

Love Japan (April 10 to Apr 20) Mission Trip Report

Day 0 (Apr 10)

- Set off from Changi Airport Terminal 1 with five members, team leader Kean Soon, treasurer Sing Ai, logistics I/Cs Faith and Rlna (who participated in two previous Love Japan missions during the crisis relief phase) and programme I/C Fei Fei; joined in Japan by interpreter QInglin
- Send-off by Pastors, cell members, family members. Pastor Wee Long and Pastor Kang Ying prayed protection and journey mercy over us, and for us to have compassion for the Japanese as we were released to serve the nation



- Love Japan team members forming the word Japan



Day 1 (Apr 11)

- 1000: Arrive at Tokyo Haneda Airport
- 1200: Lunch at Tokyo Station; followed by shinkansen train ride to Sendai



- 1400: Arrival at Sendai station, picked up by Pastor Caleb and Pek Kuan
- Dropped off at FCBC Sendai, met up with team member Qinglin, short walk in the park near FCBC Sendai to view cherry blossoms





- 1500: Participated in FCBC Sendai's English Circle, a weekly outreach event for working adults in the area to learn English. Love Japan team members were split into different groups with Japanese attendees. Topic for the day was to do a simple introduction in English on the daily schedule of participants. It was a good time of being exposed to the felt needs of the Japanese people and even some Chinese, Taiwanese students in Japan, who wanted to learn English



1700: FCBC Sendai church service. Team members sang the Japanese song "Kimi wa ai sareru tame umareta" (Born to be loved) during service. Pastor Caleb spoke about the importance of finding purpose in life through Jesus and not having fear despite the uncertainty in life. He gave the example of how some Japanese had worries and anxiety after reading about some 150 dolphins that were beached in Ibaraki prefecture, bringing back old fears of another tsunami as a lot of dolphins were also beached prior to the March 11, 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Team member Qinglin shared her testimony about how God has helped her to overcome her fears.

2000: Packed up after service and headed for dinner at Yoshinoya, followed by buying of bread and preparation for next day's programme

Day 2 (Apr 12)

- 0700: Set off for church service at Kesennuma First Bible Baptist Church

- 1000: Attendance of service at Kesennuma First Bible Baptist Church (KFBBC). We were very blessed to be able to attend the first service at the re-constructed KFBBC, after the church was completely washed away by the tsunami in March 2011, leaving nothing behind, with all the foundation and buildings gone in a matter of minutes as it lies close to the coastline. But KFBBC has since risen from the ashes, with the FCBC Sendai team taking an over two-hour drive every Sunday morning to lend support and minister to the KFBBC community, led by Ps Hiroshi Minegishi. Ps Minegishi told the congregation of around 20 people that the tsunami can wash away everything, but it cannot wash away God's love. The rebuilding of the church is a testament of that, as the church continues to reach out to pre-believers in the area. The Love Japan team sang a worship song, while team member Qinglin shared her testimony of God's love overcoming her fears. The team joined the church in a simple but heartwarming lunch after the service, bringing some Singapore delights like pandan chiffon cake and also snacks.





1230: The team then set off for Goenmohara Temporary Housing Units (THU), or kasetsu, which is home to survivors of the earthquake and tsunami in the area. Their lives were turned upside down when the disasters struck, as their homes, along with their belongings and valuables, were swept away by the tide. The THUs are essentially containers that serve as a home to the survivors while new buildings they can call home are being built.



1330 – 1630: Cooked and served about 30 residents of the THU local delights such as laksa, pandan chiffon cake and kaya toast. It was an action-packed time, with all the chefs like Ps Christina, Gideonite Pek Kuan and team members whipping up a delicious meal within a short span of 45 minutes for the mainly elderly residents, who were eager to join in the activities and came early at around 1.40pm even though the publicity posters put up around the THU stated the programme would start only at 2pm. Before the food was served, the team played ice-breakers with the residents, introducing them to common Singapore kampong games, like blowing up and playing paper balls, five-stones, pick-up sticks. There was also an introduction of Singapore, where the team shared a brief history and geography of how Singapore came to be, as well as uniquely Singapore idiosyncrasies like loving food, chopping seats using tissue paper packets and kiasuism. The team also sang some Japanese songs and had enough time to give shoulder and back massages to the residents, who smiled and clapped along during the programme, enjoying a moment of respite. Each resident who attended the programme was also given a pack of fresh fruits before they left, as Ps Caleb prayed a prayer of blessing over them to close the event.





