Love Japan Mission Trip Report

(11-20 November 2016)



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Trip Summary

Objective of trip:

- To support Pastor Caleb and Christina in current stage of church planting by participating in their outreach
 activities, encouraging and befriending FCBC Sendai brothers and sisters-in-Christ
- To intercede and understand God's larger heartbeat and plan for Japan and FCBC Sendai
- To learn from the FCBC Sendai experience and grow in the missions heartbeat
- To explore the possibility of young families adapting and contributing to short term mission work in Japan

Key activities:

- a. FCBC services and cell group events,
- b. Prayer walk at Hirose River and Kesennuma,
- c. OCC packing
- d. Outreach events including soccer match, homestay mum and previous trip contacts' meet-up, e-circle (kids and adults)

Key takeaways and follow up:

- We were delighted to see that FCBC Sendai has grown in depth of the lives of the members. The aftereffect of the recent Encounter Weekend was evident! Also really encouraged at the faith of our pastors in extending their influence to other cities.
- With some preparation, it is possible to explore missions as a family. Kids are more adaptable than we think. However, it is important to align expectations.
- We understand that as short term trippers we can also play a longer term role in intercession, relationship building, and perhaps doing some programmes that could extend into a longer term work, i.e. parenting.
- We will continue to encourage parents who are prepared for short term missions to participate in future trips.

Overall Schedule and Roles

- Zexian: Overall team leader, worship, Day 2 sharing (together with Kendice)
- Kendice: Treasurer and admin, children's lesson
- Eric and Arlene: Sharing for 1st service, devotion, e-circle
- Vincent and Carol: Icebreakers, songs, e-circle

Day	Activity
11 Nov	Travel
12 Nov	E-Circle, Service
13 Nov	Rest at Adventure Park
14 Nov	Kids Door, Soccer night
15 Nov	E-Circle, Cell group
16 Nov	OCC packing
17 Nov	Prayer Walk at Hirose River and Aoba Castle, Previous trip contacts' meeting
18 Nov	Homestay mums' meeting, Service
19 Nov	Outreach: Couch surfing meet up
20 Nov	Travel and return

Daily Events: FCBC Service

- **Objective:** Observe FCBC service and share testimony during service. Service messages on "Success in Marriage"
- Activity: We participated in two weekend services. Eric and Arlene shared their testimonies at the first service and Zexian and Kendice shared at the second service.
- Takeaway:
- Eric "I sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit so strongly that I teared while we worshipped, although I did not understand the Japanese lyrics at all. God reminded me that He is real and spiritual, not intellectual. As we shared our testimony, I was reminded of God's second chance to me and bit by bit, I recalled how God brought me back to Him although I was the prodigal son who chose to live a worldly life and neglect God. After we shared our story, Hatake-san came forward to talk to us and told us he was encouraged by our sharing. Then, he took the initiative to share his own story although this was our first meeting. Our testimony with God has a natural connection to people and I encourage us to keep sharing our testimony to friends around us."
- Zexian "As we prepared the message, we felt God wanted us to move away from a 'method' message to talk about the 'man' of Jesus. We shared about how God healed us in our families and we were encouraged when many came to us afterwards to share that they were encouraged by how real God is and they wanted to find out more.
- One Asian-American lady married to a Japanese man came up to me and shared deeply about her family and church situation.
 Indeed the situation in Japan is complex. Even the church sometimes have to deal with the chauvinistic culture norm. She left indicating that she'd like to return and find out more."





Eric and Arlene preaching for the first service

Eric shared about second chances in life - how God saved him through a terrible accident, and Arlene shared about how God saw her through cancer treatment.





Zexian and Kendice preaching at second service followed by dinner
Zexian and Kendice shared about how God has a plan for families. He wants
to redeem our brokenness and rebuild our walls. This was followed by a
sumptuous steamboat dinner!





Daily Events: Kesennuma Service

- Objective: Share testimony during service for Kesennuma First Baptist Church
- Activity: Sharing at Kesennuma First Baptist Church by Eric and Arlene
- The kids sang a number of Christian hymns in Japanese and the team donned red t-shirts as a show of our solidarity coming from FCBC Singapore. The kids did very well singing and immediately connected with the community.
- After the service, we served the rice dumplings we brought from Singapore, as well as other food items. This was followed by games and interaction time with Kesennuma church led by Vincent.



