

church planting

NAGOYA

**FEBRUARY 2010**

**Mission To The World  
1600 North Brown Road  
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Dear Friends,

**"Precious, important and no light matter, in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints, His loving ones." (Psalm 116:15 Amplified Bible)**

Our friend Chizuru went to be with the Lord earlier this month. She fought a long and hard battle with cancer but the final victory was in Christ and her secure eternity with Him.

Chizuru confessed her faith in Christ and was baptized last March at Nisshin Christ Church. It was a great privilege for Peter to assist in her baptism and to later speak at both her wake and funeral. Her life and faith touched many people.

**Please pray for her family and relatives.**

For many, this was the first time to attend a Christian funeral and to hear the hope of the gospel. **Please pray especially for her two sons who were very moved by the ministry of the church in their time of need.**

*The Japanese characters (kanji) for Chizuru's family name mean "big forest."*

**Please pray that the gospel, like a vibrant strong tree, would continue to take root in Japan and flourish like a mighty forest!"**

Unlike Chizuru's funeral, the Buddhist funerals I have attended for friends and people in my neighborhood are often filled with the priest chanting mostly non-understandable Japanese words from old writings. But the last one I went to was surprisingly different. After the priest finished his chanting, he turned to the audience and motioned for a chair so he could sit down. He then began a rather fatherly chat with those in attendance about the meaning of some of what he said. He acknowledged that he did not know where the deceased was at this time. He also said that since none of us knows when we will die, the best preparation we can do is to have a beautiful picture taken of ourselves each year so that it can be presented at the funeral. Although his advice was practical culturally, I wonder how people left that night with grieving and hurting hearts—*people who needed so much more than a good picture. But there was nothing that could be said in that context.*

Christian funerals are an opportunity to proclaim the hope of the gospel since the audience is often listening more keenly than at any other time. The opportunity to present Christ is even greater now because of an increasing frustration and disgust among Japanese with the commercialization of funerals by Buddhist priests.



Buddhist graveyard near our neighborhood

Please pray that we as the church would be faithful witnesses to the unchanging truth of God's Word. Please pray that, in both word and deed, we would be used of God to convey the gospel. *God's Word meets the deepest needs of our heart both in life and in facing death.*

Thank you for remembering in prayer the many people in Japan who have yet to have meaningful contact with God's Word and God's people in everyday life, especially in the challenges and transitions they face. Please pray for open hearts.

Thank you for your prayers for our family as well. We continue to be encouraged knowing that people are praying for us and the work here.

In Christ,  
Peter and Diane Bakelaar,  
Keagan, Rita, Evan, and Wendy

