



September 2020

Dear Praying Friends,

ROUND 2- HERE WE GO AGAIN

Eight weeks was about all we had. After the three-month COVID-19 emergency status was lifted here in Tokyo, we were excited to finally gather together again on the first Sunday in June. But it didn't last long. The following month, as people started to get out and about again, the infections in Tokyo started climbing at a very rapid rate. In less than two months, the infections shot up to twice what they were during the peak of the emergency status. This time however, the government chose not to call an emergency status, but did shut down public gatherings, asking everyone to do what they could to help stop the spread. Because our auditorium is very small, and it was already consistently full, we decided to stop gathering and go back to only live-streaming again in August. So how has that affected our church family and our ministry?

DIGITAL OUTREACH

Our online outreach has continued to gradually increase, as more people are watching our live-streaming services and listening to the audio podcasts. I am really looking forward to seeing the long-term impact of this aspect of reaching Japanese!

Honestly, I feel like I'm getting to experience YOUR end of missions outreach as the supporter. Just like you, while I know God's word is going out, I only get a small glimpse of the impact it actually has. While I see the numbers grow of people listening and watching, I really do wish I could see the story of the person behind each number! Through it all, it's been very encouraging and exciting. Because Japan is so digitally immersed, it really seems to be a viable way to help so many more people come to know Jesus, and learn to grow and abide in Him. In conversations with some of our church family, we've already come up with another way to help their out-of-town loved ones who don't have access to a good church near them, (like so many others here) to learn about the Bible. But more on that in another letter. That project is still in its infancy.

CARING FOR CHURCH FAMILY

While we understand the massive potential that digital outreach has here in Japan, our church family is still our main focus. Helping our church family to grow in their love for Jesus and their love for one another without that corporate gathering as a church family has definitely been challenging. Midweek Zoom meeting services, small group discipleship, phone calls, texts, and group chats have all been keeping us busy caring for our brothers and sisters. And for the most part, I think we're doing pretty well in growing together as a church family. That being said, I do think that for some, the fear of COVID is overwhelming, and it's hindering their faith in God. For others in our church family, the lack of gathering together is causing spiritual lethargy. So please keep us in your prayers as we work through this together, that God would glorify Himself in each of our believers, and that through this, their faith in Him would be strengthened rather than weakened.

Having the Edwards here, the missionary family who came to work with us this year, has been invaluable. Having another missionary to share the load has been so encouraging. God's timing in all this continues to amaze me in how He cares for us!

On a personal note, in July our daughter Brianah headed back to the States to begin her life as an adult. I think Bethany and I are recovering from the loss of not having her with us. But man, it takes time. I hate goodbyes. God's been so good to our family though, and we're so thankful for our home church in Louisville who has been so helpful in taking her in and helping her get adjusted to life in the States.

Thanks so much for praying for your missionaries even during these uncertain times. It means so much to us!

Serving Him,
The Carters to Japan