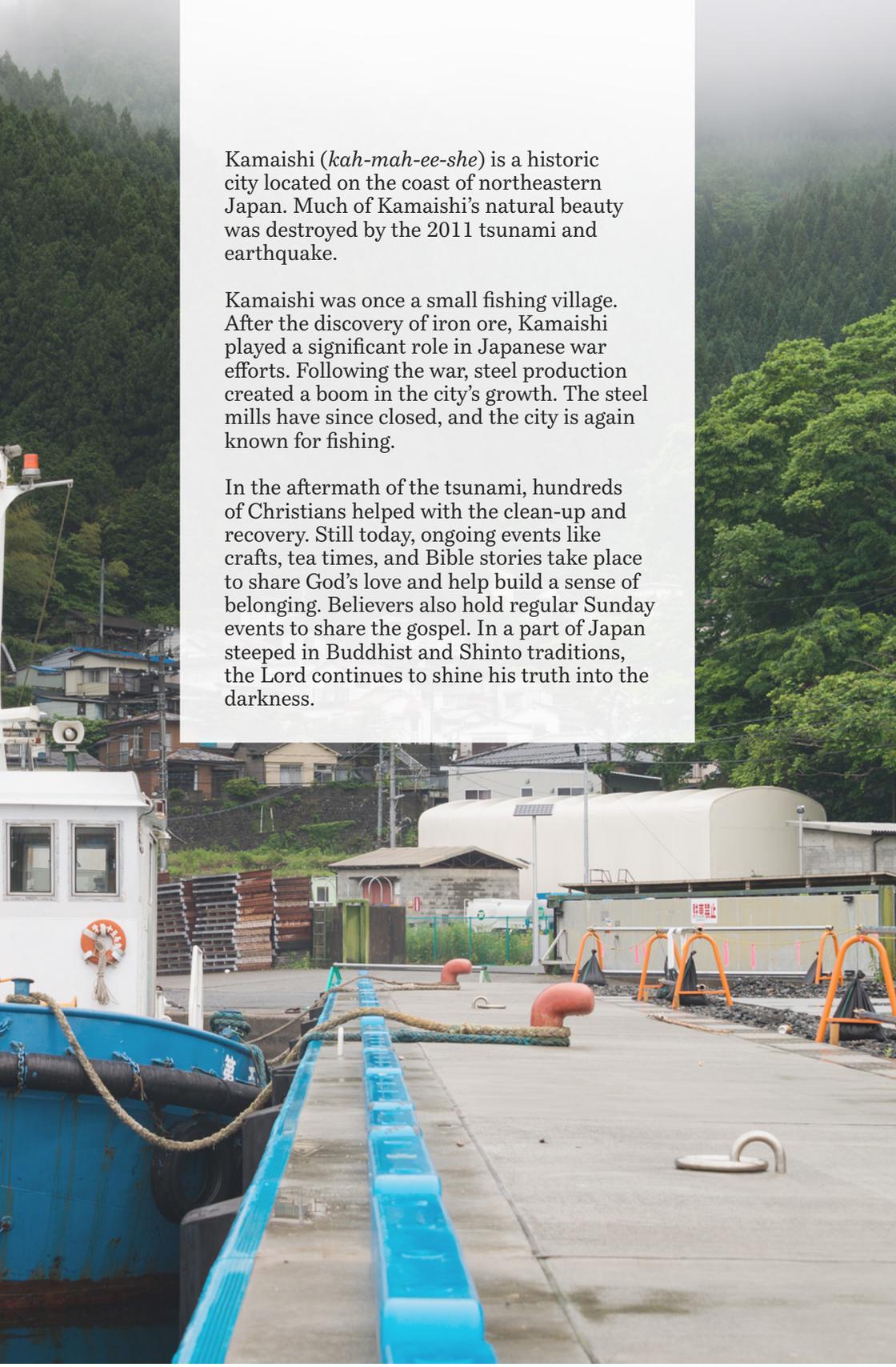
Because of tsunami recovery efforts, many have heard the gospel message. **Pray** that this message will bear much fruit.

Kamaishi's prominence is shrinking and the population dwindling. **Pray** those who remain will find their purpose in life by repentance and trust in Jesus.

**Pray** Christian workers who live in Kamaishi will partner together to further kingdom growth.

**KAMAISHI, JAPAN**





Kamaishi (*kah-mah-ee-she*) is a historic city located on the coast of northeastern Japan. Much of Kamaishi's natural beauty was destroyed by the 2011 tsunami and earthquake.

Kamaishi was once a small fishing village. After the discovery of iron ore, Kamaishi played a significant role in Japanese war efforts. Following the war, steel production created a boom in the city's growth. The steel mills have since closed, and the city is again known for fishing.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, hundreds of Christians helped with the clean-up and recovery. Still today, ongoing events like crafts, tea times, and Bible stories take place to share God's love and help build a sense of belonging. Believers also hold regular Sunday events to share the gospel. In a part of Japan steeped in Buddhist and Shinto traditions, the Lord continues to shine his truth into the darkness.



**Pray** that the Holy Spirit will open millions more hearts to understand that knowing Christ is greater than anything the world offers.

**Pray** 1 Corinthians 15:58 over Japanese Christians: “[May Japanese Christians] be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that [their] labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Jesus spoke of salt, light, and leaven—all small yet having permeating influence. **Pray** Japanese Christians will play a major role in transforming Japanese society.

**JAPANESE CHRISTIANS**



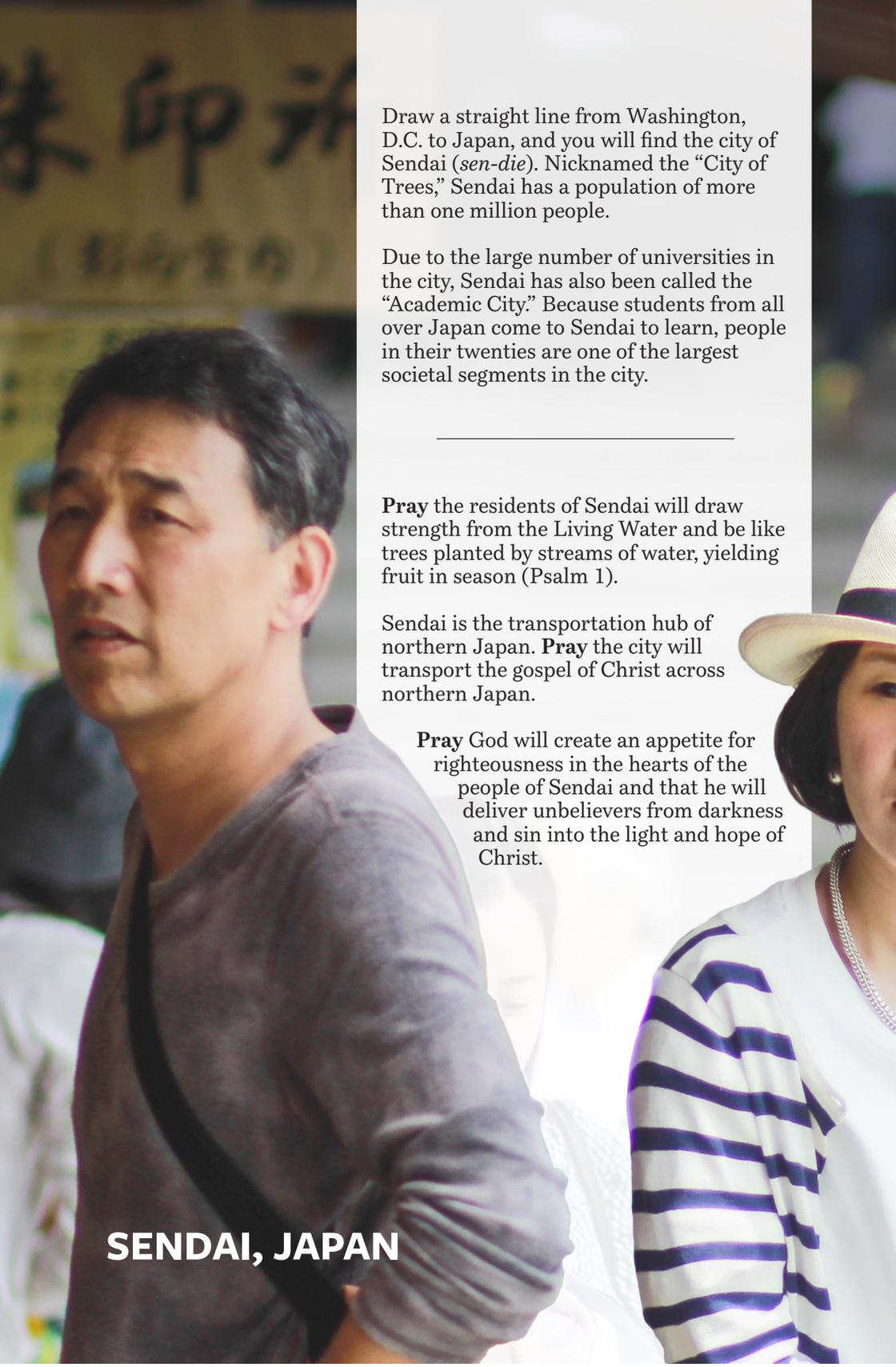
After years of gospel endeavor, evangelical Christians still account for less than 1 percent of Japan's population.

