

June 2020

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Coronavirus Times – January – May 2020

January

2020 began with fun, hard work and celebration! Taking part in the Tokyo Underground Mysteries (a sort of treasure hunt using Tokyo's train network) with friends, was a blast! This was followed by Pete facilitating OMF Japan's two-week Pre-Home Assignment Workshop, for missionaries due to go on home assignment. Even then some attendees were being directly impacted by coronavirus, bringing forward Home Assignment dates, changing locations etc. Then, at the end of January, Aaron and Mayuko, with whom we did marriage preparation, got married.



The coronavirus situation became real to us as we contemplated the risks in attending the Footstool Retreat in South Korea at the end of January. However, the situation didn't seem severe enough to cancel at that time, and we're really glad we went! This retreat had lively communal worship times, friendly people, pampering, huge bedrooms and some lovely snacks - though we were less keen on the Korean food served in the dining room ... Even more amazingly, this retreat was completely paid for by South Korean churches! What tremendous vision and blessing.

'Waymaker' by Leeland (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0), became the unofficial conference theme song containing these poignant words; '...Even when I don't see it You're working, even when I don't feel it You're working...' Many at the retreat were already being directly impacted by coronavirus, unable to return home or do their work. These words kept us firm to the promise that God was still working.

February

February saw the arrival of the *Diamond Princess* in Yokohama, the infection of 712 guests and some level of coronavirus spread in greater Tokyo. However, despite increasing our guard, we were still



able to visit a Tokyo immersive art installation, which is, bar none, the coolest thing we've ever done! We are so glad we got to do this, before everything closed down!



On the work-side of things, Janet was able to share the results of her dissertation with about 50 missionaries on the subject of 'Staying Well'. (Had this event been just one week later, it would probably have been cancelled - what a relief! She is now attempting to transform this seminar, combined with the dissertation in to book form.

March

Coronavirus spread across greater Tokyo in March. Most schools closed from 2nd March, and re-start on 1st June. Janet and others debated whether to hold and attend the annual ladies retreat in early March, eventually deciding to go ahead. It was a fantastic time of fellowship, teaching and singing, with Janet acting as MC at one evening event. Once again, an unofficial theme song arose 'The Goodness of God' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-f4MUUMWMV4>) with the chorus, 'All my life you have been faithful; all my life you have been so, so good; with every breath that I am able, I will sing of the goodness of God.' Our speaker quoted Tozer; 'Anything God has ever done he can do now. Anything God has ever done anywhere, he can do here. Anything God has ever done for anyone, he can do for me.' Wow! March also saw us try out the 'black & white' café and visit one of Tokyo's beautiful parks for the last time in a long while... We were also able to help one missionary in her home and provide childcare, before attending church for the last time in person on 22nd March. Sadly, but inevitably, the March OMF Japan Field Conference was postponed until September (God willing), but was replaced by an online Team Day.



April & May



Japan's State of Emergency (Japan's version of lockdown) began on 7th April, so Easter saw us cancel a trip to visit our former neighbours on the island of Shikoku, and begin working and worshipping from home. Although we exercise outside every day, we have struggled without seeing friends and being able to explore. However, Janet used a devotional guide designed for isolation, and one of the themes was

gratitude. Author, Tanya Lyons, said; 'Gratitude notices sparkles in the rubble and streaks of colour in the storm clouds.' We have tried to remember this, but it hasn't been easy. So far, we have lost three UK friends to coronavirus and more remain unwell. On the plus side, we have enjoyed participating in our UK churches' online services, and Janet has been learning crochet for the first time (along with making facemasks)! Workwise, we've been extremely busy dealing with many new missionary candidates, designing and conducting transition interviews for missionaries leaving OMF Japan, facilitating online training (& learning how to do that!) and leading worship on Zoom for Tokyo Multicultural Church. Japan's nationwide State of Emergency was lifted on 25th May, but many precautions and restrictions remain in place. We had planned a trip to another part of Japan to see OMF missionaries in June as part of our work, but really don't know what to do about that... Our church begins face-to-face services again on 14th June with precautions, but that means train travel, so is that a good idea? Coming out of the State of Emergency is hard; the risk remains – albeit lowered - so how should we be rightly cautious, while going on with our life without fear?

Prayer Points

- 1 **Health** – Please continue to pray for good health and sleep for both of us.
- 2 **Training & Development (Peter)** – Please pray as Pete plans training events later in 2020, God willing.
- 3 **Pastoral & Spiritual Care (Janet)** – Janet is part of a small group which is considering how to manage the 'recovery' phase of this pandemic within OMF Japan. Please pray for wisdom and recovery for all.
- 4 **Candidate Coordinator (Janet)** – Currently about 21 candidate units want to come to Japan before the end of 2020! Pray for God's peace, provision, and timing for each one, especially in light of coronavirus.
- 5 **Staying Well (Book)** – Pray for Janet as she edits her dissertation and seminar notes into this book.
- 6 **Family matters** - Our families are safe, but please pray for God's direction in regard to our already-booked visit to Australia to see Janet's brother and family in August...
- 7 **Home Assignment** – We hope to come to the UK in December 2020, but please pray for wisdom in regard to the timing, during this pandemic, and for God's provision of a house and a car.

Thank you for your faithful prayers. We appreciate you all so much!

Love, Janet & Peter xx