

Land of the Risen Son

イエス・キリストは日本を愛する

(Jesus loves Japan)

An Easter Miracle!

Unlike the rest of the world, Japan is not in lockdown. Over the past month and a half, life here has seemed surreal. Per capita, testing in Japan has been about 1/17 of the testing in Canada. Only those who have had symptoms for at least 4 days (2 days if you're a senior) are eligible, though there are numerous stories about people with symptoms getting turned away from testing because they haven't gone out of the country or to "hot" zones. Though a state of emergency has been declared, governors still have to get permission from the federal government to do anything substantial. Since that government has declared businesses such as beauty salons and barbershops essential to the economy, most shops are still open.



Higa Sensei, preaching to an empty church building

We've felt as though we're walking a bit of a socio-cultural tightrope: trying not to develop ethnocentric attitudes, trying to act in ways that protect the vulnerable, but knowing that we can't just self-isolate when no one else is. We've also been trying to pass on information about the current research around the world. Much of this information is unavailable in the Japanese language.

Meanwhile, we've been deeply uneasy about the future health and reputation of the church. The church has continued to congregate, and we've been concerned that with such regular meetings, it could

become a small epicentre of viral spread through the community.

Last week, I found an article in the *LA Times* that explained how the virus can be aerosolized by singing, using a case study of a choir group in the Seattle area that ended up having a 75% infection rate following a choir practice where no one had symptoms. Peter suggested we get it professionally translated so that we could distribute it to the Japanese. Perhaps an authoritative source and professional translation would help to get the message across.

We received the article back on the Wednesday before Easter. Knowing the importance of timing, we asked God if we should post the article on the church internet forum that day. He told us to wait.

The next day, we asked again. "Send it only to Chelsea," came His reply. "Follow whatever advice she gives you."

Chelsea is Higa sensei's youngest daughter, and an extraordinarily sensitive and compassionate person. For instance, once when we were praying and fasting, she somehow knew that we were hungry, and brought us food. When she saw the article, she was horrified, and promised to talk with her parents. Many hours later, she contacted me again. "My parents are going to go ahead with the service this Sunday," she said. "I've done all I can. Now all we can do is pray."

After months of trying to explain the dangers to people, Saturday morning found me surrounded by failure, in tears. "God, we've come here for these people. How will we ever share the good news of

Interesting Facts



Oldest Population

Italy has the second-highest population of elderly people in the world. Japan has the highest. Within Japan, Okinawa has the highest.



Who Are Seniors?

You're not even considered a senior in Okinawa until you're 75 years old.



An Elderly Church

Across Japan, the elderly population makes up a significant proportion of the Christian church. Some denominations, like the Anglican one, primarily consist of elderly congregants.

PRAYER IS SO POWERFUL! I'M REALLY GRATEFUL THAT GOD SENT THE TWO OF YOU TO OKINAWA!

—Chelsea, Higa sensei's youngest daughter

Jesus with them if they won't even listen to our warnings about the coronavirus?"

"You haven't come here for them," He responded. "You've come here for Me." My heart relaxed.

Later that morning, Chelsea contacted me again. "My mother now recognizes that having church this Sunday is dangerous. She's going to talk with my father." Higa sensei was at church preparing his sermon.

Six hours later, we received another message. "My father and mother now recognize that having the church service on Sunday is dangerous, but when they talked with the church members, there were several who said they would still come to church no matter what." We'd wondered what was taking so long. Now we understood. In Japan, decisions are usually made by consensus. Since there was no consensus, no decision could be made.

"We can't just tell them not to come. We'll have to still have the Easter service on Sunday," she said. As Canadians, we might think, *Of course you can tell them not to come!* But that's not the way Japanese culture works.

At this point we knew that, barring a miracle, the Easter service would continue on. I phoned Chelsea and her older sister, Karin, to thank them for their efforts. We prayed, surrendering this situation once more to God.

After our call, Chelsea texted me again. (In Japan, people often feel more open to expressing their emotions via text than in person or over the phone.) "I couldn't stop crying when you prayed," she said. "I'm going to try again."

Half an hour later, she texted me back. "Valerie!! God heard our prayer! Church is cancelled tomorrow!!!"

Literally at the eleventh hour (11pm), the message went out to all the church members: "Church is cancelled. We will have services online."

The next day, Peter and I went to church bright and early and filmed Higa sensei's sermon to the empty auditorium. Using only equipment and software we already had, over the next 12 hours we would put together the church's Easter service.

Being so far ahead of the Japanese government in responding to the coronavirus crisis, we realized that we had a unique opportunity for outreach. We've now made a special flyer, which we are distributing throughout the community. In it, we tell people that their lives are precious to us, and that's why we've cancelled meeting in-person until the crisis is over. We provide them with the website, where they can listen to our messages of hope and love, and also offer free CDs of the sermons for those without internet.

We can't help being excited that God can use even an empty parking lot as a testimony of His love, and the value He places on each person. And once more we look expectantly to the future and ask, "What will He do next?"



The flyer we're delivering

This Month's Recipe

Streusel Coffee Cake

(Yield: 16-20 servings)

INGREDIENTS



2 ½ c all-purpose flour
¾ c granulated sugar
1 c brown sugar, packed
1 tsp ground nutmeg
½ tsp salt
¾ c cooking oil
1 ¼ c buttermilk, fresh or reconstituted from powder

1 large egg, beaten
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp water
½ c chopped walnuts or pecans
2 tsp ground cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

Mix first 6 ingredients in large bowl. Measure ½ c of mixture and set aside in small bowl.

Add buttermilk and egg to flour mixture in large bowl. Stir.

Dissolve baking soda in water in small cup. Add to mixture in large bowl. Stir. Spread in 9x9 inch (22x22 cm) greased pan.

Add walnuts and cinnamon to reserved dry ingredients in small bowl. Sprinkle over top. Bake in 350°F (177°C) oven for 45 to 50 minutes until an inserted wooden pick comes out clean.

Contact Information

Thank You!

Thank you for your interest in our work. We send out newsletters every two months. If at any point you decide that you don't want to receive them anymore, just write or email us.

Correspondence can be sent to:



Peter & Valerie Limmer
Sunny Court 207, Apt C-3
Nishizaki 3-207, Itoman-shi,
Okinawa 901-0306, JAPAN

MissionGo Main Offices

MissionGo Canada	MissionGo USA
PO Box 1210	PO. Box 2010
St. Catharines, ON	Buffalo, NY
L2R 7A7	14231