Japanese people often struggle with the uncompromising nature of the Christian God. Most Japanese value human relationships more than truth. For many, harmony in relationships is ultimate, so compromise is natural.

A moment of truth for many Japanese Christians often happens at a funeral, where they are expected to bow before and pray to the deceased. With so many watching, refusal can invite shame and ostracism from key people in their lives—not a small thing in a society that places so much value on social standing.

It is common in Japan for someone to be the only believer in their household. This was the case for Toshi-san.\* As he participated in a discipleship study, he felt a growing burden to pray for the lost and share the gospel, especially with his own family. Within one year of the training, Toshi-san shared the gospel with over fifty people and led his first person to Christ. He faithfully shared Christ's love with his own family, and his wife accepted Christ. It is exciting to see local believers like Toshi-san sharing boldly and making disciples.

*\*Name changed*



Draw a straight line from Washington, D.C. to Japan, and you will find the city of Sendai (*sen-die*). Nicknamed the “City of Trees,” Sendai has a population of more than one million people.

Due to the large number of universities in the city, Sendai has also been called the “Academic City.” Because students from all over Japan come to Sendai to learn, people in their twenties are one of the largest societal segments in the city.

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**Pray** the residents of Sendai will draw strength from the Living Water and be like trees planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in season (Psalm 1).

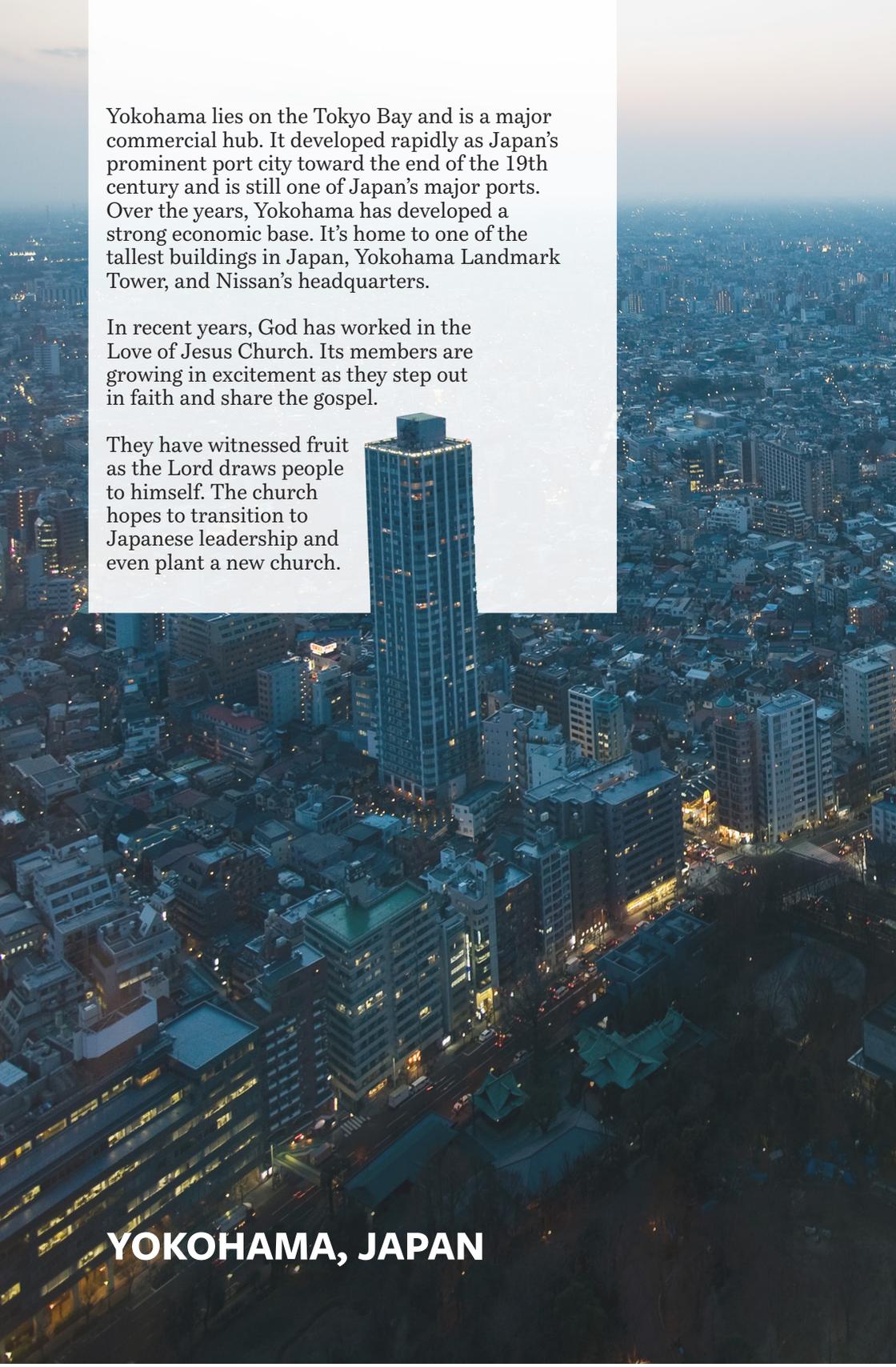
Sendai is the transportation hub of northern Japan. **Pray** the city will transport the gospel of Christ across northern Japan.

**Pray** God will create an appetite for righteousness in the hearts of the people of Sendai and that he will deliver unbelievers from darkness and sin into the light and hope of Christ.

