

“The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.” Elisabeth Elliot

September 2021

Dear Friends,

Greetings from fortress Auckland! We are thoroughly locked down and for the past 10 days or so the lockdown restrictions mean we are only able to go outside to exercise or to go to the supermarket. It's quite different from the ongoing “State of Emergency” in Tokyo where the government is “requesting” that people stay home but the commuter trains are still routinely packed.

In many ways our decision for Charley to do an online language refresher (see below) means that our routines are not that altered by events. We're grateful for the Lord's provision – the day of the lockdown a large bag of coffee beans arrived, the week before we'd managed to pick up a free trampoline which we are now making much use of. This house we moved into at the end of July is also a great place to be locked into – I think there may have been a serious incident if we were still living above Mr Tom! James has just started reading Ellen Vaughn's new Biography of Elisabeth Elliot – it's been helpful to seem someone dedicated to Christ through many trials – the quote above typifying some of that and I recommend the book!

### **Our new routine**

Thanks for praying how we should use this next period of time as we continue to wait for the Japan to issue our visa. As we prayed and thought things through it made a lot of sense for Charley to do a language refresher. She is now nearly four weeks into it and going well. Charley does three hours of self-study in the morning, in particular trying to learn and revise her Kanji (Chinese Characters). Then she has a two hour online Zoom class from 12-2pm. It's a real blessing to have access to a great language school in Nagoya who've been very accommodating. Charley's reflection is that this opportunity has been great to refresh her Japanese, which was rustier than she anticipated in some areas.

During this time James looks after and runs the home schooling. So far, it's going quite well (he – thinks!) At 2pm James goes into the study and usually jumps on Zoom. At the moment I'm doing a lot of “visits” with pastors and church planters in Japan.

### **Pastor Visits**

The aim of these is to introduce myself a little bit as well as get input on the Samurai Projects but we are also hoping that we will be able to partner with some of these pastors in training. With some of them teaching on the SPs, and in being willing to take on a trainee in their church.

It's been a joy to chat to pastors and to hear how the Lord is working in spite of, and sometimes precisely through covid. I heard the wonderful story of a lady who'd gone to missionary run kindergartens as a child. The experience left no obvious spiritual impact, and she went on in life to become a nurse. A few months ago, she was caring for someone dying of COVID who asked the nurse to pray with her. The nurse felt deeply convicted of her inability to do this and so decided to go to church, where she was converted the following week. It was a joy to hear that story and think how God's word doesn't return to him empty even if the seed sown lies very long in the ground.

Most of the pastors I've spoken to so far have been loosely linked to the church planting organisation City to City Japan and are supportive of the SPs– although it's noticeable (although unsurprising) that pastors from more traditional churches are more sceptical. It would be great to pray that an “influential” pastor from a more traditional denomination would publicly get involved. That kind of “endorsement” would probably help others. But the thing I'm struck by again and again, is the number of people who say there really is no one in their church who they think could be an apprentice in the next few years. Do pray for the Lord of the harvest to keep raising up his workers.

The COVID situation in Japan itself still seems rather bleak. Pray on for wisdom for the government and the Lord to restrain this sickness. We give thanks that it is now possible to get dependent visas from NZ. Unfortunately, it is still not possible to get a visa for James. Do pray this would change.

The SP summer break finishes on Wednesday – do pray for the restart. Give thanks that we've accepted a new Samurai who will start mid-way through the year. Pray for Shono-san to get used to things quickly and that the Lord to work in her. Our plan is to be online until the state of Emergency ends (in theory in two weeks' time) then we will go back to in person meeting. As a result, I am still not doing any teaching but will be chairing the sessions while they are one Zoom.

### **In Short**

- Pray for the Samurai Projects as it restarts on Wednesday – for the Lord to be equipping his people
- For Charley to absorb the language well
- Pray for our energy and godliness in the mundane moments– lots of grumpiness
- Pray for Samurai for next year
- For Visas to be issued

Thanks for your partnership.

With much love,

James, Charley, Wren, Ena, Louis and Rupert