- Arlene "After our testimony sharing on Saturday evening, Pastor Caleb asked me to add in more details on how I overcomed the obstacles in my cancer journey. As I prepared that night for sharing the next morning, God brought to mind two separate occasions when He sent two messengers to bring His message of assurance and sovereignty over my life.
- As I reflected on my testimony sharing in Kesennuma, I felt that God was using me as His messenger to send a message to His beloved people in Kesennuma, that He had never left them nor forsook them, not before the 2011 tsunami and definitely not after. Just like my own cancer discovery journey when I didn't understand why I had to go through it, when there was doubt and fears, God sent His messengers to assure and comfort me. It was only after the storm had calmed down and was over that I could see the good out of the whole episode. Similarly although the people of Kesennuma had gone through periods of doubt and fears, God wants to assure them that He loves them and will never forsake them. His people need to trust and believe that He is in control and in time to come, they will see the good out of this entire chapter."
- Vincent "The church was really beautiful; a mix of traditional church setting with a sophisticated and modern look. Pastor Minegeshi was a survivor of the 2011 tsunami, but lost his church building and house due to the damage.
- After the meal, Pastor Caleb suggested a team bonding session. I was initially a little skeptical about the two games we were to play, given it was simple and catered to a wide range of age groups, but I was praying in my heart for the Lord to intercede and establish opportunities to connect with the local community. Yuko-san was the translator and I felt we established good rapport with the participants. We played 'cat and mouse' and 'follow the leader' before handing the time to the Lees for a song which they sang in Japanese."



Chows sharing their testimony



After service lunch and activity



A beautiful church
We spent time to pray for the church members, for unity and peace.

Daily Events: Kesennuma Prayer Walk

- **Objective:** Prayer walk at Park at Cape Iwaisaki, Kesennuma (Tsunami vantage site)
- Activity: After service, we went to Kesennuma park, which offered a viewpoint of where the tsunami struck the coast of Kesennuma. The site is 10km south of the city centre. The site offered a breathtaking view of the sea and was a vivid reminder of the devastation that struck the entire coast in 2011 when the tsunami hit.
- Takeaway: Kendice "During the lunch after Kesennuma service, Zexian sat beside a lady in her 60s or 70s. She was the only one he managed to strike a conversation with through the translator during lunch. After the lunch, we planned to go to the martyr's site 45 mins away from the church. But Pastor Caleb decided to let us stop by the coastal area to have a look at the coastline. We alighted and walked to the coastline. The lady whom Zexian spoke to earlier happened to stay nearby and joined us with her daughter.
- At the coastal area, we prayed for Japan. Zexian spoke with the lady and she shared that the day the tsunami struck was the graduation day of the kindergarten students, and parents were getting ready for their performance. These students all died in the tsunami. When she saw our children, she was reminded of them.
- I think it was a first time in a long while that she managed to share her emotions with someone. We later learned from Pastor Christina that today is her first time at church because her husband is a Buddhist who builds temples. It happened that the husband is out of town so she came. Although we couldn't communicate much, I think the Lord wanted to give her a chance to share. It is so divine that this was her first time in church."



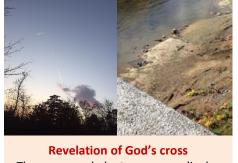
Statute of Edo-period Sumo Wrestler, Hidenoyama Raigoro He points out at the sea seemingly in defiance.



Impromptu meeting with
Kesennuma members
Besides praying over the city, we had the unique opportunity to minister to the members. A divine opportunity.

