

'I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' [John 12:24-25]

We greet you from Tokyo, Japan, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, we want to thank you for praying for GraceCityChurchTokyo. Fall has started in Japan, too, and in this harvest season we pondered upon this Bible passage from John 12. We are sowing the seed of the Gospel in the city, in Japanese culture. Church planting is like dying, following in Jesus' footsteps. In this newsletter we will share about our experiences sowing, trying to do so in an effective, contextualized way. Not to seek honor or to make a name for ourselves, but willing to lose everything in our longing to see fruit, the glory of God. Looking back at the last couple of months, this way of church planting in dependence of the Holy Spirit produced a vibrant and lively atmosphere that attracts many seekers.

heavenly winds > The fall is also a time when many typhoons hit this part of Asia. Since the start of GraceCityChurch in late fall, early winter last year, the wind seemed to change direction all the time. We had to adjust the sails continuously to keep moving as a church. The fatigue that came with that after a little less than a year was intense. We had tried many techniques and looking back we see how futile some of our efforts were. The harder we were blowing air into the sails, the less we opened ourselves up to be propelled by the Holy Spirit. That is not just a fact in church planting, but in any aspect of life. The more you try to accomplish on your own, the less you are open to God. But by God's grace we proved agile and we quickly learned to sail on heavenly winds. Sometimes these winds are so powerful that we feel like we are losing control. There are so many new contacts made, how can we possibly follow up on all of those? So many new ideas, how can we make them work? Many musicians and other artists offer their help in reaching out to Tokyo's young professionals, but how can we get all these events organized? We are being noticed or even watched: The cover of the Japan Harvest (the magazine of the Japan Evangelical Mission Association) fall 2009 edition is filled with the unique designs of our flyers and invitations of our outreach activities. The introduction to the extensive article read: *'Is Japan on the verge of a*



The Netherlands and Japan are celebrating their 400 year relationship this year. Ten Dutch young professionals came to encourage and help GraceCityChurchTokyo.



Culture fusion during a yukata party. Tall Dutch people dressed up in traditional yukatas (Japanese summer kimono) presenting Dutch entertainment and snacks. The best fusion was the interaction between the team and the 50 (!) Japanese guest who responded to our invitation.

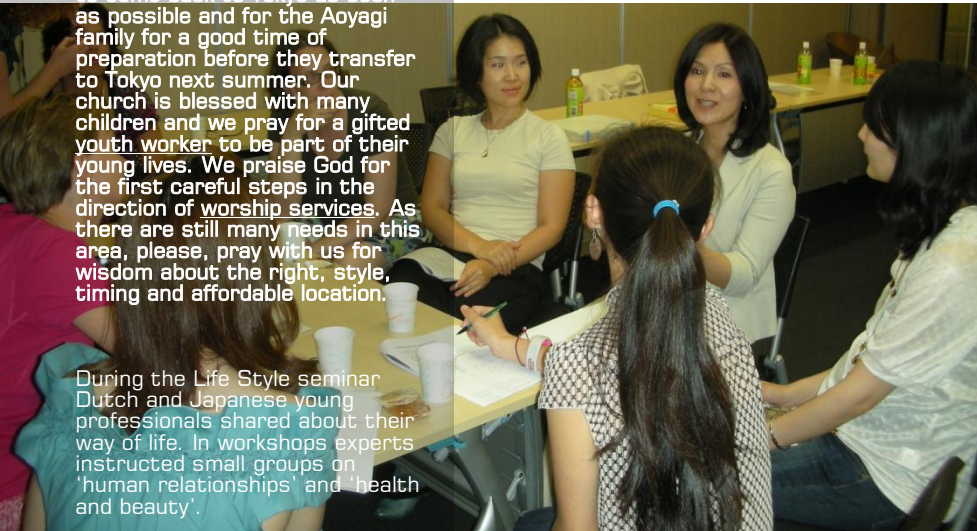
shift in the spiritual climate that will profoundly impact the culture of Japan? If so GraceCityChurch Tokyo will be in a strategic location, poised to gather influential young professionals and artists into the church of Jesus Christ.' How will we be able to live up to these high expectations? We have to admit, it is a luxurious problem to deal with: there are so many chances in this place that cries out for meaning. God's guidance became our compass, but with so many forces around, we need to be still and pray for wisdom about what to do next. Just as the time that we pondered upon the meaning of that kernel of wheat in John 12. God is meeting our needs in many awesome ways, for example in adding people He called to our staff. Not only are we expecting the musically gifted Lowther family this fall, also Rev. Seima Aoyagi and

worship > We have celebrated GraceCityChurchTokyo's very first tryout worship service in July. A historic moment! In a small meeting room overlooking the office buildings and fancy fashion and jewelry outlets in the heart of Tokyo 25 people gathered, Rev. Fukuda led us in worship and preached on Romans 10:12. By 'practicing' (our worship is for real and from the heart, of course) we try to find a worship style and compose a liturgy that fits our theology, tradition and target group. Furthermore a lot of practical issues need to be addressed like location, time, welcoming seekers, etc.

