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Dear Ministry Partners,

It is by the power of our Father in Heaven that we continue to be sustained here in Japan. He has been gracious to us as we adjust to the complexities of life and ministry as foreigners. We look forward to how He will work in the coming months.

We hope this mid-year update will give a glimpse of the “big picture” of our ministry and report on the progress towards the goals we prayerfully set in our annual report back in March. We have included the March report as an appendix at the end of this update. Please join us in prayer as we submit our plans to Him for the coming six months.

We are grateful for your continued prayers and financial support. It is a tremendous responsibility to be entrusted with this service.

In Christ,

Andrew and Tanja Rokeby

## **Report Outline**

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## **Vision Statement**

Japanese believers using their Spirit-given gifts to support one another and reach out to plant new churches.

## **Strategies**

- Partner with existing local churches to equip believers for leadership and evangelism.
- Build community connections for Gospel proclamation.

## **Summary**

We continue to dedicate ourselves to the study of Japanese with the goal of clearly and accurately communicating the Gospel. Andrew recently started at a new language school (Tokyo Academy of Communication), and Tanja is making progress with online tutoring. At home, Anna can often be heard trying out words she learned at Japanese kindergarten or “words” with Japanese sounds she has made up.

We have been submitting our church partnership plans to God in prayer. We have been discerning the potential for a partnership with the church where we previously served as short term missionaries in 2015/2016. We are working towards a final decision on a partnership and anticipate having an answer by the end of the year.

Our times of prayer and Bible study over Zoom continue to be a source of strength and support. The books we chose earlier this year have been a benefit as we think about how to best parent our children in light of the Gospel and in the context of living in another culture.

## **Key Area Reports**

### **Language and Culture Acquisition**

We have now been studying Japanese for 15 months with a couple of months of break along the way. Since our last report in March, Andrew has been studying Monday to Friday at Coto Academy until this month when he switched to the Tokyo Academy of Communication (TAC) which has classes Monday to Friday except Wednesdays. Andrew hopes that he will learn more natural patterns of speech and get more practice writing. Just like with English, everyday spoken Japanese can sometimes sound like a different language when compared to what is found in a textbook. Both formal and casual Japanese need to be mastered to effectively communicate in Japan, so Andrew is hopeful that TAC will help him as he continues to study. Also, Andrew continues to benefit from weekly time with a conversation tutor.

Tanja has made good progress after changing tutors. Her new tutor has helped her reinforce already learned material and they have now moved on to new concepts. Homeschooling John and studying Japanese has been demanding, but Tanja has continued having lessons twice a week for two hours a session. Recently, she added an hour a week with Andrew’s conversation tutor.

Anna has been learning Japanese by immersion as a student at a Japanese kindergarten. She seems to be soaking up a lot of words at school (some real and some made up). But, just like us, our kids are aware of their Japanese limitations and are sometimes discouraged.

God continues to give us opportunities to use our language in everyday life. In the past six months, we have met up with many Japanese speakers (both Christian and not) and those meetings have stretched us as we grow in our ability to converse in Japanese. We are praying that we will continue to grow in our language ability so that we might clearly and accurately share the Gospel with those around us.

### Partnership Building with a Local Church

In our last annual report, we outlined Andrew's tentative plans to start a discipleship ministry with Mr. S from our church. As it turns out, God had a discipleship opportunity planned, but it was not the one Andrew envisioned. After meeting with Mr. S to discuss the ministry, it became apparent that Mr. S is going through some significant challenges in his life. So, the discipleship ministry with Mr. S turned into a ministry for Mr. S. We have had him in our home several times to encourage him, prayed with him, and showed him God's love at a time in his life when he is feeling discouraged and frustrated. Andrew hopes to continue his relationship with him in our next season of ministry.