Daily Events: Kesennuma Prayer Walk

- Objective: Prayer walk at Okago Christian Martyrdom Memorial Park in Fujisawa-cho Iwate Prefecture
- **Activity:** Prayer walk at Okago Christian Martyr Memorial. To track the history of the church where many believers gave their lives under persecution.
- Takeaway: Kendice Christian Martyr Monument
- "Later we went to the martyr's site. This site has a flight of 309 steps up the hill, in remembrance of the 309 Christians who were martyred for their faith during the Tokugawa period. They were hung on crosses or their heads were cut off and put on poles as a warning to the other Japanese.
- Pastor Caleb lost his way so we ended up arriving later. On our way up martyr's hill, which
 was a steep flight of steps, we saw a cross in the sky made by airplanes. It was so timely
 because they flew off after making the cross and we would not have seen it if we were not
 delayed.
- When we reached the top of the hill, Elsbeth shared with us a revelation of the cross we saw earlier. She said that one aeroplane was flying behind the other one which made the cross, which meant that the plane carrying people was following the way of the cross. And as it happened during sunset, the sky was partially dark and partially lit by the setting sun. The planes were flying towards the west, the lit part of the sky. This symbolised people crossing from darkness into light. It is a reminder that the Lord remembers Japan and He remembers the blood of the martyrs.



The cross made by two perpendicular intersecting planes. We had to be there at the right time and spot. Last year, God also showed us a cross at Hirose river, another martyr site. God was reminding us that He does not forget the blood of His children.





Ascending the Christian Martyr Monument

We ascended 309 steps, each represented one martyred life. We remembered how Christ ascended the hill of Calvary himself carrying our sin and shame. We declared that the shame of the Christians will be removed.

Daily Events: Prayer Walk at Hirose River

- **Objective:** Prayer walk at Hirose River, Martyr's Monument and Aoba Castle, former stronghold of Daimyo Date Masamune
- Activity: We visited Christian Martyrs Monument at Hirose River which we visited last year. Following that, we ascended Mt Aoba to see the remnants of Date's castle. Following which we visited Tohoku Gakuin University, a university that was started by missionaries in the early 1800s.
- Takeaway:
- **Zexian** "When we visited the river this time round, the sense of remembrance of the martyr's price remained poignant. Again we spent time to break the curse of shame and rejection and we asked the Lord to quicken His revival for Japan.
- Mt Aoba overlooked the city of Sendai. We saw mountains and rivers and we sang "I Could Sing Of Your Love Forever" as a song of healing over the land of Japan for the tsunami, the repressed souls in Sendai and for a river of revival to flow through the land. We realised that the construction on this hill has also been destroyed. An eagle sculpture has been swept off its pedestal, a castle destroyed a few times by earthquake, even barracks destroyed. On the hill now stands a Shinto shrine commemorating the war dead. We prayed that the curse of Shintoism be broken over the land."
- Arlene "We visited the Tohoku Gakuin University, a private university in Sendai. Like many of the universities in Sendai, it was founded under a Christian background, intended as a theological seminary. We went to the main building which had Victorian style architecture. At the chapel, we prayed and claimed grounds and that one day, Pastor Caleb will stand at the pulpit to share God's word.
- We also visited the new campus building opposite the main building. One of FCBC Sendai's member, Rachel Chacha, is working within the new campus. The presence of Christian roots is still strong, with a huge cross and Bible verse from Matthew 5:13-14, 'Salt of the earth, Light of the world' at the entrance of the new building. There is also a café called 'BIRTHDAY' which symbolises new birth. We prayed at the new building that doors will be opened to Rachel to reach out to the staff and students at the campus, and that the café 'BIRTHDAY' will be a new ground that can be used as a place to reach out to more lives.



Christian Martyr Monument



Praying over the city of Sendai on Mt Aoba



Tohoku Gakuin University Inscription reads: Salt of the Earth, Light of the World

Daily Events: E-Circles

- **Objective:** Participate in English lessons so we can reach out to the kids and their parents. Japanese are keen to learn English and it becomes a useful platform to reach out.
- Activity: There are three platforms for English learning. One with kids and two with adults.
- Takeaway:
- **Kendice, Kids' e-circle** "Yaos and Lees followed Yuko-san to engage some kids in an English lesson. We did art and craft with the kids. Only two families were there because of another school event, hence we did not get to interact with the mothers."
- Carol, E-circle "Vincent, Carol and Zexian spent an hour with friends of FCBC Sendai on an English lesson. A total of six Japanese students and six English facilitators were present for e-circle. We made use of a memory game to carry out introductions, which helped everyone to relax and also learn and remember each other. This was a good ice breaker as well as to allow the participants to practise and pick up new words.
- As Vincent is in the recruitment line, we hitched on the idea of everyone sharing what is
 their dream job. The last activity had each facilitator paired up with a participant to carry
 out an 'interview', where each of us would share qualities that suit our dream job. Through
 these activities, the key advantage is to allow them to open up without us probing or
 sounding too invasive into their private lives.
- I would say Sasaki-san is the peacemaker of the group. She's very jovial and candid, and brought a lot of laughter during the whole session."
- Eric, Small group English conversations "Eric and Arlene went with the pastors to engage a group of adults. I realised that English Learning (conversation) creates opportunities for us to 'value-add' and more avenues for us to know new people. The other possible way to enhance family bonding is by organising a 'Father and Child Day or Camp'. This will help to 'lure' the fathers out."



