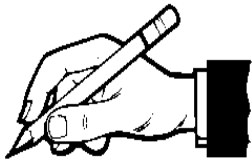
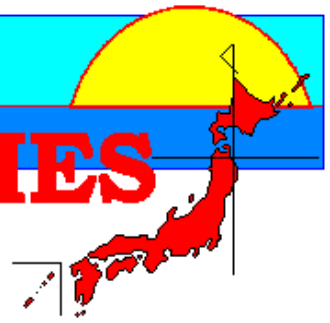


JAPANESE MINISTRIES

September 2002

Ron & Debbie Galbreath
Joseph, Samuel, Elijah, Hannah



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LAND HO!

Many of you are aware that we have been looking for a permanent place for our new church plant for a long time. Since the beginning the church has met in our small rental home. Now we are out of space both for our church and for our family. The truth is that without a permanent place for our church it would be nearly impossible for our it to grow big enough to support a Japanese pastor, dooming it to eventually close. Here in Japan very few places are willing to rent to a church. Even if a meeting hall could be found, it leaves the church having to also pay rent and utilities on housing for a pastor. Land is expensive, but it is much cheaper and more cost effective to own a church in which a pastor can also live, than to pay rent on a meeting place plus a pastor's house.

It has been a long and hard search. There is very little available property which would suit a church. Usually land sells in tiny 1/20 acre lots which are much too small to build any kind of a meeting facility. For a long time we limited our search to land that was zoned as farming or forest land because it was cheaper with larger lots available. Our hope was that the city would allow us to build there because of the special zoning exemptions given to public buildings. However, when we applied to the city for permission to build in one of these areas, they refused to grant it. This sent us back to square one in our search.



One of our church families lives in a new housing development near the Mabechi River. Whenever we visited them we had to drive by an eyesore lot filled with dilapidated rust-covered metal buildings. I often wondered as I drove by who owned the lot and if they would be willing to sell. But since the area was zoned for housing and very desirable, I just figured it was an impossibility for us and never bothered to look into it.

In March when I drove by one day, I noticed that the buildings were being torn down. My first thought was, "Someone bought the property." I should have asked about it before it was too late. Maybe there would have been a chance that they would sell it to us for a good price. A few weeks later we saw a "For Sale" sign on the property. Still thinking that it would be

way too expensive, I took down the address and contacted the realtor. To our surprise, we discovered that the property was being offered at about half

the going rate for that area.

The more we have looked into this property, the more attractive it has become. 1) It is large enough to build a church and still have room for parking. 2) The zoning will allow for us to build a church without having to apply for a special permit. 3) It is located just off of a main street, less than 10 minutes drive from both downtown and from the central train station. 4) The streets are wide enough to carry traffic to and from the church without causing traffic jams. 5) The

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new housing development nearby makes it a nice neighborhood for a church, 6) The ground is more stable than most areas of Hachinohe, so we would not have to spend as much building a foundation.

Please pray with us about this opportunity. We've expressed our interest in the property to the realtor and made a tentative offer for a lesser amount, but at this point the owner is not willing to accommodate us. He has a large debt against the property and wants to get enough to pay it off. The Japanese economy is very weak right now, and Aomori Prefecture has been hit the worst. It is the best of times for those looking to buy, and the worst for those who must sell. We are believing that if God wants us to get this property, He will perform a miracle to make it possible. Our desire is to purchase the property in January and finish a church before the end of 2003. If we can get the entire piece (a little more than an acre) one day we would like to build classrooms and a dormitory so that we could start an extension Bible School here in Hachinohe.

Please join us in prayer.

- 1) Pray that no one will make a better offer.

- 2) Pray that the price will come down enough to make it possible for us to buy.
- 3) Pray that we will have an outpouring of support so that we can purchase this land and build a church and outreach center to this part of Japan.
- 4) Pray that we will be able to find volunteer workers who are willing to come to Japan next year and build a church.

