



But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."
 Luke 18:16-17



Newsletter #9 九

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.

Dear family and friends,

20-11-2023

Following the urgent call for prayer for Café COEN two weeks ago, we would like to follow up with a longer prayer letter in which we want to tell you a little more about our work and the situation in Kitami.



Our Japanese friends from Lake Toya have sent us produce from their farm ❤️

During the one year that we have spent here, we have been able to gain a rough insight into how people here in rural Hokkaido are like and experienced both the good and the difficult sides of the life at Japan's final frontier. At the same time, we are full of joy and gratitude for what God has already achieved with and through us, especially in our local church and in the hearts of the people, and how much more light is shining in this place compared to last year.

Why there are **No Children** in our Church? – Rural Life and Rural Migration

Living in the countryside in Japan has many advantages. Everything may look a bit more "rustic" and makeshift, and not as polished and modern as in the big cities, but the beautiful nature is within easy reach, and you are showered with fresh produce such as vegetables and sea food. On the other hand, we are seeing more and more people moving from the countryside to the bigger cities like Sapporo or cities in other parts of Japan because they have more job opportunities there and expect a higher standard of living. Hokkaido's harsh climate does not make life in the countryside any more attractive either. The small towns around Kitami in particular are suffering from emigration, but Kitami itself, as one of the larger towns in eastern Hokkaido, has lost around 13,000 citizens, or 10% of its population, in the last 10 years as well.

The effects can be seen externally in the form of abandoned and neglected houses and entire settlements. More and more schools are closing and the population is ageing without enough service and care staff remaining. Invisible and hidden in people's hearts, a lack of prospects, resignation and loneliness are spreading, causing even more people, especially young families, to leave.

In our church, this has now led to three generations being missing. There are no children, no young adults and no one our age. The youngest member of the congregation is around 45 and the average age is between 60 and 70. Although most of the church members have children, they have all studied elsewhere and are now scattered all over Japan.

A little bit of Japanese



Autumn is a time of sharing in Japan, especially in the countryside. If a farmer has a surplus harvest that he cannot sell, he distributes it to his neighbors and friends. This beautiful practice is called

お裾分け

osusowake

which literally means that you share (*wakeru*) the hem of your garment (*suso*), i.e. something insignificant or a trifle, with someone.



In the past, this custom was not only limited to food, but it was natural to share any kind of profit or blessing with your friends.

Since last year, however, there has been a new hope. The new church building is located in the middle of a residential area right next to a playground and somehow the neighborhood children found out that the church has toilets—and wifi. Since then, the pastor and his wife have opened the church twice a week for children, offering them snacks and a sympathetic ear for their worries. The parents know about it and are happy that someone is looking after their children during the day. For Japanese people in general, entering a Christian church is quite an overcoming, but children don't have such reservations.

One eight-year-old girl in particular has made up her mind not only to come to church during the week, but also to the Sunday services. She has been coming regularly for a few months now and attends the children's service together with the pastor's wife. One Sunday, she just dragged Julian away and showed him the labyrinth she had made out of pencils. Since then, we have often played together. We are excited to see what God will do with it. **Please pray that in this little person a deep trust in God's fatherly heart and a desire for truth will grow from an early age.**

Christmas Preparations and Other Plans

For us, the coming time is packed with many exciting things. We are grateful for Julian's sermon last Sunday, which hit like a bomb and deeply moved many church members. Starting today, we will have the couple from Lake Toya with us for a week and we plan to study the Bible together a lot. **Please pray for a Spirit filled and fruitful time together, and that they can grow in wisdom and faith, and become mighty instruments of God for a spiritual awakening on Hokkaido.** For Christmas we are planning at least one big meeting with our students and will have other special meetings with our churches other cell groups. **Please pray that the students will bring many friends and fellow students.**

Please continue to pray for our financial provision, which for this year so far has been covered on average 55% of each month's needs by donations to us. Within OMF Japan, donations are redistributed as needed from missionaries who receive more gifts to missionaries with less, and we as a missionary community are extremely grateful to God that the Japan field has already received more than 100% of the donations needed for 2023 (i.e. that have been planned for in advance). **But nevertheless, please pray that our contribution to the shared pot will soon increase and more people will donate to us,** especially since our budget for 2024 is also slightly higher than for 2023. This is due to various expenses that we will be facing in 2024, such as the biennial car inspection and several necessary work trips.

Thank you very much for your interest, your prayerful intercession for us and your faithful financial support!

Julian & Karolina

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Like all OMF missionaries we live on donations. [Link to online donation](#)

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Upcoming events

20.-25.11. Workshop with a couple
26.12. Christmas dinner with students

This is how you can support mission in Asia

- Order our prayer letter (write us an email).
- 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](#)

Betet für Japan [Link](#)

The lack of children in churches is a problem in Japan that does not only affect our local church, and the reasons for this are manifold. In addition to the migration of young families to the big cities, Japanese children from middle school onwards (i.e. from about the age of 12) are very busy with studies and club activities, so they hardly come to church anymore. Also, youth ministry in many churches is neglected or conducted in a way that is unattractive for children or not age-appropriate. Please pray for new ways to reach the youth and for an understanding in the churches of the importance of including the next generation.

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

 **Our Telegram channel**
[Julian & Karolina in Japan](#)