Teaching kids songs



Doing crafts with kids



English conversations

Daily Events: Kids Door

- **Objective:** Serve with Kids Door, a NPO organisation providing tuition and latch key services for teenagers from under-privileged families.
- **Activity:** Provided dinner for them and had a quick chance to connect with them.
- Takeaway:
- Carol "Kids Door consists of about 15 to 20 teenage students that study and do their homework after school. A number of teachers, who are university students, will provide tuition to these teenagers.
- Our involvement was mainly to prepare dinner and serve them.
 Yuko-san and Pastor Christina prepared dinner while the team helped to serve the students.
- The interactions with the students were short, as many of them struggled with speaking English. Many were also rather reserved, probably due to language barrier.
- Thank God for the peacemaker amongst the students, Runa. She was jovial and shared that she likes English.
- I managed to speak to one of the teachers, who spent a year in Sweden. He was able to communicate well in English and some Swedish. Apart from reaching out to the students at Kids Door, the teachers could also reach out and build rapport with the English speaking in the community, those who have exposure to western culture and may be more open to the gospel.
- We also took the opportunity to invite the students and teachers to upcoming church events."





Preparing food for Kids Door





Delivering food for Kids Door and serving the teenagers

Pastor briefly discussed the possibility of setting up our own Kids Door equivalent. This would be an excellent outreach tool for the community as many of FCBC Sendai members are already in the education and youth sector.

Daily Events: Soccer Night, Outing

- **Objective:** Watch soccer with cell group members and their invitees as part of a cell group activity. We also followed up with acquaintances from the previous trip.
- Activity: Soccer Night.
- Takeaway: Eric "I enjoyed this session as I love to watch soccer! We had friends who came to watch and one father brought his two children to join us. I encourage the team in Sendai to continue to plan for such activities for the community and make this place a community centre. In this way, we will get to know new pre-believers and build a relationship with them, introduce them to e-circle and do community work with us. All these create a platform for us to talk and know more about FCBC Sendai members."
- Activity: Outing with university students
- **Takeaway: Vincent** "Pastor Caleb, Cheh Hsien, Eric and myself met with three university students, one has now started work, the other two are still studying. Their names are Jun (working in an architectural firm), Xiao Gao and Xiao Ye.
- This was a follow up meeting with Jun and Xiao Gao as Cheh Hsien had made contact with them back in 2015. They were open to meet us given the brief encounter back then.
- I had the chance to talk to Xiao Gao and he shared his struggles on finding the next 'right move' as he's contemplating doing his Masters in Sendai but wondering which professor to work for. All three of them are from mainland Chinese and were chatty and open in sharing their current predicaments, including how they adapted to Japanese culture.
- Jun shared about his new firm and starting from the bottom how he had to acclimatise to the Japanese way of working and hierarchical structure. He was lamenting on the newbies in the firm having to organise after work drinks and activities for the company so as to establish presence and value-add.
- They were all invited to church the next day. We highlighted that Cheh Hsien and Kendice would be sharing their personal testimonies. We felt that given their age group, their main focus wasn't to know the Lord but to succeed Japan's competitive society. We exchanged Facebook contacts and created a messenger chat group."