**SENDAI, JAPAN**

In recent years, university students and young adults gather weekly for bilingual Bible study and worship. Adults from various religious backgrounds also gather to study Christian books. God is establishing the bonds of Christian love among churches, pastors, and missionaries as they minister and pray together. In 2016, an old farmhouse south of Sendai became the location for a new church. There, young believers are learning to reach out into the neighboring communities. In a span of four months, another church saw three students believe and be baptized. In 2018, God opened another door when an elderly community group invited Christians to regularly share in their meetings.



An aerial night view of Yokohama, Japan, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings and streets illuminated. A prominent skyscraper, the Yokohama Landmark Tower, stands out in the center. The sky is dark, and the city lights create a vibrant glow.

Yokohama lies on the Tokyo Bay and is a major commercial hub. It developed rapidly as Japan's prominent port city toward the end of the 19th century and is still one of Japan's major ports. Over the years, Yokohama has developed a strong economic base. It's home to one of the tallest buildings in Japan, Yokohama Landmark Tower, and Nissan's headquarters.

In recent years, God has worked in the Love of Jesus Church. Its members are growing in excitement as they step out in faith and share the gospel.

They have witnessed fruit as the Lord draws people to himself. The church hopes to transition to Japanese leadership and even plant a new church.

**YOKOHAMA, JAPAN**



**Pray** that members of the Love of Jesus Church will wholeheartedly seek the Lord.

**Pray** the Lord will prepare the church to transition to local leadership and move toward planting a new church.

**Pray** local believers will be fervent in obedience to God and his purposes for the church.

**Pray** English clubs at two major universities will lead to many students believing the gospel and following Christ.

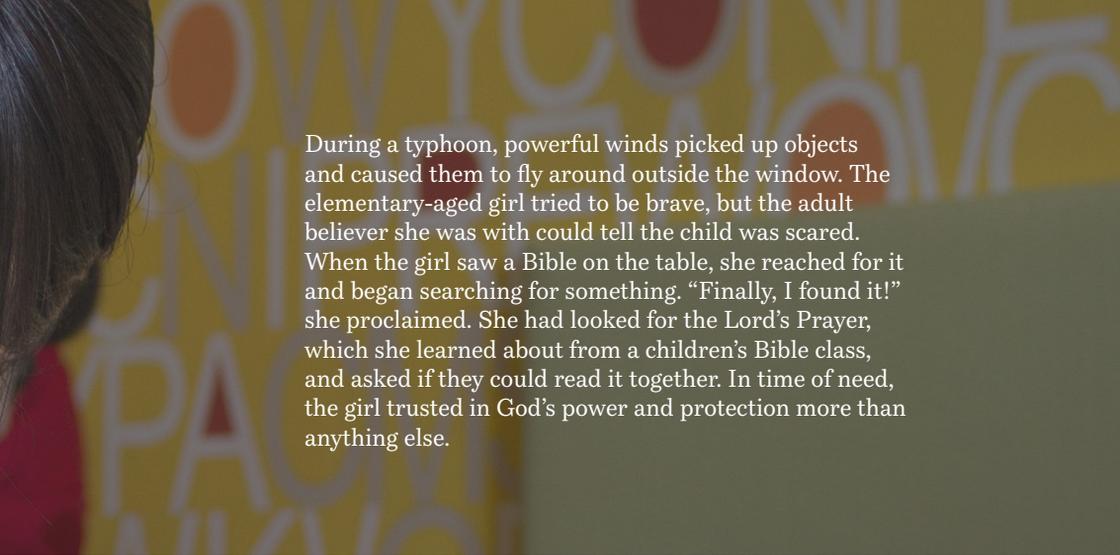
The Love of Jesus Church started a Bible study group in 2019 with the goal of planting another church. After the first study, one woman decided to follow Christ. Another decided to follow Christ soon after. Everyone was amazed at the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is wonderful to see the body of Christ faithfully working in their respective roles as church members serve: teaching, babysitting, inviting others, showing hospitality, and engaging in intentional gospel conversations.

They are all united around one goal—to see people following the Master.



**JAPANESE FAMILIES**



During a typhoon, powerful winds picked up objects and caused them to fly around outside the window. The elementary-aged girl tried to be brave, but the adult believer she was with could tell the child was scared. When the girl saw a Bible on the table, she reached for it and began searching for something. “Finally, I found it!” she proclaimed. She had looked for the Lord’s Prayer, which she learned about from a children’s Bible class, and asked if they could read it together. In time of need, the girl trusted in God’s power and protection more than anything else.



Many missionaries live in large apartment buildings and witness Japanese family life firsthand. Here are a few common scenarios to help you understand the needs of families in modern Japan:

- A single father lives with his emotionally disabled adult daughter. She sometimes yells at neighbors for things she only imagined they were doing.
- Both parents work full-time. Mom comes home so tired it is hard to cook. When the kids refuse to eat, she raises her voice and feels guilty. To compensate, she spoils them.
- Some men feel compelled to go out with coworkers and drink until late to keep their job, yet feel guilty about neglecting their families. They are exhausted at the end of the week.

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**Pray** that all families will come to know God, who wrote the manual on successful family life.

**Pray** for God to heal and set free those who have mental health struggles and those struggling to have and raise children. **Pray** for genuine love and harmony among family members.

**Pray** that this custom of men drinking with coworkers until late at night will disappear.



**TAKASAKI, JAPAN**



The Takasaki team works with children's community centers, hosts children's events at church, and manages a children's gospel choir. Several children have professed faith in Jesus and are growing in their faith. Many parents support their child's faith but have not professed themselves. God is drawing other parents through the witness of their children.

The city of Takasaki (*ta-kah-sa-key*) is in the very heart of Japan and is known as the inventor of flash memory.

Takasaki is the hometown of the Daruma doll, which is sold without eyes. The purchaser paints one eye on the doll to represent the good fortune they wish to receive. If good fortune comes, the person paints on the second eye before returning the doll at the end of the year to be burned. The good luck only lasts one year.

Life in Christ, however, is eternal—and believers at one new church plant embrace and live out this message of hope as they gather for worship at a local business. New disciples are growing deeper in the Word, sharing their faith boldly, and uniting in prayer for the lost.

Several churches in Takasaki encourage one another monthly by sharing testimonies of what God is doing within their neighborhoods. The Holy Spirit is bringing unity in the body.

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Many are hearing about God's love for the first time. **Pray** that a great harvest will unfold as God opens hearts.