1630 – 1800: Drove to Ishinomaki for onsen bath and dinner before staying over at Hebita, premises of a member of Kurihara Bible Baptist Church under Ps Ichio Kishinami, who was called by God to reach out to the Oshika fishing village by coordinating international efforts to help the fishermen during their harvest season. We were comfortably hiding in our sleeping bags and grateful for the premises, as it shielded us from the chilly winds and cold temperatures.



Day 3 (Apr 13)

- 0645 - 1600: It was a bright and early start to the day as we set off for Oshika to work with fishermen during the current seaweed harvest season. Seaweeds are harvested only during the months of March and April, according to the locals. The fishing village was badly affected during the disasters, as livelihoods were disrupted when their homes, fishing equipment, boats were damaged. One can only imagine the psychological scars inflicted on the fishermen, when the seas, their means of support, became a source of terror. On a day when the weather is good and there is no rain, the fishermen would set sail at 5am to harvest the seaweed from the oceans, bringing the haul back to land. This is where the volunteers came in, with Ps Kishinami arranging for help from Christians around the world to work with the fishermen in whatever form of aid the fishermen could use. The ten of us were divided into pairs and sent to different fishermen's places to process the seaweeds. Many of us were involved in the cutting and packing of seaweeds, although the men – Ps Caleb and team leader Kean Soon – did the harder manual labour, carrying stacks of seaweeds to be processed by boiling them. Our hosts were very generous, ensuring we had coffee breaks and providing us with bento sets complemented with home-cooked food.





1700 – 1900: Programme at another THU by Ps Kishinami, with different churches around the world pitching in. It was an uplifting time of serving another group of some 30 residents whose homes were washed away. This time, three churches from around the world – Tokyo, Hawaii and Singapore – banded together to bring cheer and meaning to the residents. The three churches were all volunteers at the Oshika fishing village, and it was a night of unity in serving the residents, with the Tokyo team cooking dinner with help from the Singapore team, the Singapore team also sang worship songs, while the Hawaiian team performed Hawaii dance. There was much joy in working alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ from the other churches for a common purpose.







- We saw posters that were a grim reminder of the after-effects of the disasters at the kasetsu, where bodies were found and their faces reconstructed by drawing, but these bodies have not yet been claimed.



- The residents were given a bag of fish each as a farewell present and Ps Christina prophesied over the pail of fish, that just as Jesus is a fisher of men, the fishermen of Oshika would also one day be fishers of men for Christ, that many Japanese lives as represented by the bountiful fish would give their lives and follow Jesus.



Day 4 (Apr 14)

- 0645 - 1600: The team again set off for Oshika to work for the fishermen as we processed seaweed or wakame again, cutting and packing them. It was a heartwrenching time of sharing as the hosts got to know us better and shared more of their plight. One family spoke of how they had lost their daughter during the tsunami; another family spoke of how they lost two sons to the tsunami and were left with one son; one also shared that his wife took their children and left him as she could not bear with the pain of living in Oshika; another family survived the tsunami, but the home was still not repaired and bore the brunt of the 10metre high waves that struck. The owner of the home spoke of how he and his son was out at sea when the earthquake happened, as they were tossed and turned in the huge tidal waves, but were thankful to be alive and to reach home, where it took them three days after the earthquake to finally reach home. This family is one of around 20 to 30 people in Oshika who have been touched by the unconditional aid given by Ps Kishinami and volunteers and gave their lives to Christ. Ps Caleb and Ps Christina were also able to pray for their hosts before they left and team members Faith and Rina were able to share John 3:16 with their hosts



