



## Dear Praying Friends,

Hello from Sakai, Japan. Some major changes are taking place at Sakai International Bible Church. Here is an update on some of the wonderful things that God is doing at SIBC.

### SIBC IS GOING HOME!

Actually, it would be more accurate to say that we are going TO a home. Let us explain...

As we mentioned in our last letter, at a congregational meeting in January, the church family sensed very clearly that the Lord was leading us to move out of our current facility. This is something that we had been considering for a couple of years, but we never felt like God had given us the "okay" to move...until now. So, with this new directive from the Lord, we began a 4-month process of seeking the Lord as we explored various options for a new worship location.

seemed the least likely of the five we were considering, but now it has become clear to us that this is God's heart for us.

Honestly, this whole process has been really good for the church. From the very beginning we did not want this to be a decision that the church leaders made all by themselves. Instead, we wanted the Lord to speak to each person in the church family. And in many ways, this is exactly what happened. Over the past few years we have often talked about Jesus being the Head of the church. However, during these last few months, the people of the church actually began to experience the reality of this. As we ALL made the effort to look to Jesus, seek Jesus and listen to Jesus, Jesus began to speak to ALL of us. And, like the Good Shepherd that He is, He led us ALL in the same direction. This gives each of us great confidence as we move forward into this next season that God has prepared for us.



*The SIBC family at our Congregational Meeting in June*

Finally, in early June we began to get a sense of how the Lord might be leading us. After taking a week to fast and pray, the entire church family met on June 10th. At that meeting there was unanimous agreement that the Lord was leading us to move the church to the home of one of our church members. Six months ago, this option

So, on July 29th we will have our last worship service in our current building. Then, starting in August, we will transition to a more simple-style church as we begin gathering in a home.

Personally, we are excited about the many advantages of meeting in a house. The more intimate setting will not only allow us to grow in relationship with one another and explore what it really means to be the Family of God, but it will also provide an opportunity for people to become more active participants in our worship gatherings. Rather than depending on a small number of people to do the ministry of the church, we hope

that every person will become a fully functioning member of the body of Christ. Like we see in 1 Cor 14:26, our desire is that everyone will have an opportunity to contribute to our worship times together. In this way, we hope that "new" SIBC will lead to much growth in the lives of the people, resulting in more fruit for the Kingdom of God.

For these reasons, we are excited about what Jesus is doing at SIBC. However, truth be told, we are also a bit nervous. Jesus is leading us to "do church" in a way that is very new for us. In some ways, we feel a bit like Joshua and his generation. All their lives they lived in tents, wandered in the desert, and took care of livestock. But as God transitioned them into the land He was giving to them, they had to learn a whole new way of doing life. Suddenly, they had to adjust to building houses, living in cities and planting farms. I'm sure that this was a bit stressful for them.

In the same way, from August we will need to adjust to a new way of gathering together. None of us have ever done house church before, so we are trying to imagine worship without a band and teaching without using PowerPoint. However, since Jesus is the One who is leading us, we trust that He will continue to guide us as we enter this new chapter in the life of the church.

### PRAYER REQUESTS

Needless to say, we would really appreciate your prayers during these next few months. Specifically...

- 1) **PLEASE PRAY** for a **smooth transition** as we adjust to meeting in a home and embrace a new way of gathering together as the body of Christ.
- 2) **PLEASE PRAY** for the **church family**. May each person continue to look to Jesus as they consider how they might be able to contribute to our weekly gatherings. Pray especially for the emotional stress that often accompanies times of change.
- 3) **PLEASE PRAY** for the **church leaders** (Michael, Chris and Mr. Noji). May they provide leadership and guidance to the church family during this process, without taking the place of Jesus in the eyes of the people.

### KANSAI CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

In the Fall, Chris will resume her role at Kansai Christian School as the 1st-2nd grade teacher's aide. This year, however, she will also have the privilege of serving as the new Bible teacher for grades 5 & 6. She is looking forward to the opportunity of teaching the Word of God to the students (one of whom will be Luke!)

From September, Michael will once again serve as the chaplain at KCS. After taking a break from this

role last year, he is excited about speaking at the monthly, all-school chapel times (for grades 1-12!) He will also be the camp speaker at the all-school campout in October.



*Chris with last year's 1st-2nd grade class*

**PLEASE PRAY** for both Michael and Chris as they have opportunity to share Christ with the students of KCS. May God use both of them to point the young people into deeper friendship with Jesus.

### IN CLOSING

Due to the situation at the church, we have decided not to return to the States for a time of home ministry this summer. We are saddened that we will not get to see people and visit our supporting churches like we usually do every two years. However, we feel that this is the best decision for the church right now. Lord willing, we plan to make a visit in the summer of 2013. Until then, we ask that you would **PLEASE PRAY** for our financial support. May God continue to move the hearts of churches and individuals to partner with us so that we can continue to serve Him here in Japan.

Well, there is much more that we could report, but those things will have to wait until another time.

Thanks again for all of your prayers and support. May you all have a wonderful summer.

Blessings in Jesus,

*Michael & Chris*

Michael & Chris Mason