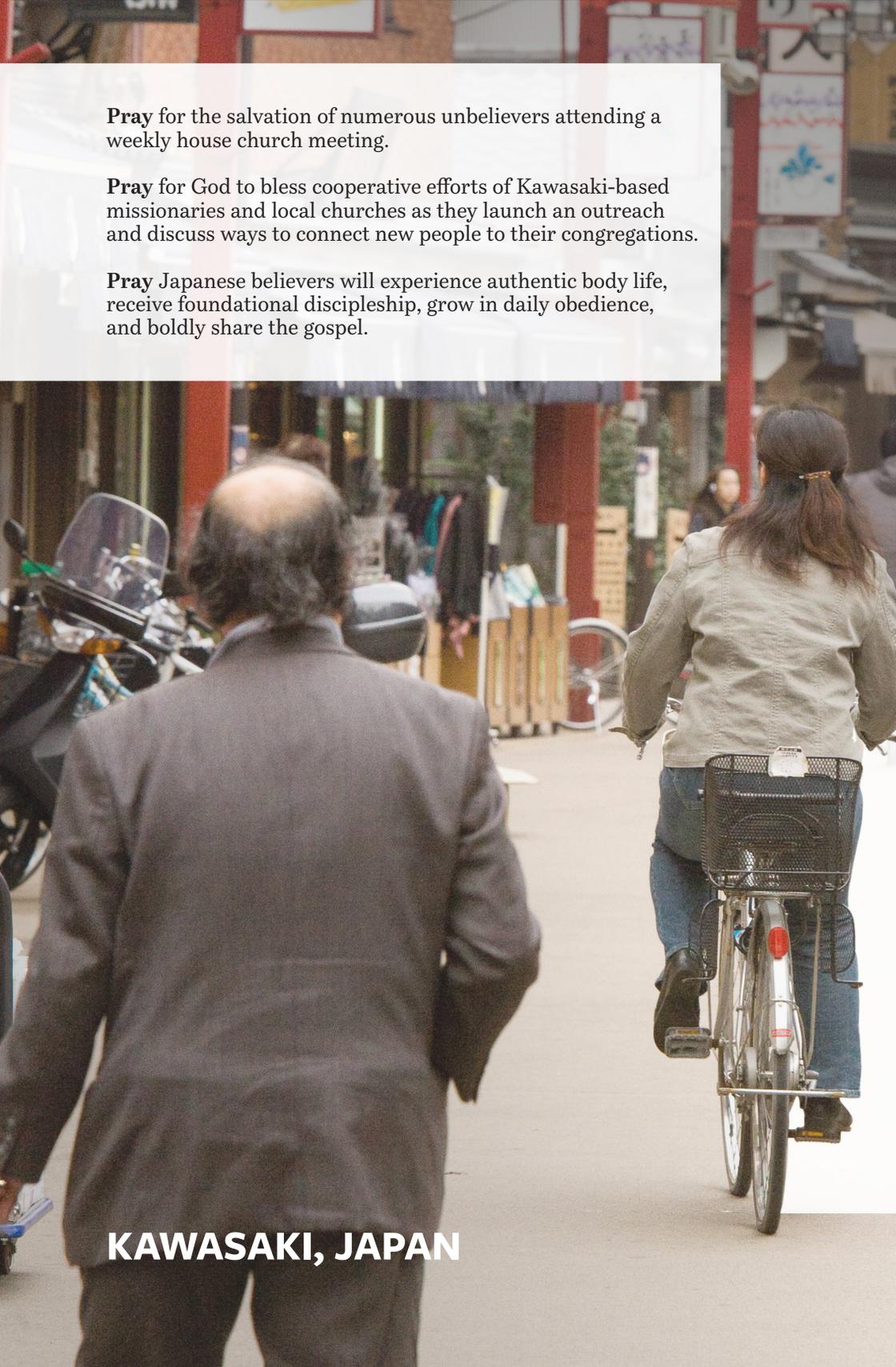
**Pray** that an exponential number of Japanese will hear and follow Jesus as new disciples grow in their knowledge of the gospel.

Many Christians feel a growing desire for unity. **Pray** that Christ-centered unity will be a magnet of love to surrounding communities and will break worldly bonds.

**Pray** for the salvation of numerous unbelievers attending a weekly house church meeting.

**Pray** for God to bless cooperative efforts of Kawasaki-based missionaries and local churches as they launch an outreach and discuss ways to connect new people to their congregations.

**Pray** Japanese believers will experience authentic body life, receive foundational discipleship, grow in daily obedience, and boldly share the gospel.



**KAWASAKI, JAPAN**

When one family moved into their new neighborhood, God gave them the idea of their home being a lighthouse. Firmly planted on the solid rock of Christ, it would be a refuge to those in need and would shine God's love to passersby.

Since 2018, over thirty unbelievers have joined the weekly worship at the family's home. The family trusts that God's Word never returns void and prays God will transform each of these unbelievers into his disciples. Then as a church, they will be like a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden (Matt. 5:14).

Kawasaki City is sandwiched between Japan's two largest cities, Tokyo and Yokohama. The name Kawasaki is made up of kawa, which means "river," and saki, which means "small peninsula" or "cape."

The land mass of Kawasaki is constantly expanding due to the construction of artificial islands in the Tokyo Bay, but very little of the new land is used for housing. Kawasaki is home to Fujitsu's main branch as well as numerous factories and development bases of heavy industry companies.

Faithful churches in the city look for creative ways to proclaim the gospel to those who haven't heard. In 2019, Yurigaoka Baptist Church launched an evangelistic Bible study for young professionals with the hope that it will form the foundation of a new church. Also, a church-start in the center of Kawasaki is growing in both attendance and spiritual interest.



How can there be homelessness in Japan, an economic powerhouse? Because the common denominator with homelessness is brokenness—brokenness in one's work situation or family.

Homelessness in Japan is different than most countries. The majority of homeless are well-groomed and well-mannered. There is a sense of civility among them that is core to the Japanese culture.

Homelessness, however, carries a sense of abandonment. One man explained he felt like garbage tossed out of the system of society—neither cared for nor seen. This feeling leads to strong walls of self-defense. Most feel hopeless, hurting, angry, and alone.

Gospel seeds are bearing fruit in this rich soil of brokenness. As the broken come to Christ, their lives are transformed. They may continue to live in a park or train station, but they have found their home in Christ.

Every week, new homeless men and women are hearing the truth. At least once a month someone confesses faith and becomes a child of the King.



**HOMELESS**

Ryu\* came to Tokyo with a plan to climb Mt. Fuji and freeze to death. He ended up in a Tokyo park where he heard about food distribution and Bible studies. He was hungry and decided to join the groups. There he heard about the love and forgiveness of God through Christ. The grace of the Lord broke down his barriers of hate and hurt. Ryu believed and was baptized. Since then, he always has the gospel on his lips and a smile from his heart. He is a transformed man.

*\*Name changed*

**Pray** for Kokoro (“Heart”) Care ministries that share both physical bread and the Bread of Life.

**Pray** for former-homeless disciples who continue to serve with homeless ministries.

**Pray** for the daily Bible studies that occur with the homeless in the parks of Tokyo.





**NISHINOMIYA, JAPAN**

Nishinomiya City is located between the cities of Kobe and Osaka, and is an important commercial and shipping city.

Unlike many Japanese cities, there is still a great deal of farmland within the city. Farmers try to make their occupation profitable by growing vegetables for the markets of the surrounding cities. They are also trying to effectively use land by growing crops in greenhouses using hydroponic techniques.

Nishinomiya is only a fifteen-minute train ride from Kobe and Osaka. Its convenient location and rich natural environment have helped it become an educational living district. Luxury neighborhoods with attractive amenities are common here.

Several years ago, a Bible study began meeting. Since then, seven people from the group were baptized. In 2018, some from the Bible study started meeting for Sunday worship services.

Mr. Allen\* was baptized a couple of years ago. He prays, reads the Bible daily, and is actively involved in his church and community. For his church's homeless ministry, he prepares and serves food, washes dishes, and shares the gospel. At his job, he works an extra thirty minutes after his shift as an offering to God and for his personal testimony. He volunteers at organizations helping children with special needs. Wherever he goes, he shares his faith. His wife, who isn't a Christian, is slowly opening up to his faith in Christ.

*\*Name changed*

Nishinomiya City is the home of a professional baseball team. **Pray** Christians will become as enthusiastic about their faith as they are about baseball.

Nishinomiya is the home of Kwansei Gakuin University. **Pray** thousands of students will become passionate about knowing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Pray** God will bear fruit from the Bible studies and give strength to missionaries as they partner with churches.

Japanese businesspeople are known throughout the world for commitment and loyalty to their company. They work long hours, and many are away from home for more than fourteen hours a day.

