

**UNITED STATES**

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September 2, 2024

**TIMES TO REMEMBER AND GIVE THANKS**

Ruth and I recently enjoyed a very remarkable dinner at a rather exclusive, Michelin-rated restaurant in downtown Tokyo. I don't even remember how many courses it was! Our children collaborated on this and gave us this rather extravagant gift in celebration of our **fiftieth wedding anniversary**.

**Wow** is right! Who knew that we would end up spending most of those years in East Asia? We continue to cherish each other and are so thankful to God for his goodness to our family!



**MISSIONARIES DO MORE THAN EVANGELISM**

After Japanese language study and throughout our career, our focus has been on spreading the Good News of the salvation offered through faith in our Lord Jesus in places where there have been few churches, and then gathering new believers and seekers to form congregations. My work also has other dimensions, like stimulating and informing partners who share the mission calling (that's you), helping co-workers through the administrative work I do as business manager and legal head of the Japan mission, processing paperwork for new missionaries needing visas or old missionaries who need to renew their period of stay, other legal work related to real estate (missionary housing, church buildings and so forth). Sometimes the Japanese churches we are partners with ask me to do other more unexpected things. That includes leading special seminars about things like effective preaching, richer worship and mission strategies, giving special lectures or speaking at retreats for Japanese churches and even for the denominational leadership. This is a tremendous privilege, and the longer I serve in Japan, the more often I have opportunities to address various topics. Recently, I presented a special lecture about **abuse**. The Christian Reformed Church has done a lot of work on researching the abuse in our own circle: physical, sexual, spiritual, understanding the dynamics of it, helping those recover who have been traumatized, and developing strategies to prevent it. The Reformed Church in Japan, our partner, has established a committee whose mandate focuses especially on gender-based power harassment among church leaders. But experience sadly has taught us that the abuse issue has far more dimensions that need to be named & dealt with forthrightly, including the very ugly abuse of children. My lecture took us to a new level of awareness and was well received, opening the door to a very meaningful time of Q&A and discussion.

**KEEPING THE FAITH**

As I often say, we had a five-year plan when we went to work for Christian Reformed World Missions in September 1980. We embarked at JFK in New York City on a TWA jet for our first flight to Tokyo. Now we have started year 45 of that five-year plan! But we have concluded that this will be our final year in Japan, and now we are busy saying goodbyes with final words of encouragement to the many churches we have worked with over the years. Most of the folks we are interacting with are very eager to hear what we have to say to them, and I find that we have been blessed at this time with the precious opportunity once more to proclaim the Good News. I have worked up a farewell message from I Corinthians 15, where Paul reminds the believers of the "most important thing" he wanted to communicate to them: the message about the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus the Savior. If 2000 years ago there were those who could not have settled convictions about the truth of the resurrection (Christ's as well as ours), how much more with present day people with a miracle-denying "scientific" world view who struggle to keep the faith concerning this very critical issue?

**YOU'LL BE BACK AGAIN, RIGHT?**

Many folks in the congregations I'm visiting say this to us, and we answer, "We hope so." Zoom meetings, short-term times of service, email and other forms of correspondence are likely part of our future. But meanwhile we are facing the very daunting task of figuring out what to do with a house full of furniture, full file cabinets and overloaded bookshelves, and piles of all the "stuff" we've accumulated over 44 years. We hope to bless a new missionary family with what is left of our furniture, and we are praying that God will send us more workers who can benefit! We're working on that and ask you to continue to pray for new harvesters for this field.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT**

Powerful earthquakes and destructive typhoons have been part of our daily lives recently. Even as you pray for God's protection during such things, pray that all of us may know we are actually weak and vulnerable and need to turn to the One who can and does actually save those who call on him! Though we are saying farewells, we need (and are blessed by) your ongoing financial support for this new fiscal year, which will be our last, ending in June 2025. Japan is facing huge social changes and political troubles these days, but these also bring us opportunities to offer good news! Please pray for us to do that effectively, for God's glory!

Search <[resonate/spalink](https://resonate.org/spalink)> for more information about us and how to support us! Thanks for praying for us and for Japan!

Gratefully yours, *Larry and Ruth*



# 基督改革派日本伝道会

## christian reformed japan mission

### Spalink prayer letter PAGE 2

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Dear friends and partners for Japan missions,

Change is afoot in Japan, and I'd like to tell you a bit about what is going on. Recently I told you about how **the population of Japan** is crashing. The statistics for 2023 were published recently, and they show that there was a 15th consecutive year of population decline, and another new record was set. The population of Japan, not including resident foreigners, is now below 122 million, a **decline of about 800,000** from the year before.

Meanwhile, **the population of resident foreigners** now comes to over 3 million, a record **increase** for this category and the highest number ever. These are not tourists, but those who have come to Japan with work permits to make up for the ongoing decline of workers among Japanese citizens. This comes with difficulties as well as opportunities, but as the trend continues, there will very likely be social upheaval down the line. One happy trend here: the number of new missionaries is inching up!

Meanwhile in the world of **Japanese politics**, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has lost credibility and trust among the people because of money scandals and corruption that go back to the days of former (later assassinated) Prime Minister Abe. Current PM Kishida has resigned, and there will be a new election held shortly. So we have instability on both sides of the Pacific Ocean these days. Exchange rates have fluctuated wildly and record-busting budgets are being proposed (with the greatest increases ever in, you guessed it, military spending). On top of that, the Toyota Motor Company has come out and confessed that they falsified safety test data, as have other makers. Toyota? Seriously?

More than 13 years after the meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear reactors, no attempts to remove even a tiny portion of the 880 metric tons (=1.94 million lbs) of **nuclear fuel debris** have been successful to date, even as the government has approved the release of massive amounts of slightly **contaminated coolant water** into the sea. Meanwhile, the government has ceased all considerations to the small group of mostly elderly people who have continually living in poverty in "temporary" housing, unable to return to their poisoned homes and farms.

Recently the government released a kind of doomsday prediction that the odds of the occurrence of a **long overdue mega-quake** had increased greatly. The prediction was not unwarranted but was based on a very strong quake that occurred on August 8 along the western portion of the expected mega-quake fault line (magnitude 7.1 on the Nankai Trough fault). It was time for us to review all our preparations for such an eventuality, but really, if the prediction becomes reality, the damage and losses will drastically exceed those of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Massive tsunamis will hit not rural areas, but the Pacific coast south of Honshu, Japan's main island, location of Japan's largest cities. Devastation on a doomsday scale is expected. Can one prepare for that?



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All of these things are very disturbing and cause us to consider what they may mean. Where is history heading for this nation that we love, not to mention the rest of creation? We are thankful that we know and serve the One who holds all of these things in his hand and who is well able to protect his people from all evil and who has a plan that he continues to implement (2 Peter 2 & 3). He is our comfort and our confidence! Thanks for praying about these things!

*Larry and Ruth Spalink*