If you or a group from your church have construction skills and would be interested in coming to Japan next year to help build a church, please contact us. Our e-mail is harvest@japanmin.com

If you or your church are able to give a special offering toward this project, please send your offerings to:

**AGWM
1445 Boonville Ave.
Springfield, MO 65802**

Please include a note that this is for **Ron & Debbie Galbreath's Project #5191 – Church Building in Hachinohe, Japan.**

You are what you eat?

Or, Hannah's eating a WHAT?

The other day the kids were out in the front playing while Debbie was hanging out the laundry to dry. Hannah was sitting in the stroller enjoying the fresh air and watching her brothers play. Mommy noticed that Hannah was chewing on what she thought was a blade of grass. She asked Joseph to get it out of her mouth. To her surprise, what came out was not grass. It was a little frog! Elijah had apparently felt sorry for Hannah all strapped in and not able to touch things and explore, so he caught a frog and gave it to her to play with. He didn't realize that Hannah puts anything and everything in her mouth. The poor frog was pulverized, but Hannah was fine. She was just a little bent out of shape when her big brother took away her dessert.



Hannah was 1 year old on July 30.

OPEN DOORS

Putting Joseph in Japanese school has been an adventure for us. Some things about the Japanese system we like. Some we endure. Some things we just can't put up with. For example, even first graders have homework assignments every night. As part of one of Joseph's homework assignments, he was asked to make up his own addition problems and solve them. We let him do it his way and he made problems like $25 + 33 = 58$. The next day he was scolded by the teacher for doing his homework wrong. She sent a note home informing us that they have not taught any numbers yet above 10.

The school is run on a shoestring budget. Even though we often get snow as late as mid-April, there is no heat in the school during the first term (April through July). In the beginning Joseph came home several days complaining about the cold. Even in the middle of the winter, when temperatures drop down into the teens, they heat only the classrooms. There is never any heat in the hallways, gymnasium, or restrooms.

As parents we are expected (required) to participate in school-help projects such as washing school lunch trays, directing traffic at school crossings, cleaning and weeding the school grounds, washing windows at the school. With our schedule it is difficult to say the least, especially considering that many of these special activities take place on Sundays, and that we don't have a grandma nearby to baby-sit while we go and serve at the school. At times we have just had to break with the expectations and say, "No." It's nice that we're the pastors of the church because they understand that we "work" on Sundays. For Japanese Christians it is nearly impossible to get out of these kinds of requirements on Sundays.

The children get just one month of summer vacation in elementary school. By the time they reach high school, depending on the kind of school they choose, they may not have any summer vacation to speak of. Joseph came home for his first day of summer vacation with a notebook full of homework to complete before school begins again on August 26th. He also had a list of do's and don'ts for summer vacation. Some of the rules were:

1. All children must show up at the local Shinto shrine for calisthenics at 6:30 every morning.
2. Children can't play outside until after lunch.
3. Children must come home by 6:00 PM
4. Whenever students leave their house, they must wear their school name tag.
5. Before summer vacation begins, students must submit a schedule showing how they plan to spend each hour of the day during summer break.

We are extra careful not to cause problems or make waves, but some of the rules we have chosen to selectively ignore. For example, we have family devotions every morning. We felt that keeping our devotions was more important than sending Joseph to the Shinto shrine for calisthenics. We also felt that if our kids wanted to play outside before noon, it was our choice.

Parents who once would have looked on us with suspicion now treat us with respect.

We expected that putting our children in school would open up new doors for evangelism. We never imagined how great the opportunities would be. Shortly after Joseph was enrolled, we got a call from the school principal. He called to inquire about whether or not I would be willing to teach International Understanding at the school one day a week. Our schedule was already full to capacity, but we felt that this was an opportunity that couldn't be missed. After I accepted, I was invited to City Hall for a special ceremony with the Superintendent of Public Schools. I discovered a week or so after that that I had been written up in a local newspaper. Parents at other schools in the area came asking why I was teaching at Takadate Elementary, but not at their child's school. The principal explained that our child was a student in his school.