- Ps Caleb, Ps Christina, our Japanese translator Yuko-san and team member Qinglin headed back for Sendai, as the FCBC Sendai team prepared for the weekly Gospel choir outreach programme in church. The rest of the team, along with Gideonite Pek Kuan stayed on in Ishinomaki, had an onsen bath and dinner, as they celebrated team member Fei Fei's birthday

Day 5 (Apr 15)

- 0900 - 1500: The team headed back to Sendai, dropping by Mitsui Outlet Mall for a spot of shopping and lunch, after that it was soba for dinner at FCBC Sendai church building.
- 2000 – 2300: Cell group with around eight FCBC Sendai Japanese members. Ps Caleb asked the Japanese members to share about their challenges in sharing the gospel with their fellow Japanese.
- Kishi-san spoke of how he lost his best friend when he shared the gospel, as his friend felt insulted that Kishi-san was rejecting their culture, gods, but Kishi-san was grateful for the new community of friends and believers.
- Yuko-san said she accepted Jesus when studying in Texas in the US, saying more than half the Japanese Christians became Christians outside Japan because outside the country, people were more willing to talk about their own opinion, more freedom somehow, but back in Japan, the tendency is to talk about superficial things, avoid asking personal questions
- Tai-san said the gospel of freedom and choice really contradicts what the Japanese believe in, as he also faces difficulty in sharing with his family, noting the hierarchical structure in Japanese society and emphasis on unity which is really an emphasis on conformity
- Kyoko-san said although many people attend gospel choirs, which is a fad in Japan, they can only sing that Jesus is God in English, not in Japanese because Japanese expect you to stay the same and they will stop someone from believing or evangelizing because they feel faith is a personal thing.
- Fumio-san said it is not hard to evangelise because one can stand in the streets and shout Jesus is Lord, but the difficult thing is to get people to accept Jesus as Japanese want to be the same always, so must get people of the same age/experience to share and walk together, or to approach those with desperate needs like the tsunami victims as they are more open
- Violet-san said young people in Japan don't really know what religion is and they don't have bad impression of Christianity but she noticed that many churches in Japan are not the kind of churches that young people like, because if they are not lively, cool or interesting, they will not attend anymore
- Rose-san said she noticed people's hearts are not as open now as when the disasters first struck as when people were desperate, they had no choice but to ask for help
- Team member Sing Ai shared about Mat 9:36 "When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" and she sensed God really loves the Japanese who were like sheep without shepherds and need believers to rise up and lead them
- Ps Caleb highlighted the tendency of Japanese to conform, how their public face may not be the real face, so even if they say sinners' prayer, they may not mean it but may have said it out of conformity. But he added that it is a new season for Japan, observing that of the group of 17 of us present, only 3 accepted Christ after the age of 22, so he felt the youths are the ones to reach out to as they dare to be different and Sendai is the education hub for the north



Day 6 (Apr 16)

- 0900 - 1700: It was a day of prayerwalking in the city of Sendai and distributing flyers about FCBC Sendai's programmes and services to residents as the Lord led us.

- We began the day at Aoba or Sendai Castle, which the feudal lord Date Masamune began building in 1600 after he settled in the area. The castle was built on one of the highest points of Sendai and from the castle now, it oversees the Sendai city area. We spoke with some students who were on an excursion with their schools. Among the prayer promptings we had were that

(i) The earthquake shook up the trust and foundation that the Japanese had in their economy and power, and is meant to turn the Japanese to the Lord

(ii) Isa 61 and Psalm 25: that the local churches will rise up and shepherd the flocks and FCBC Sendai is to be like the alien shepherding the flock in Isa 61:5

(iii) In all the high places, there are shrines that are built, like the one at Aoba Castle, and which need to be reclaimed for the Lord

(iv) could see the river flowing through the city and need God or the river of life to flow through

(v) saw an eagle and reminded of places of authority like the castle once was, to take over the authority under God



- Second place we visited was Tohoku University, which was ranked the fifth best university in Japan and is well-respected for its research and engineering department. The university attracts many top foreign students as well. FCBC Sendai had prayerwalked the grounds before and managed to reach out to Chinese students with its English Circle programme previously. On the day we visited, it was some extra-curricular activities day, where all the clubs put up booths to recruit members