For the businessperson, work itself gives them identity. Activities outside of work often include coworkers because this creates strong work bonds.

The business world is one of the most challenging-to-reach groups in Japan. Businesspeople who trust in Christ could have a powerful influence, but many believe you can't be a Christian and conduct business.

Christian businesspeople often feel they don't have enough margin to add activities like church services. They feel that everything they do is constantly ranked, graded, and compared. Japanese Christians are often the only Christians in their workplace.

**Pray** that weary businesspeople will find rest for their souls in Jesus Christ.

**Pray** that Christians will be people of influence in the business world, loyal to work but also unashamed to be identified as believers.

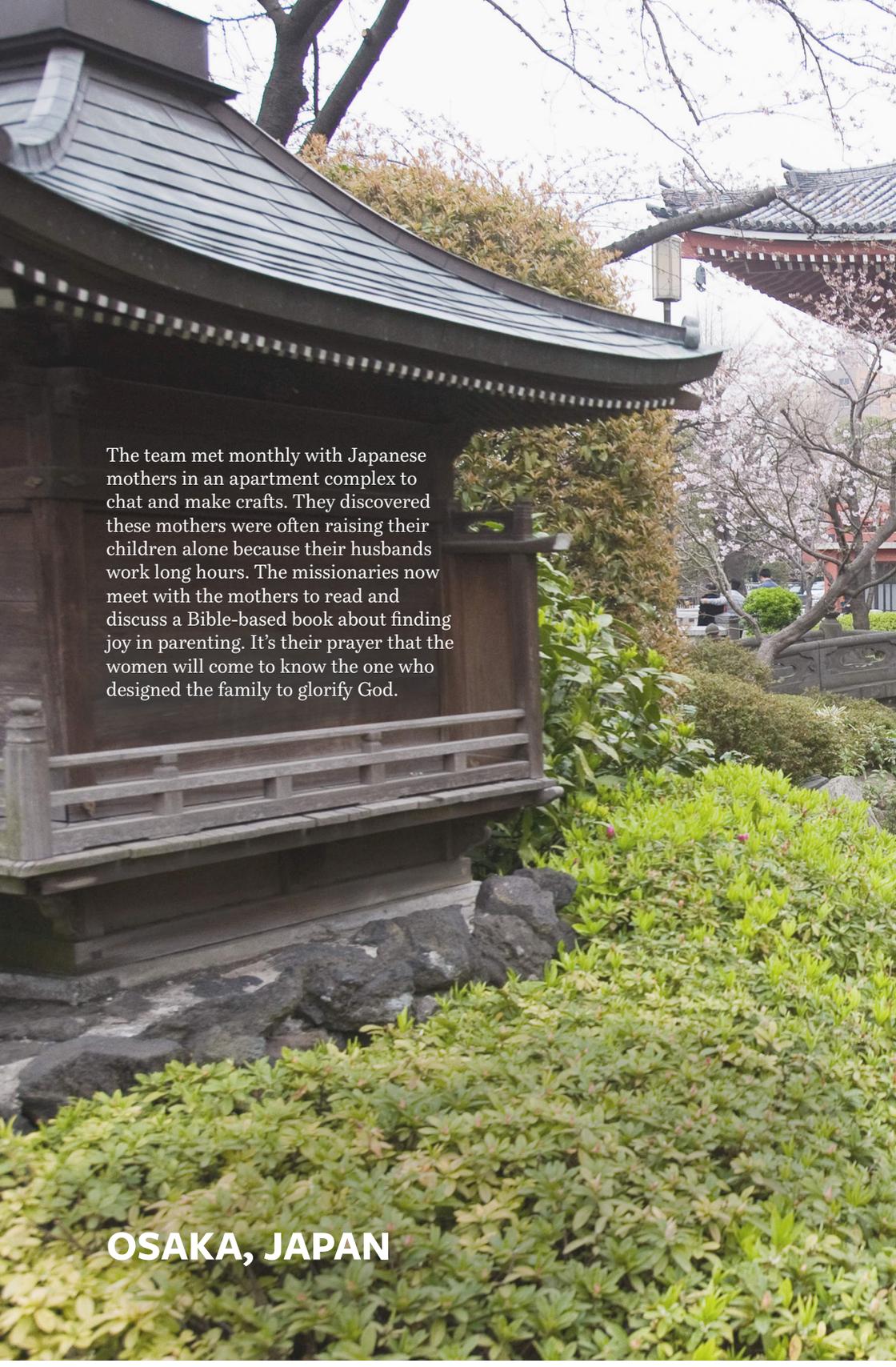
The Japanese business community is influential, communication-savvy, and networked. **Pray** for those whose mission is church planting among these people.

## BUSINESSPEOPLE

Tokyo Metro Community is the name of a ministry for people who work in the business world. The gatherings are called “Ecclesias” because the goal is Christ-centered community through meaningful relationships and prayer. Currently, groups meet in five locations. Their motto is, “When Tokyo changes, the whole of Japan changes.” Participants desire to see God’s presence from the core of Tokyo to the ends of the nation.

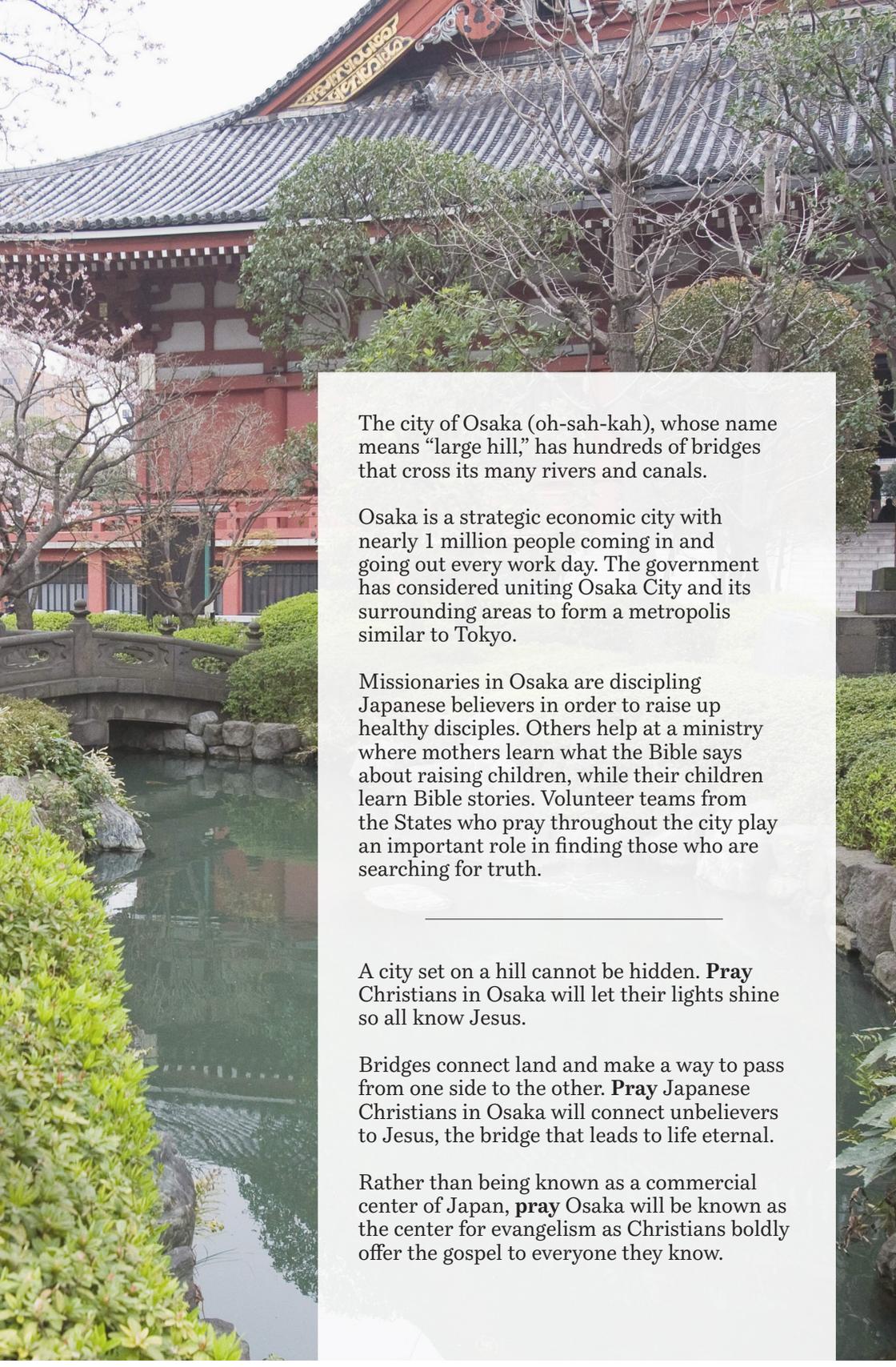
Participants find Ecclesias meetings to be an oasis in the desert. One was so moved that he began a group in his office. Another spearheaded the opening of a new group near his work location. In the future, Ecclesias leaders want to spread into media and politics.