Daily Events: OCC Packing Session

- **Objective:** Operation Christmas Child (OCC) is a Samaritan's Purse initiative that rallies churches in Japan and around the world to give a Christmas gift to a child in a developing nation.
- **Activity:** To pack OCC gifts in partnership with Samaritan's Purse. This is an inter-church activity and we felt it was good to see the churches unite to bless other nations.
- **Takeaway: Arlene** "It was a very meaningful time spent packing gifts of love for the children of Philippines. We were joking among ourselves that we were like factory workers at a production line.
- Station 1: Quality check (check the gift boxes to ensure everything inside is appropriate and good to send to the children)
 - Station 2: Tape the boxes (ensure the boxes are securely taped for delivery)
 - Station 3: Pack into cartons (separate the gift boxes according to boys, girls and age, seal up the carton and carry into warehouse)
- All of us had a good time working alongside one another. There was much laughter and friendly competition between stations as we egged one another on. Being Singaporeans, we were kiasu and worked doubly hard to clear as many boxes as we could. We were amazed and proud when we found out we had cleared about 2100 boxes, when our target was just 1200 boxes that day. Indeed with God on our side, we can achieve more than what we can ever imagine!
- I was assigned to station 1 throughout the day, and as I went through all the gift boxes, I was able to feel the love and effort put into preparing a gift box. I could almost imagine the surprise and joy the children would have when they finally open their gift boxes for Christmas! The fact that the gift box was prepared for a complete stranger at another part of the world was just amazing. Kudos to this organisation for this operation that will bring so much love, joy and hope to underprivileged children.
- I was also reminded that just as a gift packed with love can bring much joy and hope to one, how much more it would be when one receives the greatest gift of all Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that as Christmas draws near, the world will know the true meaning of the season, the perfect love of our heavenly Father, the gift of His only begotten son, that all will open their hearts to receive God's love and gift of salvation. Amen."



Packing a Gospel Opportunity
Box (GO Box)



Singaporean competitiveness put to good use. We finished three days of work in one day

Reflection #1: The work in Japan is like a slow-burn project. It starts with building relationships and being willing to work through the brokenness of people to reveal the glory of God.

- Vincent "During this trip, we learnt more intimately the culture and norms in Japan –
 the societal expectations at work leading to long working hours, the focus of man at
 work and woman at home, keeping up a facade even if things are not going well, etc.
 I've always assumed that Japanese culture is more sophisticated than others given their
 civic consciousness. That is true but at the same time the structure of a typical
 Japanese family robs parents' time from the kids.
- The God we know, even in a society like Japan where people are less inclined to show their true feelings, is able to work wonders as we heard the testimonies of Hatake-san and many others.
- My takeaway is as much as Japan is a self sufficient country, many people are suffering from depression and the country as a whole only comprises 1% Christians. I'm very encouraged and motivated by the work of Pastors Caleb and Christina as they showed compassion, patience and sincerity in all their work in Sendai. They've been crying out to God and not willing to let go of the nation even though it's a 'hard ground' to win over as compared to other communities."
- **Zexian** "We are encouraged that during the recent Encounter the members are seeing breakthrough in their own spiritual walk. I know God is doing a work with the weak and broken so that in the end, all glory will be given back to Him.
- We heard of complaints from other churches about how the pastors there would act chauvinistically and also of church breaks. These are heartbreaking and we know we must intercede for the growing church, which is like a newborn baby and can be broken if not discipled properly."



Getting to know the members of FCBC Sendai

Reflection #2: Even though we are weak and poor, God can provide all we need. Our faithfulness back home in ministry is the best preparation for mission work.

- Chows "I'm thankful for the various exposures I had while serving in different ways. Every time I prepare and run through my testimony for sharing, my heart is always overwhelmed with gratitude as I am reminded of God's blessings and love for me. Thank God for this opportunity to share our testimony which was timely as we come to the end of the year, a time to look back and count our blessings.
- Before the trip, many of us were ill, thus I am thankful that everyone was well throughout this trip other than Kendice who was unwell for only one afternoon, thank God for watching over us."
- Yaos "Prior to the trip, Vincent and the kids were very ill. It was a super tiring two weeks prior to the trip. Both kids had viral and high fever which lasted for a week before the trip; I myself then came down with viral fever and sprained my left foot on the way back after seeing a doctor!
- I've also had a number of work-related matters I had to oversee, which burdened my heart and I didn't want to be distracted in Sendai whilst thinking of my work. The deals were important but I've learnt to rely and submit to the Lord. The outcome thus far has been more than what I could ask for. I'm reminded to seek His kingdom first and all the rest will come.
- The tremours we experienced (a first for myself) reminded me to be ready to meet the Lord. It's a reminder of what I've done for Him and what else needs to be done. Also, how I've been a good steward to my children, the people around me, the resources and gifts I have, as well as my finances."
- Lees "God's timing is perfect. The initial plan was to set off for Sendai on the 5th. If we had not delayed for a week, we may not have been involved in OCC where the men's strength came in handy. We may not have experienced the strong earthquake on the morning of the 12th that woke us not just from physical slumber, but spiritual slumber. The earthquake came to us without warning. We felt unprepared and wondered what we needed to do. However, there are many warnings of the second coming of Jesus. What are we doing now?"



