



And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.  
Isaiah 60:3-4



Newsletter #16 十六

# 祈tenzlers in 禱Japan

Julian und Karolina want to reach students and staff at Japan's universities with God's good news of love and forgiveness, and disciple and accompany them in following Jesus.

## A little bit of Japanese

Do you remember 絵 (e) from 絵文字 (emoji)? Now can you imagine what a

踏み絵

fumi e

that is a „stomping picture“, could be?

Between 1612 and 1863, Christians were persecuted in Japan. One of the methods used by the shogun government to track down underground Christians was this *fumie*.

These were small stone tablets engraved with an image of a cross, Jesus or Mary. Especially in cities, you had to step on such an image regularly in the presence of an official to show that you had nothing to do with Christianity. Something that most of the predominantly Catholic Christians in Japan could not bring themselves to do.



On Shikoku, we saw *fumie* used at checkpoints on the trade routes. This brought the tribulations of the underground Christians during this time uncomfortably close to us.

Dear family and friends,

28-11-2024

We are catching up with you with a good deal of delay. You can tell that the last six months before our home assignment have begun. We are already in the middle of packing, making appointments and preparing materials. One thing that is particularly exciting for us right now is a prayer initiative that the Lord has put on our hearts. Because we have experienced so



With two good friends in a restaurant for Okonomiyaki (savory pancakes with cabbage) in Osaka.

much good fruit from your and our prayers in Kitami, we want to extend prayer to all of Hokkaido. Under the motto “**No town on Hokkaido without prayer**”, we would like to recruit people to pray for each of the 188 towns and villages on Hokkaido. We will do this mostly in Germany and the Netherlands, but if you want to participate and take on a town to pray for it regularly, please contact us. We have the feeling that this will be absolutely magnificent!

Otherwise, we are noticing that fatigue is now increasingly creeping up on us in the home stretch and we have to manage our energy very carefully. We are glad that our pastor understands this and has lightened our workload a bit. Please pray for strength, good sleep and setting the right priorities.

## Osaka and Our Mission Trip on Shikoku

After a good rest during our vacation in September, we were able to set off for the south of Japan. We spent a week in Osaka and visited several friends. But most of all, we spent a lot of time with Yasuko and her husband (pictured), encouraging and equipping them for their evangelistic work in Osaka. For one day, we did the workshop with them about God's message in the Old Testament sacrifices that Julian had prepared for our church. This answered many questions for them and shed a whole new light on God's character and his actions in the Old Testament. Yasuko told us that she is doing personal discipleship with 12 other Christians and always passes on to them everything we teach her and her husband. Isn't it awesome how God builds his networks? Please pray for Yasuko and her husband, and their work in Osaka!

After that, we hiked the old Sanuki trade route in the northeast of the island of Shikoku with a group of 12 Christians from 6 countries. In total, we walked 67 km over 5 days and visited 8 churches along the way. Again and again, members of these churches joined us for part of the way. Together we talked to people we met, prayed for them and handed tracts and Bibles to them. When

there was no one to talk to, we shared our own stories with God with each other and prayed together for the area (photos on pages 3 and 4).

One encounter in the last church we visited was particularly special for us. The morning before we left, we suddenly ran into a young man we had met in Sapporo four years ago and with whom we did an online Bible study for a year. After that, he broke off contact with us and other Christians because his parents were against the Christian faith. We prayed for him again and again over the following years. He told us that he had blamed himself all this time for avoiding us. He had only recently moved from Hokkaido to Shikoku because the pressure from his parents to perform and find a prestigious job had become too great for him. That day he came to the morning worship time of the church for the first time and didn't even know that a group of missionaries would be in the church. This miraculous encounter encouraged him greatly and showed him that even when people treat him badly, God does not disappoint him and cares for him wherever he was. Please pray for him, that he will find a good connection in the church and that God will heal the relationship with his parents.

### *Developments in Kitami Church*

For one thing, we are happy to report that our church in Kitami has finally found a new pastor who will start in April. Our current pastor will retire in March. Please pray for a smooth start for the young pastor and his family, and for good relationships in the church. Having a change of leadership after more than 30 years is certainly not easy for the church. Please pray for guidance for our current pastor, who, as far as his strength allows, wants to continue working in the kingdom of God.

We are also pleased that our discipleship work is bearing more fruit and expanding. The monthly teaching meetings about the church and our identity in Christ have been very well received. Even some men participate. The sisters in our discipleship group report having more and more deep conversations with their husbands. Mrs. Sone says that her husband is becoming more interested in spiritual growth and is open to watch also sometimes a Christian testimony instead of only baseball. And Mrs. Hoshi's non-believing husband has agreed with her to start each day with a time of devotion and prayer together. They read from Julian's sermons and Christian books together. One of these books, which he reads for himself, is full of sticky notes and pencil marks. Recently she asked him, "Do you think you are on the path of life or of death?" "Of death," he said honestly. "And what are you doing about it?" He replied, "just a little longer." Please continue to pray for the men and their relationships with their wives.

Thank you very much for your prayers for us and the people of Japan, and for all your gifts and other support!

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### **This is how you can support mission in Asia**

- Become a prayer partner of us or support us practically: [Link](#)
- Become part of an OMF team of volunteers close to you: [Link](#)
- Do a short term mission trip with OMF Serve Asia: [Link](#)
- Or does God call you to Asia as a long-term missionary? [Link](#)

### **Pray for Japan**

[Link](#)

While we were discussing and praying with our leadership about the location and work for our second term after our home assignment, it became clear to us how important good cooperation between local Christian leaders and missionaries is. All too often interpersonal boundaries and a lack of mutual cultural understanding get in the way. In extreme cases, the Japanese leader sees the missionary only as a gap filler or English teacher, or the missionary fails to understand the value and subtleties of the Japanese ways and does more harm than good. We ourselves have seen the full range of these pitfalls in our 5 years in Japan and have had already our fair share of it through our own mistakes. Even if we don't want to admit it, none of us is spared from cultural biases. Please pray for good cooperation between missionaries and locals, and mutual appreciation as members of one body and for the removal of prejudices and blind spots on both sides.

Please check out our Telegram channel for more photos, videos and stories. (No Telegram account needed)



#### **Our Telegram channel**

[Julian & Karolina in Japan](#)







In the countryside of Shikoku. Unlike Hokkaido, it never snows here. But the sun has the same intensity as in North Africa.



A fumie from a border post between Tokushima and Kagawa.



A farmer and his wife are getting a New Testament.



This young college student was the first person we witnessed to.



Our banner: „Glory, glory to Jesus Christ, the king“.



“Walk with Jesus” team starting at the castle gate in Tokushima.





Prayer meeting in a local church.



Nicholas, our spiritual papa in Japan.



A local pastor is receiving a T-shirt as a gift of honor.



The people are generally very open for a chat.



The kanji quiz is particularly popular among students.



The former main trade route is a mere side road today.



Our goal: The castle in Takamatsu in northern Shikoku.