

newsletter

de Boo family

Issue 22

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Japan



Dear friends,

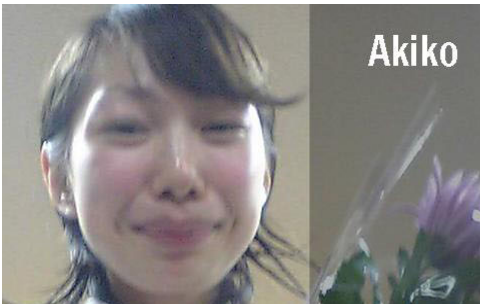
The Japanese are just about done spending their Christmas bonuses. The average bonus is good for \$7,000 and that gives many people headaches: what to spend this money on? What do we, as missionaries have to offer to these rich people? Sometimes we catch ourselves thinking that it would be easier if we had to offer bread or water wells to relieve their suffering. But their needs are deeper: these people try to make themselves believe that money can fill up the hole of loneliness they are experiencing. Commerce happily uses this illusion and exploits it by offering very expensive robot dogs or cats as buddies. Another trend is Buddhists priests jumping into this lucrative market and offering all-inclusive retreats at temples.

Every day we offer the seeking young professionals a listening ear, sometimes a

home cooked meal, and especially the Bread of Life. Let us introduce to you somebody regularly sitting at our table. Yukie came to a dinner meeting we had organized and she brought two friends with her. She wanted these women to experience the warmth she feels when she attends the meetings. That night Yukie was quiet as always. Like Martha she helped Eline in the kitchen cutting vegetables, but she sat down and listened like Maria when Geert told his message about the Good Shepherd. On Sunday she came to church and was clinging on to us. That night of the dinner meeting she had experienced God's love in an indescribable way. As sober Dutch people we were blown away, but most of all touched by how God had touched the woman's heart and He had shown her some of the height and depth of His love. Yukie explained that her eyes had been opened for the wonder of the gospel

that God's love does not depend upon her actions, but that it is based on grace. Just like the Shepherd who lays down his own life for the sheep – because He is good. Through Yukie's testimony God confirmed our calling once more: 'The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it' (1 Thess. 5:24). Just before home assignment, with a heart filled with gratitude, we look back at who else sat down at our table these last two years. It was an ever changing, multi-colored group of people, and we would like to introduce just a couple of our new friends to you. It will be just a selection, but we hope that these nine people whom God placed on our path, will give you an impression of our evangelism and equipping ministry here in Tokyo.

Praying with you for the advancement of the Kingdom in Japan,
Geert, Eline, Thom, Berend and Julie de Boo



Akiko

Akiko was taken along to church by her boss, Ms. Todo, who had just received baptism herself in our church. But she was thrown into the deep end almost immediately because her boss was transferred to another part of the country. She wanted to continue coming to church and asked her classmate from university, Masaya, who seemed to be interested in Christianity, too, to go with her. They had studied Japanese literature together and had stumbled upon work of a Christian author, Ayako Miura. They were fascinated and researched her work. Akiko started studying the Bible and we were privileged to walk the path towards faith with her for 2 years. The path was not smooth, Akiko fell down but got back on her feet. Eline with Julie and an open Bible on her lap in a coffee shop in the heart of a business district in Tokyo while Akiko ate her breakfast. She got overworked, but remained faithful in her search for God. By herself, because after her soul mate Masaya proposed to her, she got upset and demanded his departure. Akiko was baptized in December. She is no longer alone, but together with God and her new brothers and sisters she continues her walk with God.



Masaya

Masaya's heart was broken. And looking back, we have to be honest and admit that the church chose vulnerable Akiko's side. Masaya, the deep thinker who walked thousands of kilometers from east to west, north to south all through Japan, did not feel welcome anymore. The pastor put the situation on our plate. We tried to connect Masaya to another congregation, but he was too disappointed in the church. These days Geert does Bible study with Masaya and listens to his philosophical thoughts on life. Masaya still has an open attitude towards God, but the world is pulling hard. He works as an editor for an advertisement agency and has to sell lies regularly. Long working hours do not grant him a lot of time to reflect on his very day life deeply, something he needs so badly. He admits that the money makes up for some things, but he feels an important thing is missing. He continues to seek God's help. Come with your Holy Spirit, Lord! Maybe we will be able to offer him a new church home in the church we hope to plant after home assignment?



Junko

Zumpi (her real name is Junko, but that is such a common name that she thinks it doesn't suit her) is for Japanese standards an unusually extravert young lady who works as a consultant for a multinational in central Tokyo. We remember her from our time in Sapporo, when she attended our English Bible study for university students. She came to faith and after graduation she followed us to the church in Tokyo. Zumpi is the leader of the growing group of students and young professionals in the church. She turned out to be a true evangelist and Eline started with her a small group for young business women downtown. Zumpi is a loyal helper in our ministry and she promotes our evangelism activities amongst Christians and non-believing friends and coworkers. For Zumpi we are transmitters of the Good News, Bible teachers and listening ears when not everybody appreciates her enthusiasm for the Lord. At home nobody understands her, and she likes to blow of steam about her frustration about the non-responsiveness of her family with us.