Somewhat unexpectedly, in mid-Spring we started to talk about partnership with the church where we formerly served as short termers for 5 months in 2015/2016. Mizonokuchi Chapel is in Takatsu ward which has about 215,000 people and is located in the neighbouring city of Kawasaki. To our knowledge, there are three or so small churches in this community including Mizonokuchi Chapel. Mizonokuchi Chapel is currently looking for a Japanese pastor and would like help with their outreach and evangelism ministry. As part of the discernment process, we participated in the chapel's outreach ministry this summer and attended their annual retreat. We will be meeting with the church leadership this fall to have direct talks about a potential partnership. If we decide to partner with them, we will likely move closer to Takatsu in the new year. Please continue to pray for us and Mizonokuchi Chapel that the Lord would lead us to a God honouring decision about a partnership.

### Personal Health/Growth

#### Andrew

Recently, I have begun to regularly schedule time for reading. Paul Tripp's *Parenting* is a higher-level look at child-rearing, but very impactful on everyday fatherhood. I found it to be full of good thoughts and expositions of Scripture on children and parenting. I was convicted and learned a great deal about how I can and need to improve as a father. I have started into *For the Fame of God's Name* by Sam Storms and Justin Taylor but will wait until I finish before providing any thoughts.

Currently, I am meeting online every second week with two men from our mission to study God's Word and pray for one another. I recently discovered John Piper's "Look at the Book" series in which he diagrams and exposit short passages of Scripture in 12-minute videos. My small group is using these videos as the foundation of our Bible study.

#### Tanja

This spring, I read Andrew Murray's *Humility, Parenting* by Paul David Tripp, and completed a CICA module on spiritual disciplines. *Humility* refreshed my perspective on God's greatness and my position before Him and others. It was a good companion piece to *Parenting* which convicted me of my role as humble servant to my family, for the Lord. I was thankful for the important shift in my parenting perspective.

My Bible Study Fellowship group has started meeting again after summer break. I am so blessed by the mutual study of God's Word and fellowship with three other ladies who are also "foreigners" here in Japan.

I have continued to meet monthly with my two prayer partners. Their fellowship and support are invaluable to me. Homeschooling this spring and summer went well, and we started Grade 1 this fall. It is a joy to teach my children, especially having the opportunity to acknowledge God and worship Him through our learning. Please pray for wisdom and insight for me as a teacher and mother on both good days and tough days.

I added *Third Cultures Kids* to my list of books to read this year, and I am currently working through it. I am learning about the significant grief and loss that TCKs can experience. As I read the book and have discussions with colleagues, I hope to be equipped to support the kids as they face various challenges related to being missionary kids.

### **Financial Report**

As of the writing of this report, our monthly support needs are being met. However, if we partner with Mizonokuchi Chapel we anticipate our monthly rent will increase approximately \$500 per month in our new location. As always, we are thankful for your continued financial support of the proclamation of the Gospel in Japan.

### **Prayer Requests**

1. We are working toward a decision on a partnership with Mizonokuchi Chapel. We want a relationship that will be beneficial for both parties and for the advancement of God's Kingdom. Please pray for a process that will bring clarity and reassurance for our family and the Mizonokuchi Chapel leadership.
2. A partnership with Mizonokuchi Chapel will necessitate a move in the new year. We are a bit sad to have to say goodbye to our current neighbours who have been so kind and hospitable. We are planning to have a Christmas party in our home again this year and will be distributing Gospel literature. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to apply the Good News to their hearts and that we might be able to continue our friendships with them after our potential move.
3. We understand that language learning is a task that a missionary never completes, but we are also aware that this season dedicated to language learning will eventually come to an end as we become more engaged in ministry. Please pray that we will continue to make significant gains in our ability in our remaining six months of full-time language studies, so that we might have a solid foundation for long-term self-study.

## **Appendix A – March 2025 Annual Report**

### **Vision Statement**

Japanese believers using their Spirit-given gifts to support one another and reach out to plant new churches.

### **Strategies**

- Partner with existing local churches to equip believers for leadership and evangelism.
- Build community connections for Gospel proclamation.

