

The Japanese Lantern

Sponsoring Church:

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Matsudo Church of Christ

Photo Albums (Click on this link for photos for this issue) [Japanese Lantern Photos](#)

Changes at Matsudo Church

Valentine’s Day is just around the corner and it is snowing outside here in Matsudo. Many of you in the States are likely experiencing some strange weather as well. And there are many changes in our country and around the world. We are thankful that our Lord is Sovereign over all!

My sermons at Matsudo have been more “topical” in nature this term, as we think about Forgiveness, the Righteousness of God, and Our Salvation by God’s Grace.

The Thursday night Bible study which had for some time been “on hold” while we were on furlough, was started up again with two new students. Sis. Nakama who regularly

came to Thursday classes, got used to going to the Saturday morning class during our furlough, so she wanted to continue there. But Bro Yoshida, who has come to our congregation from the Sharon Church of Christ asked to study with Debbie and me on Thursday nights, so we are now studying the Gospel of John. Mrs. Junko Hisamura, a friend of Sis. Suzuki, a Matsudo member, also wanted to join our study, so she is coming as well. So we hope that this class will fulfill a dual purpose, to strengthen Bro. Yoshida’s faith, while at the same time teach Hisamura san what she needs to know to become a Christian. Please pray that this class will be successful for that purpose.

I have also been asked by the Yokota members to begin teaching a class from February 23rd, after Bro. Nonogaki finishes his series of lessons on the Nature of God, Sin and Salvation, and related topics. I will begin teaching the Gospel of John there as well, looking at Jesus as John presents Him in different “images,” such as “The Light of the World,” “The Water of Life,” “The True Vine,” “The Good Shepherd,” and so on. We pray that this series will help build faith at Yokota.

Our Saturday class at Matsudo has begun a study of the Book of Acts. We are trying to help the members gain a clear pictures of the Lord’s church in the New Testament and the work of Christians in the first century, a model for us today.

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Preacher’s Meeting - Fuji Hakone

Customarily in December, the Japanese preachers and we missionaries gather near Mt. Fuji for two purposes - to plan the new year’s schedule and to have an inspirational retreat for fun and fellowship. This year, I agreed to have our October meeting at Matsudo - never done that before, so it will be a

new challenge. We also met with some leaders of the Christian Church to discuss some points of our common heritage in the Restoration Movement in an attempt to try to understand what has happened in church history. Although we may have many differences, we still have had some opportunity to spend some



time together to try to understand one another, which has been helpful. Our normal meetings for 2011 began with our first meeting in January at Yokota Church of Christ. Please pray God blesses our fellowship

Kids' Christmas

Each year in Matsudo, we have made an effort to reach out to the children of our community to talk about the birth of Jesus, have some fun with the kids, and to encourage them to come regularly to the monthly children's Bible classes.

Debbie has some flannel graph materials which have many stories from the Bible which can be illustrated colorfully for the children. Working with Sis. Noriko Sanpei, they have gained the children's confidence, and the children occasionally even invite their friends to come hear the stories they are enjoying each month. This time a brother and sister, friends of a little girl who comes regularly joined the program to hear about Jesus. They have not

returned for more study, but it was at least a "one time effort."

Also a lady and her son that we met at the hospital recently called to ask about coming to church and came to hear about Jesus' birth and to join us for a fellowship meal and party afterward. Even though they may not continue right away, they still remain "favorable" toward the Christian teaching and enjoy the fellowship with Matsudo members. Quite often they are receptive to future invitations when we have other gatherings at the Matsudo church. Please pray that the Lord continues to bless our efforts to reach out.



Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Christmas Party and Christmas Eve Meeting

Trying to make the most of the season when many are thinking about the birth of Christ and expecting to hear songs about Jesus' birth and coming to learn something about Christianity, I usually prepare several lessons about Jesus from the Biblical records in Matthew and Luke. I also talk about the Incarnation of Jesus from the Book of John. So telling about Jesus born as King, as Savior, and as God in the flesh are themes which spark great interest among those who come to visit our church, sometimes for the very first time. I try to think of it as Paul spoke about God to pagans in Athens who were at least "religious" but not with a clear understanding of all they had heard from so many sources. It is my hope that our message can always be positive, clear, and full

of joy and hope at all times.

After our worship on December 19th, everyone remained for a fellowship meal, exchanging some presents, and a time for some singing. It seemed to be encouraging to all.

Another opportunity which we try to use is what is usually called Christmas Eve. We all know there is no mention in the Bible of what day of



the year our Savior was born, but we know that Matthew and Luke were inspired to record his birth as part of their gospel records, so the fact that there was great joy at the birth of Jesus is the very point we too emphasize in all our teaching. We point out that it is important to honor Jesus all through the year, so whether some may choose not to in December, does not take away from the opportunities afforded to us to tell God's message at all times. After the evening meeting on the 24th, we invited those who wanted to come over for some refreshments and fellowship at our home. We hope we are helping to make some good memories for those in our community. They seem to all enjoy coming over.

Making "Snow Candles" at a Day Care Center

Sis. Noriko Sanpei has invited Debbie over several times to her Day Care Center where she is the principal. In an official capacity to teach the parents in her school which has a Christian emphasis, Debbie teaches some of the mothers with her skills either in cooking or with crafts.

This year, she taught how to make "snow candles." Several years ago, one of the ladies from the Yokota Church of Christ had shared her expertise in making these pretty little candles with Debbie, so she has shared that information at Tachikawa and now also in Matsudo. Since it is an official

activity of the school, Debbie is also able to pick up a little added income by being paid for her services. So we are thankful for that as well.