The team met monthly with Japanese mothers in an apartment complex to chat and make crafts. They discovered these mothers were often raising their children alone because their husbands work long hours. The missionaries now meet with the mothers to read and discuss a Bible-based book about finding joy in parenting. It's their prayer that the women will come to know the one who designed the family to glorify God.

**OSAKA, JAPAN**



The city of Osaka (oh-sah-kah), whose name means “large hill,” has hundreds of bridges that cross its many rivers and canals.

Osaka is a strategic economic city with nearly 1 million people coming in and going out every work day. The government has considered uniting Osaka City and its surrounding areas to form a metropolis similar to Tokyo.

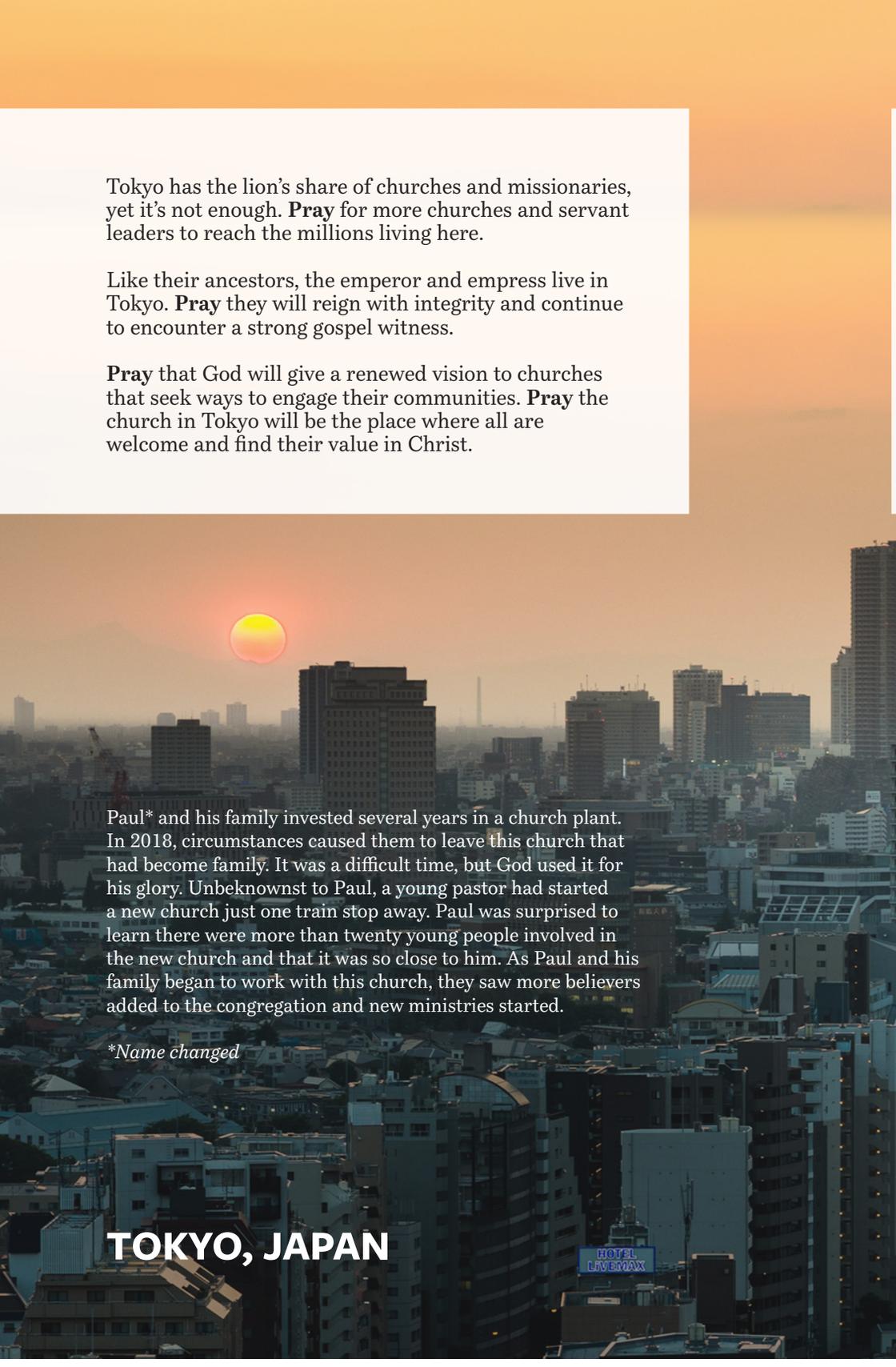
Missionaries in Osaka are discipling Japanese believers in order to raise up healthy disciples. Others help at a ministry where mothers learn what the Bible says about raising children, while their children learn Bible stories. Volunteer teams from the States who pray throughout the city play an important role in finding those who are searching for truth.

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A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **Pray** Christians in Osaka will let their lights shine so all know Jesus.

Bridges connect land and make a way to pass from one side to the other. **Pray** Japanese Christians in Osaka will connect unbelievers to Jesus, the bridge that leads to life eternal.

Rather than being known as a commercial center of Japan, **pray** Osaka will be known as the center for evangelism as Christians boldly offer the gospel to everyone they know.



Tokyo has the lion's share of churches and missionaries, yet it's not enough. **Pray** for more churches and servant leaders to reach the millions living here.

Like their ancestors, the emperor and empress live in Tokyo. **Pray** they will reign with integrity and continue to encounter a strong gospel witness.

**Pray** that God will give a renewed vision to churches that seek ways to engage their communities. **Pray** the church in Tokyo will be the place where all are welcome and find their value in Christ.

Paul\* and his family invested several years in a church plant. In 2018, circumstances caused them to leave this church that had become family. It was a difficult time, but God used it for his glory. Unbeknownst to Paul, a young pastor had started a new church just one train stop away. Paul was surprised to learn there were more than twenty young people involved in the new church and that it was so close to him. As Paul and his family began to work with this church, they saw more believers added to the congregation and new ministries started.