### **Summary**

Much of our time this past year has been dedicated to learning the language and culture. Andrew has nearly completed intermediate level classes and Tanja is finishing up beginner level studies. John persisted and graduated from Japanese kindergarten. In the coming year, we will continue our focus on language learning and Anna will enter Japanese kindergarten.

We have built many new relationships at Saikyo Nozomi Chapel. Highlights include connecting a new attendee studying in Victoria BC for a year to one of our partner churches in Canada and the initial planning for a discipleship ministry. Andrew will partner with another member to lead a discipleship ministry. Furthermore, Andrew is praying for a preaching coach to help him begin preaching in Japanese.

God blessed both of us with excellent English language Bible study groups this year. We have been encouraged to study the Word and pray with others. Reading *Shepherding a Child's Heart* together provided opportunities to reflect on the material and learn from one another. We are looking forward to how we will be blessed in the coming year through our new reading choices.

### **Key Area Reports**

#### **Language Acquisition**

##### **Year-in-Review**

Over the past year, most of our time and efforts have been invested in learning Japanese. The more we learn the language, the more we realize how essential it is for understanding the culture and ministering in Japan. Our language studies are already opening doors to building community and church relationships.

Andrew has been studying Monday to Friday at a language school in Shibuya. His classes are 3 hours a day, and his commute time is an hour each way by foot and train. Thankfully, there are mobile apps that he can use to study during his commute. In addition to his classes, last fall, Andrew enlisted the services of a conversation tutor. They meet online two evenings a week for a total of two hours a week. Between classes and study time in the evening, Andrew spends about five or six hours each weekday studying Japanese. He has one month of classes left before he will complete his intermediate level classes. Recently, his coursework has focused on new sentence forms, Chinese characters, and practicing conducting interviews and giving short speeches. At church and with our

neighbours he can have varied conversations. Currently, his biggest needs are more speaking practice and growth of his vocabulary.

Tanja studies three days a week with a private tutor. Her classes are 2 hours a day. She has nearly completed the second of two beginner level textbooks. Last month, she learned that she would be assigned a new tutor by her school. So far, her new tutor has been doing a good job of challenging Tanja to speak more and has provided excellent review of already learned material. Tanja is encouraged by the number of Chinese characters she has learned and her growing ability to have extended conversations with women at church, neighbours, and mothers from the kindergarten. Currently, she is looking forward to getting more practice and expanding her grammar skills and vocabulary.

Overall, John's year at Japanese kindergarten was a success. Starting school for the first time and doing so in Japanese was a big adjustment for John. He was the only non-Japanese student in his class, so he spent the first half of the year just trying to understand what was happening. Nevertheless, John persisted and graduated at the end of March. He learned a lot more Japanese than he would admit and enjoyed playing with his new friends at school.

#### Plans for the coming year

We are praying that our Japanese abilities will increase in the coming year as we practice sentence forms and integrate grammar concepts in everyday conversations. Missionaries in Japan never stop learning new Chinese characters and words, but we are praying for a particularly productive year in our second of two years dedicated to language study.

Andrew will continue studying full time at Coto Japanese Academy with the goal for completing the advanced level classes. By the end of these classes, Andrew should be able to speak more about abstract concepts and have deeper conversations in Japanese. After completing his studies at Coto Academy, Andrew is planning to study for a semester or two at Tokyo Academy of Communications (TAC). TAC is run by a Christian Japanese man, so the school provides more opportunities to learn the vocabulary and expressions associated with Christianity.

Tanja will continue studying with her tutor but at two days a week when she begins homeschooling John. The flexibility of an online tutor has been essential for being able to learn the language and meet the needs of our growing kids.

With John done kindergarten, we will send our daughter Anna for a year starting in April. She will attend the same kindergarten as John with the same goal of learning Japanese language and culture. We intend for her to attend Japanese kindergarten for a year and start homeschooling at the end of the school year next March.