- Some of the prayer promptings we had at the university include:

(i) It was a dead place, felt very heavy there

(ii) One possible place of entry for FCBC Sendai could be English club

(iii) Students were very self-absorbed and pursuing their own dreams

(iv) the fears, hesitation and concerns of students at that age, how we need to connect with them, be at the same frequency as them

(v) students seem more open to talk and more confident of themselves



- After lunch, we headed to Gakuin University, which was the first time FCBC Sendai entered the grounds. It was founded in 1886 by Protestants as a theological seminary, to train pastors and missionaries, with the motto, "Light Love Life", but has since over the years become a secular school, providing liberal arts education and other courses, although a chapel still stands. We were able to share with several students about Singapore Night. We saw there was a poster for recruitment of students for a magic club and had encounters where one prayerwalking team was told by God to head west as there would be a girl who would be sitting alone. When we saw the girl and invited her for Singapore Night, she said it was the day of her birthday. Another prayerwalking team was led to a possible man of peace, a professor of the university was a big fan of Singapore, visiting the country more than 30 times and he agreed to a meeting with Ps Caleb and Christina the next day, where they discussed possible areas of collaboration especially in Project Smile, which teaches magic. Another team met a professor who said he was a bahai believer but was open to prayer



- After that, we headed to the goddess of mercy statue, which is 100m high, the sixth tallest statue in the world, and can be seen in almost all parts of Sendai as it sticks up high. It was built by a businessman to evade taxes, which was why it is not much respected by Japanese, who avoided that place and the businessman eventually went bankrupt. There were less than a handful of people on the day we visited. But the place has memorials for fetuses, pets. The team walked round the statue once and as there were seven of us, we each prayed a prayer, trusting that the seven rounds of prayer would be like Joshua and the Israelites who obeyed God in walking round Jericho that tore the wall down. Ps Christina sensed Jer 10:5 at the place, we prayed for the statue to be brought down and sang a worship song to lift up Jesus. Ps Caleb also sent us a map that showed the spiritual battle taking place, where many Sendai shrines were built.

- Prayer promptings:

- (i) Sendai or 仙台 in Japanese, showed idol on a platform, prayed against that
- (ii) prayed repentance for act of aborting babies, that forgiveness comes from Christ alone
- (iii) like the statue of dagon brought down in the bible, so will this statue



- 1930 – 2100: First round of shopping for non-perishables for Singapore Night

- 2130 - 2300: Team had a de-briefing session with Pastors where we shared learning points so far, some issues highlighted were:

- (i) God really loves Japan
- (ii) Japan is rich materially but poor in spirit
- (iii) our job is to show God's love and share joy as best as we can
- (iv) things seem to be getting back to normal, people affected by the disasters are trying to move on with their lives and put past behind; lack of daily devotional as a team
- (v) importance of Japanese language as a form of communication to speak His love



Day 7 (Apr 17)

- 0900 - 1530: We began the day by sending bulky luggage not needed to Narita Airport via Ta-Q-Bin at its office near FCBC Sendai in Jozenji as it was the last day (before 7pm) we could do so before setting off for home on Sunday Apr 19, we paid about 1,950 yen per luggage. We then had a time of prayer and worship at FCBC Sendai, interceding for the nation, before prayerwalking and distributing flyers around Jozenji

- Some of the prayer promptings:

(i) see the Japanese flag, with the red dot like the blood of Jesus, flowing and covering the land

(ii) blood of Jesus falling to the ground, asking God to redeem the land, that has brought curses like low birth rate, worship of own lifestyle instead of God

(iii) see eagle flying over Japan, flapping its wings, worshipping God and spreading this blessing over Japan

(iv) prayer over our interpreter Yuko-san, personally as well as a representative of Japan, for healing, to know God's deep love, to know how special she and Japan are to God, a closer relationship