Teaching at the school has done a lot to elevate our profile in the neighborhood. Japanese have such high respect and trust of educators that they can no longer look upon us and our church as a dangerous religious cult. Parents who once would have looked on us with suspicion now treat us with respect. We have an open door to talk to children when we meet them around town. Even Joseph has found his world of influence

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Joseph's School

Children's schooling is a big concern for missionaries all over the world. It is something that we have grappled with for 6 years, ever since our oldest son, Joseph, was born.

Many missionaries choose to put their children in private American schools. In our situation, there are two big reasons why we didn't feel this would work out for us. 1) Our nearest option is in Tokyo. We feel that our children have been given to us as a trust from God. We cannot believe that it is God's will for us to send our children far away where we would only be able to see them a few times a year. 2) Here in Japan the cost is astronomical. Boarding school for one child costs around \$15,000/year. Add to that the cost of one trip home each month by train (about \$300/trip X 12 = \$3,600/year). Multiply this by 4 children and you come up with a grand total of around \$75,000/year. Most of the MKs we know from Japan who take this route never master Japanese, never feel truly at home in this country, and never feel like they are a part of their parents' ministry.

Homeschooling is an option, but in this society it makes for a very lonely existence. As far as we know there are no other English-speaking children in our whole city. The only option for playmates would be Japanese children, who are in school so much of the time that they would rarely be able to play together. Once again, it is very difficult to master Japanese without going to school and being part of the system. Since our entire ministry is to Japanese in Japanese, it would be really sad if our children couldn't even understand their father's sermons, read a Japanese Bible, or sing along with a hymnal.

On the other hand, Japanese school also poses a lot of problems. The Japanese school system

is plagued with bullying. Anyone who is even a little different is made an outcast. As the only non-Japanese in the whole school, at best they would suffer more than their share of teasing and bullying. Also, just as in America, public schools are a place where children are exposed to a lot of ungodly values and pressure to compromise. Here in Japan we are especially concerned about sexual immorality, witchcraft, and idolatry. As the only Christian in the school, there would be no support whatsoever.

We prayed about and grappled with these problems until the very last moment, but finally decided to put Joseph into public school on a trial basis. We knew that we would still need to homeschool if we ever wanted him to master English reading and writing, but at least he would also be able to make friends, speak, read, and write Japanese fluently, and feel a part of our ministry in the society that God has called us to.

We weren't the only ones with reservations. The entire Board of Education was nervous (and excited) about having a foreign boy start the first grade. Our whole neighborhood was a buzz with the news. "Our schools have become international," we heard people say. Several families decided to put their children into private English classes, so that they could "keep up with the times." The teachers were nervous about how they would teach a child who couldn't speak Japanese. (Our children forgot nearly all their Japanese during the 11 months we were in the States.) They wondered if Joseph would be able to eat the school lunches. They worried that the other children wouldn't accept him. Joseph's first several days of school were awful. He couldn't understand anything that was going on. Some of the other kids picked on him. One boy took all of his colored pencils and threw them in the garbage. Joseph knew he shouldn't get into a fight, but he couldn't express to the teacher what was going on behind her



Joseph at his 1st grade entrance ceremony walking with his teacher, Mrs. Muchiko Zaike.

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School (Continued from page 4)

back. He came home in tears. But as the days passed, he learned more and more Japanese. He enjoyed getting out and spending time with other children his age. He also found that he was at an advantage over the other children because we had been homeschooling him already for several months. He knew all of the math that they were teaching and had good study habits. His teacher was very understanding and tried to protect him and help him along. We assured her that he would learn Japanese quickly, and she didn't need to worry about him not understanding.