#### Partnership Building with a Local Church

##### Year-in-Review

As planned, we have been attending Saikyo Nozomi chapel for the past year. We have been building important relationships at our church. In the spring, we met a university student named Ms. M who soon left to study at the University of Victoria for a year starting last fall. Andrew connected Ms. M to Central Baptist Church (where he was a member during his undergraduate years), and she has

been regularly attending church and getting involved in the college ministry. We are thankful to see the Lord working both in Canada and Japan. We have been doing our best to build connections with busy church members to get more involved in ministry planning and executing. Andrew had a meeting with our pastor in January to discuss how we might best be able to meet the needs of the church while practicing our Japanese. Out of that meeting, our pastor asked Andrew to pair up with a young man in the church to develop a new ministry. Andrew and Mr. S are in the planning stages of a discipleship ministry.

One area of ministry related to community formation for which we had not planned was the relationships we have been building with our neighbours. In Japan, much like in many communities in Canada, relationships with neighbours tends to be superficial. To our surprise, God opened many doors to minister to our neighbours. In May, our neighbours had a BBQ to welcome us, we have shared meals and exchanged garden produce with some of them, and Tanja has built a good friendship with Mrs. T across the street. At Christmas, ten of them attended our Christmas party where we shared the story of Christ's birth and gave them each a Gospel account in comic book form. Most recently, three of the men on our block invited Andrew to celebrate the retirement of one of neighbours. We are praying that our witness to the Truth on our block will bear fruit.

### Plans for the coming year

Our main activities for building partnerships in the coming year include increased ministry engagement at Saikyo Nozomi Chapel, participating in a pilot project by our mission to increase cooperation between missionaries and the church association, and working towards a placement where Andrew can be mentored in sermon preparation in Japanese.

In the coming year, Lord willing, Andrew will implement a discipleship ministry with another young man at Saikyo Nozomi Chapel. Mr. S is a relatively recent Bible college graduate and has a passion and gifting for teaching God's Word. Soon, they will meet to sort out the details for a ministry to study God's Word and pray. Please pray for church engagement as this kind of ministry is challenging in a country where men work long hours. We are also interested to see how we can help Ms. M integrate into the church after her return from a year of studies in Canada. Returning to Japan can be challenging after experiencing close relationships in a church abroad. Please keep Ms. M in your prayers that she might put her trust in Christ for her salvation and that she would integrate well in the Japanese church.

In the second half of last year, Andrew began discussions with one of our team leaders about a project to strengthen the bonds between our mission and our partner denomination. Our mission maintains good ties with the denomination, but increased engagement with new missionaries and the church association is needed to keep the relationship going into the future. To that end, over the course of the next year, we will travel to various churches within our denomination. It is our goal to be an encouragement, deepen the ties between the next generation of missionaries and the church association, and to discern if there are any opportunities for future partnership starting in our second term. We are looking forward to seeing how God is working in the rest of Japan (outside of Tokyo).

Andrew has a strong desire to successfully preach a sermon in Japanese before the end of our first term. A missionary friend of ours once told Andrew that the best way to learn to preach in Japanese is to preach in Japanese. With that simple but sage advice in mind, Andrew has begun the search for a preaching mentor. He has a person in mind and is praying that this man will be open to mentoring him and will provide him opportunities to preach in his church.



## Personal Health/Growth

### Andrew

#### Year-in-Review

Shepherding a Child's Heart by Ted Tripp helped me better understand some of our parenting practices through Scripture. Most importantly, I now daily consider the need to guide my children towards what is right instead of just modifying their behaviour to what is appropriate or convenient. Sometimes, this has meant working hard to change heart attitudes in our kids at the expense of enduring some tiring behaviour for a season. Furthermore, I have spent much time this past year examining my own attitudes and behaviours as they relate to child rearing.

