

*In a desert land he found him,  
in a barren and howling waste.  
He shielded him and cared for him;  
he guarded him as the apple of his eye,  
like an eagle that stirs up its nest  
and hovers over its young,  
that spreads its wings to catch them  
and carries them on its pinions.  
(Deuteronomy 32:10-11)*

We greet you from Tokyo, Japan, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, we want to thank you for your generous support and prayers for GraceCityChurchTokyo. Amidst the challenges of church planting in city center Tokyo, we experience God's love, His grace and forgiveness to be beyond what we can imagine. The name of our church, GraceCityChurchTokyo, reflects how in every aspect of our ministry to the city we are messengers of grace. There are times in which we fail to be effective messengers, because of hurdles from outside and from within us. Yet the Gospel makes us both humble and bold to share how we need Christ's grace every day. Over the past few months we have witnessed the grace of God at work in our church planting ministry.

**art at work** > Fall is in Japan the season especially celebrating art. Grace City Church's vision is to collaborate with artists to impact the city with the Gospel. Many Japanese Christians have been introduced to Jesus through paintings, literature, or movies. More than just by reason the Japanese heart longs to be moved by beauty and the unspoken. Well-known traditional Japanese painter Makoto Fujimura, movie scenario writer Yu Shibuya, and (former) urban designer Geert de Boo gave talks about 'art and the city (church)' at an art forum. Japanese traditional paper artist Kaori Honma shared about art connecting East and West. Both events were held in Ginza, a district within our focus area, known for its countless art galleries. Christmas provided another opportunity to use the (performing) arts to share the Gospel with this city. On December 23<sup>rd</sup> (Japanese people have that day off because of the Emperor's birthday) we held a Christmas concert and dinner in a fancy restaurant in Marunouchi, the international financial district. Roger and Abi Lowther performed with two other musician friends. The Gospel was shared in various ways and our 70 guests went home with more than delicious food to digest. Many of the guest wished



On December 23<sup>rd</sup> we held a Christmas concert and dinner in Marunouchi, the international financial district. The Gospel was shared through music, a short talk and community. The 70 guests went home with more than delicious food to digest.



Professional counselor Fumie Kamito skillfully combined insights into various stressors with practical stress relief exercises at the series of stress management seminars Grace City Church organized over the past few months. The seminars were especially attended by women. We are planning a new series with a different approach to appeal also to men.

they could hold on to the relaxed atmosphere. In the new year life was back to normal in bustling Tokyo with the never ceasing pressure and stress for many young professionals. As part of our faith & work ministry we served many of them with a series of stress management seminars. Professional counselor Fumie Kamito skillfully combined insights into various stress factors with practical stress relief exercises. Through the various events we seek to serve the city and have an increasing number of Tokyoites experience a warm community, introducing them to the Gospel of Grace. Several people came back on later occasions, searching for the source of that warmth that they had experienced. We were happy to see them again at our worship services or beginners Bible studies.

**help!** > Church planting in Tokyo is extremely strategic, but also very expensive. We are very grateful to see how God has provided the necessary funds to start this church planting project. Thank you for sharing generously for this ministry. Due to renting the necessary facilities for starting weekly worship services, we expect the costs to rise significantly this year. Therefore we are in need of your continuous financial support. We would like to ask you to prayerfully consider financially supporting this strategic church planting movement in Tokyo. Or please share about our needs with others who may have a burden for reaching Japan unreached millions.

### praise and prayer >

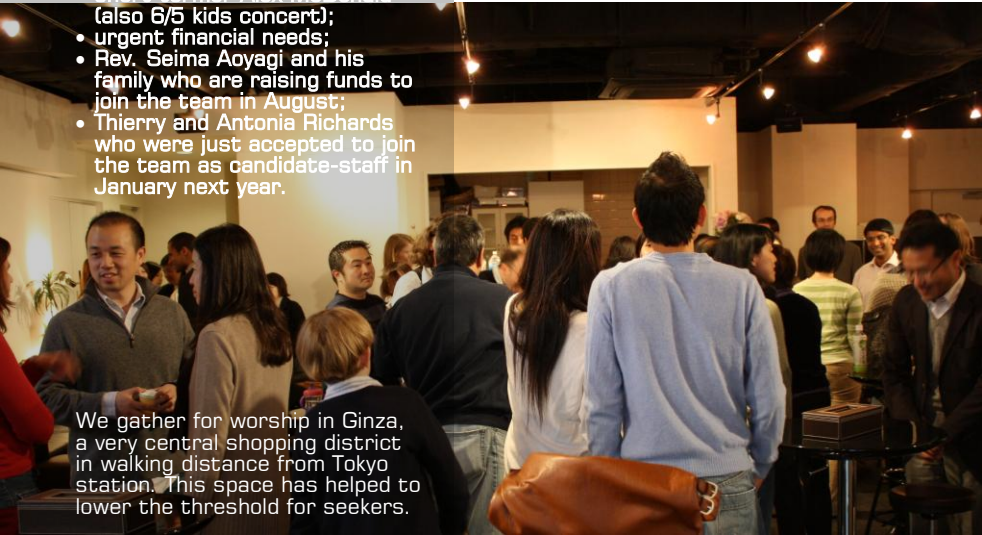
Please thank God with us for:

- a growing number of people attending the worship services and increasing evangelistic momentum also in community groups;


Please pray with us for:

- sufficient momentum to start weekly worship from May;
- many to attend the new series of CROSSROAD (plus) evangelistic Bible studies;
- for the upcoming events: 4/25 movie talk with scenario writer Yu Shibuya, 5/3-4, church retreat, 5/22 concert with Belhaven College team and short tenor Alex McDonald (also 6/5 kids concert);

- urgent financial needs;
- Rev. Seima Aoyagi and his family who are raising funds to join the team in August;
- Thierry and Antonia Richards who were just accepted to join the team as candidate-staff in January next year.



We gather for worship in Ginza, a very central shopping district in walking distance from Tokyo station. This space has helped to lower the threshold for seekers.



At Easter little Ko was (the very first baby of Grace City Church to be) baptized. It was a wonderful celebration of new life!

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

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

**contagious grace >** It has been well over a year now, since we started the process of networking, preparing, planning and organizing this church plant and GraceCity ChurchTokyo is a growing community. When we were asked to present our church during a workshop of the biannual conference of the Church Planting Institute in Japan, another missionary responded with a big compliment: "it is amazing what you accomplished in one year, you must have a big staff team!" After the first year having been only Rev. Makoto Fukuda and his wife Michiru and Dutch missionary family Geert and Eline de Boo,

training, a course that Rev. Fukuda and Geert teach. These people are being equipped to lead community groups from this Spring. We are also very pleased that a Japanese seminary student in his senior year, majoring in youth ministry, has joined us part-time. He helps us out with the growing groups of kids and teenagers. It is wonderful to see how more and more Christians get involved in the ministry of Grace City Church, but it is even better to witness more and more non-Christians showing interest in the Gospel and in the church. We know we are called to be their guides towards Jesus. Often at a crossroad in their lives they are meet the God of the Bible, who is not only their Creator, but also their Lord and Redeemer. At this point we ran several series of beginners Bible studies named CROSSROAD and will start two new series on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The initial contact is usually established through the introduction by one of the Launch Team members, at one of our outreach events or community group meetings. Recently we have been very much encouraged to see the community groups grow. Several non-Christians have started attending and in the next month new groups will start.

**new life >** We also witnessed grace in another area of growth. Natural church growth, through the birth of three new babies in our community, Ko and the de Boo twins Fleur and Lucile. All three were baptized at Easter. In Japan few people have a notion of Easter, so it felt extra special to have a big celebration, rejoicing in Christ's resurrection and God's covenant of Grace. It was wonderful of the 80 people attending the worship service 14 were non-believers of whom several visited a church for the very first time. They were very surprised by the warm and informal atmosphere, quite different from the image they had of a Christian church. We gradually see the number of people (including non-believers) increase that that visit the full worship service we held once a month for the past few months. The other Sundays we gather for what we call 'simple worship' which is used especially for teaching about the core values of the church.

**city to city >** Grace City Church is unique in Tokyo, yet shares its DNA with other global city center church (plant)s. Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York and its 'Redeemer City to City' church planting center is a wonderful partner. Recently another global city church came to serve the Kingdom work in Tokyo. Eleven young professionals from St. Helen's Church Bishopsgate in London (which also partners with Redeemer to start new churches in London) sacrificed their Easter holiday to introduce old and new contacts to Grace City. They engaged in making new friends at Starbucks, held Gospel Dialogue Suppers in collaboration with the community groups, and organized a business English seminar. Many new friendships were built and it looks like they will be back next year. To be continued!

If you would like to receive this Grace City Church Tokyo newsletter regularly, register by sending an e-mail to: [info@gracecitychurch.jp](mailto:info@gracecitychurch.jp).

God provided miraculously so American missionary family Roger and Abi Lowther could recently join the team. Both are professional musicians and will (until finishing language study part-time) support the team especially by taking responsibility for the music during worship services and concerts. We are also very thankful for the service of the members of the so-called Launch Team. They have become real 'bringers', introducing their friends and coworkers to the church. They start taking on responsibilities like organizing small scale events in order to reach out to their non-Christian friends. Tasks connected with the Sunday worship services have been delegated, too, resulting in Launch Team members helping setting up the equipment, serving on the worship team, or catering the refreshments. Five members are in leadership