*\*Name changed*

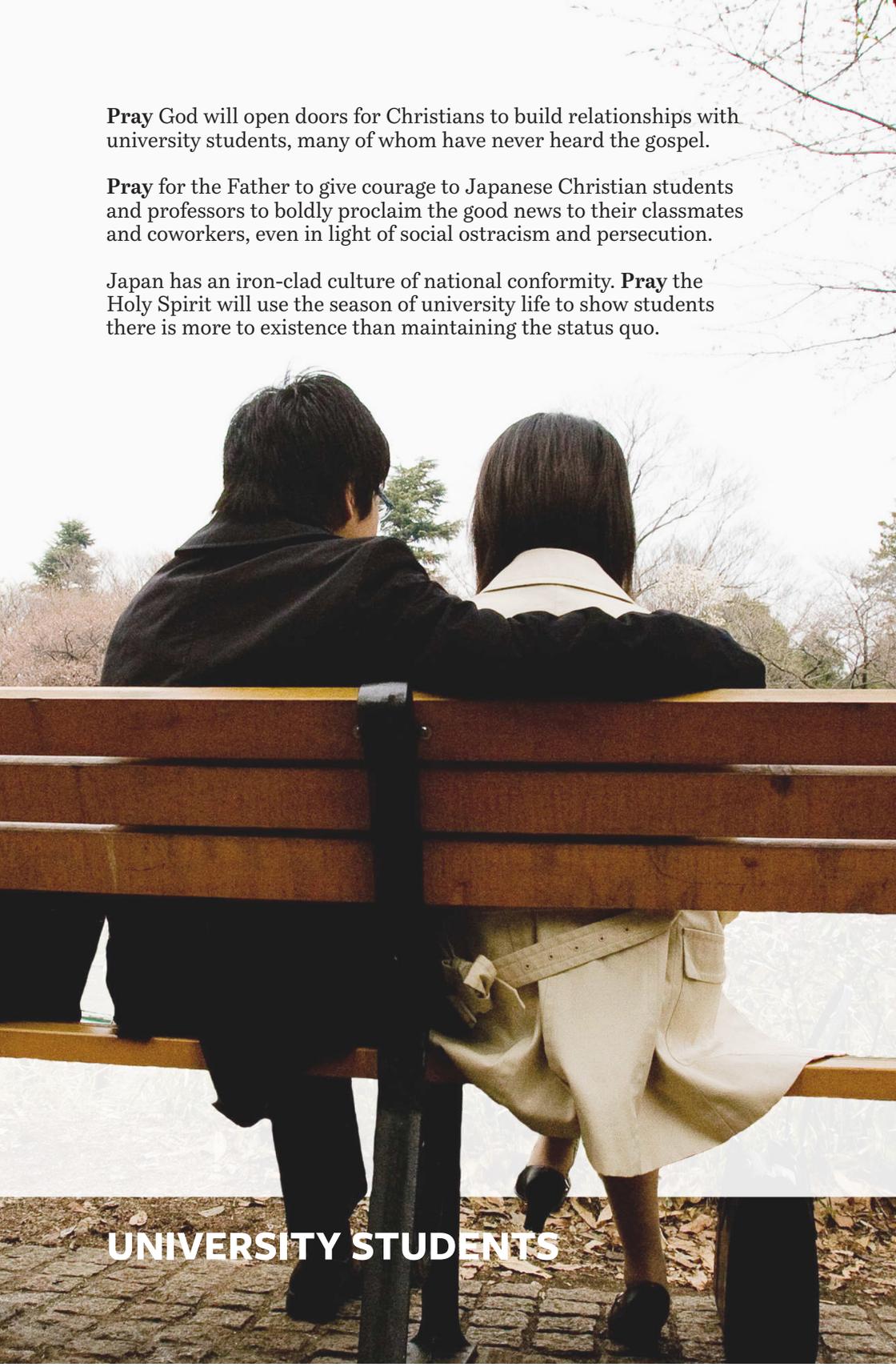
**TOKYO, JAPAN**

When Tokyo hosts the Olympic and Paralympic games in 2020, the city will be flooded with prayer and gospel conversations. The Olympics will eventually end, but the question remains: will the gospel continue to saturate Tokyo?

Shinto and Buddhism are the traditional religions of the Japanese, but polls show most Japanese have no religious affiliation and do not believe in God or Buddha. They are the second-largest unreached people group in the world.

Tokyo is the hub for Japan's banking, transportation, and broadcasting industries, as well as home to several universities. It is also the nation's cultural center, showcasing both traditional and Western art forms.



A photograph showing the back of a man and a woman sitting on a wooden bench. They are looking out over a landscape with trees. The man is on the left, wearing a dark jacket. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored trench coat. The background shows a mix of bare and evergreen trees under a bright sky.

**Pray** God will open doors for Christians to build relationships with university students, many of whom have never heard the gospel.

**Pray** for the Father to give courage to Japanese Christian students and professors to boldly proclaim the good news to their classmates and coworkers, even in light of social ostracism and persecution.

Japan has an iron-clad culture of national conformity. **Pray** the Holy Spirit will use the season of university life to show students there is more to existence than maintaining the status quo.

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**



Hiro-san\* is a staff member at a local university. When missionaries prayed for the university, they expected God to orchestrate divine appointments with students. But God introduced them to influential staff members. Hiro-san is not yet a believer, but his mind is captivated by Bible stories, and he seeks deeper application for biblical truth. The missionaries wait and pray for his salvation while continuing to speak gospel truth. God is working at all levels of university campuses in Japan.

*\*Name changed*

There are almost three million university students in Japan. Getting accepted into university is often difficult, but any Japanese student will tell you that graduating is easy. Since graduation is almost a given, many students use this time to travel, party, and find jobs to pay for their new lifestyles. Study abroad trips are common for many who desire to learn new languages.

University ministry in Japan is a seasonal battle. When students go home for extended holiday breaks, it is almost impossible to maintain relationships. When class is back in session, it's time to begin again the task of forging new relationships. The ministry is vital—Japan's future spiritual leaders sit in those collegiate lecture halls.



The city of Kobe (koh-bay) is nestled between mountains and ocean. Lottie Moon, Southern Baptist missionary to China, died in Kobe while on her way back to America.

Many see Kobe as a city of wealth and success. The 2011 earthquake in the north and the economic downturn, however, have caused many to think about the priorities of life, and many people are searching for more than wealth and success.

Japanese Christians, missionaries, and volunteers from the States take the gospel to the streets through various outreaches. One missionary lives in Collegetown, a city with six universities and virtually no Christian witness. He plans to participate in sports outreach during the Olympics.

Irene\* attended Christian schools in Japan from middle school through college but didn't believe in God. A friend involved her in a sect of Buddhism, which teaches how to have a happy life. She followed it for eight years but still had no peace in her heart. A Christian friend invited her to a Christmas service where she cried when she learned Jesus died for her sins. Two months later, she repented and believed in Jesus as her Savior. On her baptism day, she brought all the books and objects related to Buddhism to be destroyed. She testifies now that after receiving Jesus, she is finally happy and full of joy.

*\*Name changed*

**KOBE, JAPAN**

The image features a woman's profile in the upper right background, looking towards the left. In the foreground, a clear glass teapot with a lid and handle is filled with green tea. The teapot is placed on a glass base, and a lit candle is visible behind it, casting a warm glow. The background is softly blurred, showing a wooden table and a person's arm.

The Kobe Team has a good relationship with local churches. **Pray** for the missionaries and church members as they work together to evangelize the Kobe area.