Grateful just to be leaving for Sendai



Making do with lunch in Tokyo after a red-eye flight



First breakfast debrief and orientation at Yuko-san's apartment

Reflection #3: Building relationships with the contacts and members of FCBC Sendai is important. To do that long term, we must seek ways to overcome the language barrier.

- Chows "Pastor Caleb reminded us to keep in touch with the members in Sendai even when we are back in Singapore. This is one thing we need to keep doing to keep the relationship warm. As this is a recce trip for my cell, I will be challenging my cell members to come and serve in 2017."
- Yaos "Apart from keeping the FCBC Sendai team in prayers, I'll be keeping in touch with individuals such as Hatake-san and Kishi-san. I'll also be praying for the key members such as Joshua, Kishi-san and Tai-san. We will continue the work in Sendai in 2017 and encourage more family cells to join us. Start saving and praying for the finances that's needed to make this trip as a family!"
- Lees "We need to continue building deeper relationships with the homestay mothers. One of the ways is to think about the possibility of continuing the relationship through homestay. We will also continue to keep in contact with the FCBC Sendai members through Facebook."



Becoming part of FCBC family



Celebrating birthday together

Getting to know one another individually as friends



Reflection #4: Children are God's weapons in the field.

- **Eric, Arlene** "Before the trip, we were concerned that our children may become a nuisance to the Japanese because they can be rather active and noisy. At the end of the trip, I observed that they were the ones who brought life wherever we were. I felt that they have brought much joy to the elderly and some FCBC Sendai members like Yuko-san and Tai-san when they interacted with them, showering them with lots of love.
- Through this, I learnt that God is not limited by our limitations, in Him all things are possible and every situation can be turned around to be good, to fulfill His purpose.
- This is also a recce trip for us to assess if it is suitable for families with young children. We will be sharing with our cell group on our trip and will be challenging couples to consider coming up with us on our next trip. We will also continue to keep Pastors Caleb and Christina in prayers."
- **Vincent, Carol** "My kids adapted to the programmes we had in Sendai and were able to sustain each other through the company of other children.
- Thankful that during the trip itself, there were no major injuries or sicknesses to any of us. Especially so when most of the time, the kids were left on their own. The older kids helped a lot in taking care of the younger ones. It was the first time we actually left Isaiah with someone else other than ourselves, our parents or helper. We learnt to trust that God will take care of our little ones when we take time to serve His kingdom."



Seeding a mission heartbeat in our kids



Next generation warriors for Christ



Serving as families

Reflection #5: Thank God for Pastors Caleb and Christina. The gentle shepherds of the flock.

- Eric, Arlene "Throughout the trip, we thank God for Pastors Caleb and Christina who took care of us and explained Japanese culture so we would have a better understanding of Japan. I'm also thankful that we got to spend this extended time with them, it was nice getting to know them better. Their caring and shepherding hearts really is an inspiration to all."
- Zexian, Kendice "We will pray for Japan and Pastors Caleb and Christina's ministry daily. Japan is blessed to have them as God's light. Their shepherding heart and servant spirit teach us that ministry is about willingness and faithfulness. Thank you Pastors, for serving God and teaching us your heart. We are encouraged by your lives."



Final debrief



Pastor Caleb and Yuko-san taking care of kids while parents serve



Pastors with their grandkids!



Pastor Christina teaching the children about Japan





Pastors are always cooking and serving us. We are humbled by their hospitality and love.