praise and prayer >

Thank God for 170 prayer partners signing up to faithfully pray for GraceCityChurchTokyo. We pray that God may add many more people who want to be involved in our ministry this way. Praise God for many new contacts. We pray that God will keep our passion burning for our fellow-Tokyoites. Praise God for the current 3 CROSSROAD beginners Bible study groups. We pray that God will grant these seekers faith. We thank God for the anticipation of new staff. We pray for enough support for the Lowther family to come back to Tokyo as soon as possible and for the Aoyagi family for a good time of preparation before they transfer to Tokyo next summer. Our church is blessed with many children and we pray for a gifted youth worker to be part of their young lives. We praise God for the first careful steps in the direction of worship services. As there are still many needs in this area, please, pray with us for wisdom about the right, style, timing and affordable location.

During the Life Style seminar Dutch and Japanese young professionals shared about their way of life. In workshops experts instructed small groups on 'human relationships' and 'health and beauty'.



Rev. Makoto Fukuda and Geert de Boo are preparing for the leadership training that will equip our young leaders with our gospel-centered, city-focused, outward-faced, community-based, ministry balanced, movement-minded core values.

his family answered our call to come over and help. He is a Japanese pastor (ordained in the PCA), who graduated from Covenant Seminary and is currently in his second year of training at Harbor Community Church in San Diego, CA. From the summer of 2010 he will join our team, be immersed in our vision and God willingly plant our first daughter church within several years.

new winds > The piano concert in May we reported about in our last newsletter was followed by a Midsummer party in June. This gave us an opportunity to get to know the people we

meeting. Finding a driven and gifted person who can work with our rapidly increasing group of youngsters is an important prayer request. Not only human resources are needed, but in this case there is also a lack of good Japanese material to work with. In our tradition, kids are fully part of our church community, but in many Japanese churches this covenantal thinking is virtually unknown. In June we also focused on the theme of diaconate. As a church we want to serve the community. Our target group's needs are mostly spiritual and mental, so we want to be available for them by serving pastorally. We are working with a Japanese Christian counselor for the equipment of our team and in organizing stress management seminars for young professionals. But the many yuppies in central Tokyo share the streets and parks they rush through with many homeless people. How can we serve them in a structural way? To find an answer to that question we 'prayer walked' through the areas where many homeless hang out. Praying, but with our eyes open to observe the needy people we met and not with our hands folded, but with giving hands. The kids distributed packed lunches to the homeless people we met. This meant a lot to receivers as well as the little givers. We have not yet figured out a structural way to help, but in the team a growing desire to serve the whole city has awakened.

whirlwind > Many of the new contacts were made through the activities of a Dutch Mission team from the de Boos' home church. For 2 weeks in July the team buzzed through the city as a whirlwind, attracting many Japanese on their path through central Tokyo. The Launch Team was immediately impressed by the Dutch, not only because of their height, hair color and expressiveness. The openness and enthusiasm of the team proved to be contagious. The Japanese team members did not want to miss a thing and that caused a renewed impulse in their motivation, which is still noticeable now. The events that were held also bore fruit. New groups of seekers were reached during a Dutch kids' games event, Holland parties and a Lifestyle Seminar for young professionals. In fancy magazines there is a lot of talk about 'fusion', which means a music or culinary style in which the best elements of each are united. This short term mission trip was one big culture fusion: Japanese children trying out traditional Dutch games, tall and blond Dutch ladies in kimono and an exchange of experiences of Dutch and Japanese career builders. And what we learned is that there are many differences, but even more similarities. The bridge was always the Gospel, even if the Japanese counterparts had never heard the name of Jesus before. The kids saw Him in the helping hands during crafts and the young professionals heard about Him in the testimonies of their new Dutch friends.

In His name we greet you from Tokyo!

If you would like to receive this Grace City Church Tokyo newsletter regularly, register by sending an e-mail to: makoto@gracecitychurch.jp.

met at the concert and earlier events better. We invited them to our seeker Bible study 'CROSSROAD', a series of 5 basic studies as an introduction to the Christian faith. The meetings are held in a trendy, central Tokyo lounge late Saturday afternoon. As there is a lack of appropriate material to teach these basics from a reformed perspective available in Japanese, we wrote our own. This first series proved a real blessing: all participants are continuing on into CROSSROAD PLUS, a more in-depth series of studies about the Gospel of Mark. At the same time 2 new CROSSROAD groups have just started their course. Another new happening was our modest first step into youth ministry. The kids and teenagers each have their own community group now and once a month they gather for a joint



グレースシティチャーチ東京
gracecitychurchtokyo

Rev. Makoto and Michiru Fukuda
makoto@gracecitychurch.jp
03-3863-1081 | 090-6598-5567

Geert and Eline de Boo
geert@gracecitychurch.jp
03-6794-1044 | 090-1300-0868

You can help by mobilizing prayer or contribute by sending a check to (all gifts are tax-deductible):

Redeemer Presbyterian Church
Tokyo Project Acct. #23617
1359 Broadway, FL4, New York,
NY 10018-7102