Sis. Sanpei has also mentioned to me that perhaps one day I could also be invited over to her school to speak about cross cultural communication.. That was part of my graduate thesis at Abilene Christian University over 35 years ago. We always like to keep these channels open in case we can use them for good in spreading God's message to the people of our communities. Please pray that we can always

be ready to serve when we have the chance to do so.



Debbie teaching the ladies at the Day Care Center how to make "Snow Candles"

New Year's Worship Fellowship in Mito

At the beginning of each New Year, we enjoy traveling to Mito Church of Christ for a worship and study time with fellow Christians from Tokyo and Ibaraki area. The Japan School of Evangelism (JSE) has combined one of their Seminar studies, called the Golden Koza with this meeting, so that regular members can enjoy a taste of an in-depth study of God's Word. This year Bro. Makoto Noguchi spoke on the Book of Romans - giving us an introduction to Paul's teaching on "a righteousness from God which is by faith." It was truly inspiring to

all of us.

One of our Matsudo members, Bro. Kouhei Nakamura, rode up with us to Mito for the meeting. He has had some classes in the past from Bro. Noguchi, so it was a joy for him to get a sort of "refresher course" from him again.

We also enjoy the opportunity we always have to see Christians whom we don't often get to see. This meeting is normally on a holiday, so we are not usually in a hurry to get back and can relax with fellow Christians and mutually encourage one another's faith.

The lessons for the Golden Koza are usually recorded on video tape and DVD

for those who might like to keep them for review or share them with church members who might not have been able to attend.



Bro. Makoto Noguchi teaches Romans at Mito Church of Christ New Year's Worship

It is also a great time to share news with each other of what might

be happening in our local congregations. We pray that such fellowship times will continue and spread.

Debbie and Steve's Health Issues

Some of you may have read on our Facebook messages our discovery of Debbie's lymphoma sickness. She had been complaining of pain in her abdominal area, so we decided to go to our local doctor to check it out. He



wrote a letter of introduction for us to go to Matsudo Public Hospital for

further tests and examinations. After getting an endoscope scan of her stomach (video tube down the throat), as well as a colonoscopy (video tube in the colon), her stomach and colon were declared clear! However two C.T. scans have shown small growths in her abdomen which are cause for concern. The doctors have said they are "slow growing" lymphoma growths, but said they needed to operate to check them out and if possible to remove them. If they are successful, that will be the end of it. If it is determined that radiation will be needed, Debbie's treatments will begin after that. So she is cur-

rently scheduled for surgery for April 7th. So many of you have contacted us with your encouragement and letting us know that you are praying for Debbie and me. Thank you all SO... much! We are blessed to have so many loved ones praying.

Another note is that I had to have some treatment at a massage therapist in Matsudo for back pains. It seemed to be effective. We pray that the Lord's healing hand will be on Debbie so that she can recover from her illness. Thank you all again for your prayers.

Year End and New Years News

At Matsudo church, we usually have a day to clean up everything around the final Sunday of the year. In 2011, Matsudo church will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary, so we are thinking about ways we can "spruce up" the building a bit and prepare things for our celebration. So along with our regular cleaning, we are thinking of ways to get ready.

Also at the end of the year, I sent out a Christmas/New Year's pictorial review greeting to try to show some of the highlights of the year. We hope

those who got them enjoyed the "Smilebox" greetings.

Usually we have some time at the end of the old year and beginning of the new year to spend time with friends. The Ishii family invited us over to their home for a wonderful meal and to introduce us to their Chinese friends. Supien Wren and her son wanted to study English with us, so we decided to help them out and now have a weekly class set up where Debbie teaches her son in one room while I teach the mother in the other room at the same time. This has worked quite well and they are both making some good progress.

We were thrilled to hear that the Ishii's daughter, Seika, was baptized. I had taught her as a student in the LST program and we had studied about baptism during the summer. We pray that she will grow in her new found faith.





Shining the Light of the

Gospel in Japan

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalms 119:105)

Matsudo Church of Christ

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We're on the Web!

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Highlights of December and January (see more in the Photo Album)



Matsudo Christmas Meal



Steve & Bro. Nakahara in Mito

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Debbie at Matsudo Public Hospital



Sunday Worship at Yokosuka

Prayer Requests

- Thanks to God for growing faith of Matsudo church members
- Thanks to God for two Christian men sent our way to help in leadership.
- For God's healing hand to help Debbie with her lymphoma sickness.
- For the 50th Anniversary Celebration at Matsudo Church of Christ.
- For more spiritual leadership and insight for Japanese Christians.

Special Contributions - Thank You!: Debbie and I appreciate so much those of you who have gathered funds in our behalf to contribute for us and our work in Japan. Since the dollar has dropped so low in value - around 82 yen per dollar, it has affected our ability to catch up on many bills. However your generosity is helping us even so to catch up. Thank you all.

50th Anniversary Meeting: Matsudo church has invited L.T. Gurganus to be our featured speaker on March 20th when we celebrate the 50th Year Anniversary of the church building at Matsudo. We are trying to make a booklet of history for the occasion and anticipate several former members who may be coming for this special event.

Steve's Dad Moving: I serve as my Dad's financial manager and power of attorney in his business matters. So looking over his accounts, we determined that Dad could not

financially sustain living in his current facility in Nashville. So contacting several who could help us, we have now located another place for Dad to live in Nashville. We are in the process of helping him get everything moved and he hopes to be moved to his new location within February. Please pray for a smooth transition.

Birthdays: Debbie's sister Karen and my sister, Joyce and her daughter Dana all had birthdays in February. Happy Birthday!

Facebook and Skype Contacts: We are happy that many of you keep up with us more often through Facebook and Skype. Please contact us if you'd like to become a Facebook or Skype friend.

In His love and service,

Steve & Debbie Carrell

Family and Other News