Here's a picture of a church that Joseph drew at school in his art notebook. The bottom is gold for heaven. The second floor is green because Jesus made everything. The first part of the roof is red because Jesus died for our sins. And the top part of the roof is brown because Jesus died on the cross. His whole notebook is filled with churches and a picture of Jesus on the cross.

We were also pleased with the school. At first we were hesitant because the building and grounds are old and run down. But when we learned that Joseph's first grade class was just 20 students, we were pleased. Normal classroom size for the first grade as set by the Ministry of Education is 35. Because this is a small school, they didn't have enough students to make a larger class. His teacher, Mrs. Muchiko Zaike, has many years of experience teaching the first grade and is understanding of Joseph's special needs.

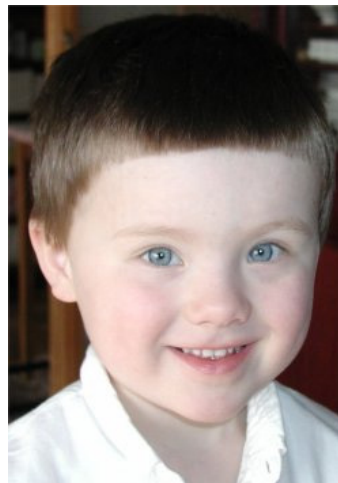
Joseph finished the first term without any missed days. At the parent-teacher conference, his teacher told us that he is one of the best students in the class. She said that he is always kind to the other children, even when they are mean to him. He has also mastered reading and writing of

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expanding. The other day when we went to the store a little girl came around the aisle, saw Joseph and came running up to him wanting to play.

hiragana, one of two phonetic alphabets used in Japanese. He can understand nearly all of the Japanese used in class.

Joseph is a very busy little boy. He has all of the work that Japanese children do, plus about 4 hours of home schooling every day. There is no time for television, and little time at home for play, but so far his education is working out far better than we had ever imagined it would. Japanese school has also broadened his world and made it possible for him to see Japan as his own mission field and calling.



With three boys, there's never a dull moment around our house. Here's Samuel (above), Joseph at piano, and Elijah with a bucket on his head.



Below: On the morning of 7/23/02. Hannah, Samuel, and Elijah sleeping together. Our whole family sleeps on the floor in one community bed. The kids always seem to gravitate toward each other.



Above: Early morning 7/24/02. Camping at the Hachinohe coast. Joseph, Samuel, Elijah and Daddy went for a quick overnight on Tuesday 7/23. We left home at 5:00 PM and came home at 9:00 the following morning. Our little tent is on the left. It's crowded, but very easy to set up and carry. We put up the tarp to block some of the constant wind and ocean spray. It kept us a little bit dryer than everything around.



Joseph wearing his "randoseru" a special backpack for carrying school books worn by elementary children in Japan. Boys wear black and girls wear red packs.

PRAYER AND PRAISE:

Pray for the land that we have been looking at for our church. Please pray that God moves on the owner's heart and supplies all of the funds that will be needed. We're believing for the right price in His time, and that we'll be able to find the volunteers from the States to help with the church construction.

Praise God for peace and direction regarding Joseph's education. Pray for continued wisdom regarding each of our children's education. Samuel is home schooling at the moment, and we don't plan to send him to Japanese school until first grade.

Pray for a young woman in her 30s. She accepted the Lord and was baptized a few years ago. While we were in the States on deputation she stopped coming to

church. Recently we received word from her that she had made the decision to turn back from following Christ.

Pray for Tamotsu, a man in his 60s. He had been coming to church regularly for some time and had even made a decision for Christ. A few weeks ago he was involved in a car accident. As a result of his injuries he is no longer able to drive and is unable to come to church.

As a result of teaching in Joseph's school, Ron has been invited to speak to a group of about 50 senior citizens at a local community center. Pray for wisdom and opportunity to testify for Christ. The meeting is scheduled for November 1st.

Pray for Matsuno, a widow in her 80s. She began coming to church about 2 months ago and has been very open to the Gospel. Please pray for her salvation.