**Pray** God will use two faithful house churches and one cell group in Kobe to lead many nonbelievers to faith in Jesus.

**Pray** the short-term missionaries will reach many Japanese university students.



Nagoya (nah-go-yah) is on the eastern coast of Japan about halfway between Tokyo and Osaka.

In the early 1600s, a military leader from Nagoya united the country for the first time. He banned Christianity, expelled many Christians, and mercilessly persecuted any who remained. This period ended in the late 1800s, but many today believe Christianity in Japan still suffers from its effects. Less than .5 percent of Nagoya's people are Christian.

Some believers in Nagoya first heard the gospel far from home. While studying abroad, Nae's\* teacher regularly took her to church. When Nae returned to Nagoya, her teacher connected her to a believer. As Nae continued learning about God, she started to see the ways he took care of her. Her journey of surrender was a process, but God was faithful to lead her to dependency and trust in him.

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Nagoyans are proud of their city. **Pray** Nagoyans will forsake their ambitions of worldly success and choose abundant life in Christ.

Nagoya is the largest city in Japan's "rice bowl" region. **Pray** Nagoyans will begin to hunger and thirst for the truth until they can say they have tasted and seen that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

**Pray** Christians in Nagoya will have Christ's heart for the masses and work together to seek the lost.



**NAGOYA, JAPAN**

Plato\* was working on his masters in Greek philosophy and seeking answers about God when he met a Christian at a local church's language exchange. He wanted answers about the "ontological nature of Jesus" and mistakenly assumed most English speakers know the word ontological. The Christian's major in college, however, was similar, so he understood. They became fast friends and began to study the Bible together. Plato also studied the Word with a local church and eventually he believed.

*\*Name changed*





When Ishikawa-san\* was saved, he had a lucrative job and a worldly view of success and priorities. Over the next few years, his life was transformed as he saw God's heart for the nations. He and his wife led several to Christ, hosted and led Bible studies, and started a discipleship study. In 2020, he will become the full-time pastor of Yokohama's Love of Jesus Church.

*\*Name changed*

**JAPANESE PASTORS**



**Pray** that every Christian will love, honor, and pray for their pastor and his family (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

**Pray** for aging Japanese pastors and churches as they seek to be faithful in evangelism to the next generation.  
**Pray** for a new generation of godly pastors.

**Pray** that Japanese believers will encourage and strengthen their pastor by using their spiritual gifts for building up the church.

Japanese pastors need prayer. Only 10 percent of the pastors in Japan are under fifty years old, and nearly half are over seventy. Thirty percent of churches have no pastor. The supply line of young pastors has slowed to a trickle as seminaries report lower enrollments and fewer graduates.

Few pastors receive adequate salaries, and upon retiring, many have little more than what the government provides.

One of Japan's greatest needs is for young pastors who will preach the whole Word of God and encourage their people toward an uncompromised allegiance to Christ.

Many pastors labor in small churches with little growth, tremendous financial challenges, and aging facilities. Japanese pastors have tremendous ministry responsibilities and a limited support team, if at all.

Living a life committed to Jesus often comes at a significant cost in a country where less than 1 percent follow Christ and where materialism and traditional Japanese religions keep millions in spiritual darkness.



**Pray** many people will believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and call out to the ever-present heavenly Father instead of their ancestors.

**Pray** that partnerships between Japanese churches and missionaries will succeed in making God's name known in Fukuoka.

**Pray** for opportunities to have spiritual impact on the students and teachers of local schools in Fukuoka and the vicinity.

A year ago, Yuto\* met missionaries through his mother's workplace. He was a shy teenager who wouldn't go to school and didn't want to see anyone. However, he felt comfortable enough to hang out with the missionaries. In time, Yuto joined outreach classes where he spent time with local Christians. He has since passed the exams that allow him to go to the next level of high school. He even visited the church service a couple times. Pray he will continue to spend more time hearing God's Word.

*\*Name changed*

**FUKUOKA, JAPAN**



Fukuoka means “Hill of Blessing” and is a blue-collar area on the island of Kyushu. It is a cultural center with a high university student population. The people are generally warm yet traditional, with their own dialects and crafts.

Two well-known crafts are the Hakata obi pattern, a special weaving used for the wide sash tied around the kimono robe, and the Hakata doll, made from local clay.

The people of this area follow both Buddhist and Shinto traditions. Families might even have a Buddhist altar and a Shinto god-shelf in the same house. They pray to their ancestors and believe the dead can protect them. For Japanese people, the most important thing is to be like all other Japanese—this is an obstacle faced by Japanese who want to leave traditions and follow Christ.



**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

Before the “Japanese,” there were indigenous people in Japan, like the Ainu people and the people of the Ryukyu Islands.

#### Ainu People:

Active contact between the Japanese and the Ainu began in the thirteenth century, but when Japan annexed Hokkaido—where the majority of Ainu lived—the Ainu lost land, autonomy, and indigenous standing. They began to be assimilated into Japanese culture. Today most Ainu have no understanding of their ancestry.

#### People of the Ryukyu Islands:

The people of the Ryukyu Islands speak seven languages. Dialects vary to the degree that different tribes are unable to understand one another. Many younger people cannot speak the native languages. For them, their heart language is Japanese.

Ryuku’s Yaeyama Islands have a unique blend of culture and language that developed over years of isolation. Three small Protestant churches are on the main island of Ishigaki.

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A new generation of youth are starting to think of themselves as ethnically Ainu. **Pray** they will find their deepest identity in Christ.

The Ryukyu Islands have become a “dumping ground” for the elderly and handicapped from the mainland. **Pray** those who have experienced discrimination will come to know a Father who loves them.

Praise the Lord that God’s Word is available in the Ainu language and that churches do exist in the Ryukyu Islands. **Pray** for more bodies of Christ.

Pastor Goodin\* had a successful career as a hospital administrator. When he left that career to attend seminary, his plan was to be a pastor in Okinawa. But God had other plans. Pastor Goodin moved his family to Ishigaki to start work among one of the least engaged peoples in Japan. After twenty-five years, there are fewer than ten members in the church.

*\*Name changed*



**DIASPORA JAPANESE**

Kayo,\* a Japanese pastor's wife, met a Japanese mother at a grocery store. Kayo took the woman's contact information and started praying for her. She invited the woman to a church event, but the woman didn't come. After praying for three years, Kayo took her name off the prayer list. However, soon after, the woman came to worship. She believed in Jesus as Savior and was baptized the next week. With God's help, she is growing in her faith.

*\*Name changed*

Around the turn of the twentieth century, many Japanese moved to territories of the Empire of Japan. Now, Japanese live all over the world.

The term “diaspora Japanese” describes those living outside of Japan. More than four million people who relate to being Japanese live outside Japan today, including a segment called the Nikkei—citizens of other countries but of Japanese descent.

Mature Japanese believers from the diaspora who return to their homeland have the potential to make a powerful impact. At the same time, those who live outside Japan could deeply bless Japanese communities near them.

Atlanta, Georgia, is home to many short-term Japanese businessmen and their families who are removed from community back home. One Japanese church offers a weekly English conversation class that provides Bible teaching and a support system.

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There are 30 percent more professions of faith among the diaspora than within Japan itself. **Pray** for the many believers from the diaspora.

The Nikkei often cling to their cultural values even more tenaciously than those in their homeland. **Pray** God will break through traditions and bring them to faith.

Many Japanese who make a profession of faith outside of Japan “lose their faith” upon return to Japan. **Pray** for true conversions and long-term obedience.



*Every church. Every nation.*

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