Last year, I planned to meet with a mentor once a week for prayer and reflection. Unfortunately, my mentor soon became unavailable. After a few weeks without this regular time with my mentor, I determined it a priority to be studying and praying regularly with brothers in English. I spent some time looking for a study to join but finding none I decided to start one. I now gather weekly (online) with two men in our mission to study through a book of the Bible (currently Ephesians) and pray for one another. Since starting the study, I have been blessed to dig into the Word and pray with others. Fellowship has been key for me as I battle the isolation that can happen to new missionaries who do not yet have the language ability to have meaningful conversations in Japanese. I have enjoyed further fellowship through a marriage enrichment program that our mission has organized. We are going through a video curriculum and meet once a month as a group to discuss our reflections on the material. The course has been a good reminder for us to focus on our relationship even when it might seem like we are too busy to do so.

#### Plans for the coming year

In the coming year, I plan to read a book which was ferried to me from our church in Canada by a member who was visiting Japan. It has been on my "to read" list for a while, so I will make sure to read it this year. *For the Fame of God's Name* by Sam Storms and Justin Taylor is a book written in honour of John Piper. Pastor John's teaching has had a big impact on my theological formation, so I am looking forward to reading this selection of essays. I am also planning to read *Parenting* by Paul Tripp to learn more how grace can shape me as a father.

I am planning to continue studying the Bible and praying with the group of men from our team here in Japan. At our most recent meeting, one of the men expressed a hope that others would join our small group. I think this ministry is important for male missionaries because their time can be consumed by study for the purpose of preaching and other ministry work at the cost of fellowshiping with others in their own heart language. I plan to continue networking with other missionaries inside and outside our mission to learn from others and be of mutual encouragement.

### Tanja

#### Year-in-Review

This past year I met each month with my two prayer partners. These regular times of prayer and sharing were an encouragement and strength for me as I adjusted to life in Japan. I also met with a mentor missionary here in Japan and received valuable insights, wisdom and encouragement from her. My Fellowship International coach gave me accountability and a sounding board to identify priorities and make goals for achieving desired changes. The Lord blessed me with opportunities to share the Word with neighbours, my hairdresser, moms and teachers from John's school.

In the first few months of our time in Japan, I continued to meet online with a Bible study group from home. In the fall, the group went back to studying in person, so my top priority was to find a new Bible study. I searched and found an English-speaking ladies Bible Study Fellowship group meeting online in Japan. This year's study of Revelation has increased my desire to share the Word with those around me and shifted my focus to remember that God is on His throne and worthy to be praised. The group been a great environment for learning culturally sensitive communication and contributing openly as sisters in Christ.

### Plans for the coming year

I plan to continue meeting with my two prayer partners each month, as well as my missionary mentor and Fellowship coach. These times of prayer and support are invaluable to me. Thank you for your prayers for my prayer partner who was treated for cancer this past year. Please continue to keep her and her family in your prayers.

I will continue meeting with my Bible Study Fellowship group this spring and plan to join when it restarts in the fall. This year I plan to read *Humility* by Andrew Murray, and Andrew and I will read and discuss *Parenting* by Paul Tripp.

In April, I will start home schooling with John. Please pray for wisdom and strategies for teaching and time management.

### **Financial Report**

As of the writing of this report, our monthly support needs are being met. While secondary in importance to prayer, your generous giving allows us to focus our mental energies on our family and ministry.

### **Prayer Requests**

1. This year, Andrew and Mr. S will develop and lead a discipleship ministry at Saikyo Nozomi Chapel. Instruction will be in Japanese, so it will be an opportunity for Andrew to learn about ministry in the Japanese context and practice his speaking skills. Please pray for wisdom in our preparations and for clarity in communication.
2. We have plans to visit several churches within our partner denomination this year. Please pray that we will be encouragement to our Japanese brothers and sisters and that God would give us discernment as we look for a ministry partner for the time after our language studies.
3. John has now finished Japanese kindergarten, and Anna will enter at the start of April. Please pray that Anna will adjust quickly and have an enjoyable and productive time in kindergarten. Also, please pray for patience and wisdom for Tanja as she begins homeschooling John.