



July 2021

Dear Praying Friends,

If you keep up with our letters, you may notice that this letter sounds a lot like our last letter. And you would be correct. While on the surface, we may not notice much change to our situation, below the surface... our Father is always working. He is faithfully giving grace and strength to those who are His own, while drawing more to Himself through the redemption of His Son!

SIGH...

Here in Tokyo, it seems that over the last year, it's been a cycle of our church family getting to enjoy gathering together for brief moments in between long periods of states of emergency. In our last letter, we were just starting another state of emergency that was supposed to last until the end of May. It was ultimately extended until the end of June. We were able to meet for these last three weeks, before Tokyo declared yet another state of emergency. Starting this Sunday, we will be going back to online services until at least the end of August. This means that beginning in September, our church family has only been able to gather together corporately for 8 Sundays this entire year. It has also meant that we've been unable to do many of our evangelistic outreach events because of the state of emergencies. Honestly, this year has been difficult. That being said, we are thankful for all the ways we've been able to reach out to people, including two Sunday livestream services, the church podcast, Zoom meetings, along with the personal pastoring of our church family.

WHAT HAS HELPED US

For our church family it seems that we have two different trajectories within the same church family. For those who are willing to meet in small Bible study groups throughout the week, I see immense growth in their faith and confidence in Christ, as well as their bond of brotherhood with one another. Our core group of believers has been consistently growing stronger through all of this! Praise God for that! All throughout this year, I have been awestruck to see how this one simple act: reading the same Scripture throughout the week and then getting together to talk about what we read, has done so much to mature both our seasoned believers and those who are young in the faith! I can't help but see the grace of God's timing in preparing us for this year. We had just started our first discipleship group at the beginning of last year, and the second group a few months after that- a few months before the surge of COVID. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, as He guides us through the words of Scripture, these two groups have been the glue that has kept the bond of our core believers strong throughout all of this.

For those who have been unwilling or unable to take part in these groups, we fear that they are drifting further away from our church family. Please pray for them. My heart yearns for them to discover once again the joy and encouragement of gathering together with their brothers and sisters.

HOW HE HELPS US TO HELP OTHERS

Our bonus ministry of being able to help missionaries get back into Japan is still thriving. Most returning missionaries are required to finish a two-week quarantine before they can continue on to their homes throughout the country. Because we are relatively close to the airports in Tokyo, God has placed us in the perfect position to help meet this need. Even as I write this, we have a dear missionary couple staying with us before they head off to Okinawa. Their stay in Tokyo for two weeks would have cost them over \$3,000. I have a feeling this ministry will last for a bit longer as more missionaries are traveling for various reasons over the coming months. Again, praise God for his grace in preparing us to serve our fellow laborers in this way!

Thank you for consistently and faithfully praying for us. To know that our brothers and sisters are boldly coming to our Father's throne on our behalf means the world to us!

The Carters to Japan