From the west men will
fear the name of the Lord,
and from the rising of the sun,
they will revere his glory.
[Isaiah 59:19]

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Daigo

Daigo works as an accountant for Mitsubishi Corporation. He is the prototype professional: highly educated, hands out business cards all the time, smooth hair and a nice suit. But in one respect he is completely different from his colleagues and that had far stretching consequences: he is a Christian! He was born and raised in a Christian home, married to a Christian piano teacher and after many years of hoping and praying they are expecting their first baby now. Daigo's job never became an idol to him. He got off for a promising career, but by now his bosses found out Daigo is not their average employee. He serves another Master above all. Instead of drinking with his superiors, he goes home at night to cook for his wife who struggles with her health and energy level now that she is pregnant. According to the normal career track, he was supposed to have been promoted years ago. He continues to serve his company faithfully and attend our English classes to improve his chances for promotion. We are grateful to see his appreciation of our time together. It is our prayer that we will not only equip him to excel in his job, but also to be a torch carrier of the Gospel within his company.



Naoki

Naoki, not yet 25 years old, has found two treasures in life! One is faith in our God when he was still a teenager. The other treasure is almost literally a pot of gold when he developed software for search engines on the internet. This is being used all over the world and that provides him with lots of money. This all sounds like Naoki really has a good life going, spiritually as well as materially. But that would be a misconception. The church he got into as a young believer had cult-like traits and he was presented with a distorted image of God. Naoki got hurt in the process. To combat his loneliness he goes for drives in his fancy BMW, he sleeps during the day because he chooses to work at night for a software company. It is not so easy to communicate with him and he did not find a new church home until he was introduced to us a couple of months ago. Now he attends our meetings and meets, besides many new friends, God as a loving father. He remains vulnerable, but we pray to God will continue to give him courage and strength.



Arata

Arata graduated from Tokyo's most prestigious art school and his childhood dream became true when Yamaha asked him to come work for them and design motorbikes. His trendy appearance would not lead you to think so, but Arata is a Sunday school teacher and hopes that he will have a family of his own to raise in a Christian way some day. Since his high school days there is this girl, her name is Nakagawa, seriously interested in him. She even followed him from their home town to Tokyo. She wants to share her life with him and for that reason decided to continue to pursue her career as a successful business woman in Tokyo. Even though Arata has great sympathy for this attractive lady, he does not want to marry her (yet). He only wants a Christian girl as his bride and this description does not fit Nakagawa. She came to understand that this is an important condition for him and comes with him to church faithfully. She cannot discuss this issue with her parents, since her father is a Buddhist priest. We pray that we can teach her more about Christianity and that she'll learn to understand Arata's dream better by observing our family and Arata's interaction with the children.



Yuko

Yuko's formal looks (her impeccable skirts, jackets and hairdo) immediately tell you she is a professional. She is lady with strict self-discipline who works hard to get ahead in her organization, the Department of Agriculture. Last year came the day that would change her life forever. Her father died at the workplace due to negligence of a coworker. Terrified of legal repercussions and eternal shame the coworker asked for forgiveness. Yuko, her mother and handicapped brother felt great anger, and the longing for revenge. But this broken, Christian family, granted, completely opposite to Japanese custom, forgiveness. Yuko shared that this did not come from her own heart, but from God. Because she had been forgiven herself through Jesus' blood. This experience deepened her faith and she shared her testimony during a lunch meeting for business women. Yuko uses the evangelistic outreach events we offer to the fullest and continuously brings friends and coworkers to hear the gospel. She is worried that people she meets think she is cold. That might be the first impression, but whoever takes a little bit of time, can feel Christ's love radiating through Yuko.



Miho

Miho is a nurse and met Dutchman Marco on a trip to Australia. They stayed in touch and traveled to meet as often as they could. Marco was raised in the community of the church and wanted his Japanese girlfriend to get to know the God of the Bible, too. Marco searched the internet and found our website www.geloveninjanen.nl. He e-mailed us and asked to introduce Miho to a church. That is how we met her in Tokyo. She is an open, friendly young woman and she committed to coming to church and participating in the evangelistic events we organize. Miho's family practices Shinto and soon she discovered that her family's religion is opposite to Christianity. Together we have found a way through all the issues and God granted Miho faith. In the Summer of 2007 Miho and Marco got engaged and Miho went to baptism classes. Her first 'yes' was heard December 9 when she was baptized. On Valentines day she will say 'yes' again, this time to Marco at their wedding in the Netherlands. Only to have arrived a couple of hours earlier (!) we will translate the ceremony into Japanese for Miho's family. We pray that we may be good interpreters of the Gospel to them.



Ichiro

Ichiro is a man of science and he appears to be an absent-minded professor. His expertise is in sociology and with a panel of researchers he informs the government on volunteering. This phenomena is much more developed in Europe than in Japan and in his research he discovered that this has something to do with Christianity. Hungry for more professional knowledge he came to us, expecting dry facts about Christianity, but we had something else in store. Not a lecture on Christian culture, but the Gospel! His university is on the far outskirts of Tokyo and a roundtrip to our meetings takes him 4 hours. But God is at work in him and Ichiro admits that his motivation to study the Bible with us changed. He puts his scholarly attitude aside and tells, like a child, that he wants to learn how to follow Jesus.



Geert and Eline de Boo were commissioned in 2003 as church planters to Japan with OMF International (former China Inland Mission) in partnership with the Reformed Mission League of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (GZB). They finished full time language and culture studies and have supported church plantings teams northern Japan. In 2006 they started new outreach to young urban professionals in central Tokyo. www.omf.org | www.jp.omf.org

home assignment

During our upcoming home assignment (February 13 – June 13) we plan to be in the US from beginning of May thru early June. We would love to meet you all to catch up and share about how God has been at work in central Tokyo. We will inform you later about the exact dates and places in our next newsletter and on our website.

home side support team

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