(v) people in the city do not seem very friendly or receptive

(vi) a need to reach out to the young and low wage workers in the Jozenji area

(vii) critical to meet felt needs of businesses, proprietors, neighbours of FCBC Sendai like in Luke 10 and Matthew 10

(viii) prayed against a 3m high statue of goddess of success at Takanoboru Building



1700 – 1730: Participation in Kids Brown, which is an English class targeted at young primary school-going children at FCBC Sendai. Mothers often sit in with their children, as they are devoted to their children and they are often lonely, with husbands working and dining out till late. Bought some Merlion souvenir pens and gave them to the Kids Brown students. Role-played with the students in English, attempted to engage the mothers, but they were more comfortable as a group by themselves



1800 – 2300: dinner and purchase of Singapore Night items, followed by debriefing, cutting of food for Singapore Night. Pastors and team brainstormed on possible ideas on new area being rented on the sixth floor of the same building as FCBC Sendai, which the church hopes to be a place to reach out to the young, where they can play, hang out like TCS Crush programme of computer games, or a place where people can study, learn music, dance

(i) do a survey of young people around the place on what they like to do, possible for future mission teams to help out

(ii) the venue may be too small as a dance studio, so may not be suitable for such activities, there is also a dance studio across FCBC Sendai, at the same building as Gallou Restaurant, so can leverage that

(iii) Singapore ITE students seem to be very into a darts arcade game called “Darts Live”, could perhaps rent it for sixth floor and let Japanese youths play it, as it seems to be popular game worldwide and in Japan

(iv) noticed a lot of students training at park near church, new group possibly to reach out to

(v) sixth floor and its activities need to be near window, open and visible to people on outside, like a beacon of light

Day 8 (Apr 18)

- 0830 - 0930: Breakfast devotional and prayer prompters for Japan. Pastors Caleb and Christina shared from 1 Kings 8:31-40, about the need to know sin, confess it, for God to hear our prayers, which are apt for the land.



- 0930 – 1330: Cooking, cutting and preparation for Singapore Night at apartment



- 1430 – 1700: Arrival in church, preparation for Singapore Night, prayer over sixth floor

- 1700 – 1900: Church service. Ps Caleb preached from Psa 34:18, where he stressed the importance of God wanting to give us a new heart for our broken hearts, not to repress our feelings, as well as to give us a new heart for our hardened hearts, not to suppress our feelings. Team sang a worship song. Team member Faith shared her testimony of how God has blessed her every step of the way, providing for her every need in life



- 1900 – 2100: Thank God for good turnout of some 40 people, not including about 20 church members, for a night of fun and food for Singapore Night, where we had ice-breakers which involved the mass dance of “I will follow Him” from the movie “Sister Act”, an introduction of Singapore, dressing up like Singaporeans competition, quiz on Singapore and of course, lots of Singapore food like rojak, chicken rice, Singapore curry with French loaf, Singapore snacks like murukus. Team member RIna also shared her testimony of how God has walked her through her life, with miraculous healing and job provision, team sang worship song and Ps Caleb prayed blessing over attendees, who were given Singapore snacks and souvenirs







- 2230: debriefing and pack up at apartment. Team shared lessons from Singapore Night
 (i) good time of bonding and enjoying, a hook for people to bring new contacts to enjoy food and develop deeper conversations/relationships

(ii) not enough time of transition between church service to transit to food serving for Singapore Night, may need perhaps longer ice-breakers, time-off for people to mingle before church setting changed to dining setting

(iii) programme need to cater to children, more mass dance/participation would be better

Day 9 (Apr 19)

0615: Set off for Sendai train station on to Tokyo for R&R before catching plane home

Follow up for future teams/intercession

(i) help with survey of youths in area

(ii) help in programme ideas like Mothers' Day, Family Day, Sports Day, picnic cum kite-flying

(iii) need more youths to come on board, like university-going or young working adults type to connect and mentor to the Japanese youths, share career or other guidance to be transformational for youths

(iv) pray for FCBC Sendai to (a) enlarge its territory by increasing circle of network to invite to events, (b) open doors to reach university students in Tohoku and Gakuin (c) for 12 G12 Japanese churches to be formed