

Youth In ACTION!

Attachment to the CJM Reporter - Spring 2015

Vancouver Japanese Gospel Church

By: Chris Collins (Staff)

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Over the last four years that I have spent with the youth at Vancouver Japanese Gospel Church, I have increasingly realized the depth of the privilege I have just to be a part of their lives as an older brother and as a friend. Although we call them “youth” in contemporary Christian ministry, they are really young men and young women and I have come to have an enormous respect for each of them.

We have had some really fantastic experiences together over this past winter and early 2015. In October, we helped celebrate the kids' Autumn Party. In November, we rented a local school gymnasium to play basketball together. In December, we performed another original skit at Christmas (they are really creative geniuses) and joined a church laser tag party and movie night sleepover with high school students visiting from Japan. One of these high school students, Takumi, even went on to get baptized at our church in February!

Additionally, we started a regular mid-week youth group in March that we are calling “the Way”. My vision for this youth group is that it would function as a sort of gateway through

which our youth can invite their friends into the church while having fun, encouraging one another, and looking at the relevance of God's Word and the transforming power of the Gospel for the lives of young people living in Vancouver today. At the same time, I intend to release monthly newsletters for parents to keep them updated about “the Way”, but also to encourage them in the awesome mission that God has given to them to raise up godly men and women in the next generation.

Finally, to my fellow youth workers across the CJM, thank you for your sincere love and devotion to young people. Remember, we are not their fathers or mothers (or Saviour). Our burden is not to replace parents, but to support families. God will definitely bless us in that endeavour!



High School Students Visiting from Japan!



Another Original Christmas Skit (2014)!



Helping with the Kids' Autumn Party

Crossover Japanese Church of Calgary

Testimony of Mana Taniguchi

I would like to share my two blessings that I received from 2014 Equipper Conference in LA. I was about 6 years old when I found out that I am completely deaf in my right ear. By the time I turned 8, I struggled with constant headaches and earaches. None of the doctors were able to find out what was wrong with me. Even though the doctors have all given up on me, I knew that God would never do the same so I kept praying. I prayed, and prayed and eventually, I gave up on Him. I had to go through so much pain for years and yet, I could not understand why God has not responded to my prayers at all.

Though I was raised in a Christian family and was surrounded by other Christians and churches, it was not until last winter that I finally realized how long I have been away from God. Even at churches, I pretended to be a 'good Christian' and just followed through the motion of doing what Christians were 'supposed to do'. On the fifth day of the conference, the last sermon was given by Pastor Tateyama. The title of his message still continues to echo in my head today: "Don't Give Up!" (Luke 9:23). When I heard the message, I felt God's presence all over again. I began to believe in Him once again but I decided to keep praying but a little differently this time. I will not ask Him to heal me, but instead, I will pray to thank Him because I KNOW that He WILL heal me in the future.

Another thing that was a big blessing for me was that I was able to finally open up the door of my heart to God. It was during a plenary session for women. The theme of was: "Bringing back our faces without make-up" When one of the scriptures from the bible was read out loud, my heart stopped. It was Psalm 139:23-24. Along with the stress and anxiety I have with school, my headaches and earaches that never wanted to leave me, and the amount of hurt and pressure that came from being a pastor's daughter, I began to hate myself. I often blamed God and I hated myself even more for that, and even though I knew God is all-knowing and all-loving, I could not let go of the thought of Him hating me. So when I heard the scripture, the first thing that came to my mind was,

"Please, Lord please don't come into my heart. I don't want you to know me. I don't want you to hate me". I tried dismissing what I have just heard but for some reason, the lady kept reading the verse over and over again until I could no longer ignore it. The Bible verses have always been just words to me. But this time was different because I felt the words really sink in and that is when I realized that I've been pushing Him away from me for ten years and all of a sudden, I felt the burden and the anguish being replaced with hope and a strong sense of security.

I wrote down my inner thoughts, regrets, and the stuff I had sealed within myself on a piece of water-soluble paper that was provided for us during the session. Afterwards, we put the paper in a bucket filled with water and watched the paper slowly melt. The purpose of this was to get all of the dirty stuff out of us and cleanse ourselves. This way, we were able to bring back our 'natural beauty'. As I watched my paper, I prayed to God for forgiveness. Once I got back to Calgary, I ended my relationship with my non-Christian boyfriend in order to have a closer relationship with God. This was an extremely difficult decision for me for we still had feelings for each other. But with a lot of support from my ec14 friends and my family, and most of all, God, I was able to accept it and move on. To close this, I would like to once again thank God for rescuing me from my separation from Him.



2014 JCFW's Equipper Conference in Murrieta, California!



Fellowship with friends at the Conference!



Team Canada at the Equipper Conference!



TESTIMONY BY RIHO FURUI

I came to Toronto last April 2014 with a working holiday visa. This is when I got connected to JGCT. Then, last December 2014, I had the opportunity to go to California to attend the Equipper Conference—a camp/conference generally for Japanese speaking people to be equipped when going back to Japan.

Although I have been going to church since I was 11 years old, I did not know God. However, I came in contact with God's love many times because I participated in singing Gospel music. There were times when I even cried but I never had the courage to say "I want to follow You."

Before going to EC, I prayed and asked God to please help me so that I can make a confession of faith.

When I arrived at EC, I attended the "Seekers" (non-Christian) workshop. At the workshop, I discussed with a lady from Vancouver and I said to her, "I want to believe in God, but in my heart I think maybe God doesn't actually exist and maybe I got myself into a cult". She responded by saying, "if you want to give up on being a Christian, go ahead and give up, but God will never let go of you." This was when I felt the depth of God's love from the bottom of my heart. Surprisingly after that, another one of my friends who was praying for me the day before suddenly came up to me said "I was praying and God gave me these words.



God will never let go of you".

I could not think that this was just a coincidence. I thought God must have really wanted to communicate this to me. I feel like God was telling me, "I was just waiting for you to show a little courage. I will never leave you. Let's walk together from now forever." I want to walk together with God who is overflowing with love for the rest of my life.

Lethbridge Japanese Christian Fellowship



Nana Ueno
(Youth leader)

My people perish for lack of knowledge... (Hosea 4:6).

I felt God had saved me again. This time, from going down a road that could have led to destruction. At the time, it seemed more real than the faith I grew up on. It was only God's nick-of-time intervention that stopped me cold from proceeding any further and I look back and think how too easily I was swayed in

another direction. It was then that an insatiable thirst for truth began, and my eyes opening to the fact that we as believers cannot keep feeding on spiritual milk and must become mature for the meat. I had discovered Christian apologetics. It's not a seminary word that runs around among only the academic intellectuals. Apologia (Greek) simply means to give a defence of the faith as in 1 Peter 3:15. Questions and issues are being presented in and outside the church which are too often not being dealt with. When answers are not given, it is usually misdirected sources that answers them.

The Christian faith is fast becoming a struggle even within believers, mixing up with other world views and slowly becoming diluted. As well, our lives are hit with unexpected trials and hardships that can easily shake or break our very core. It is with this in mind that I felt we needed to equip the youth in church, helping to answer questions and also training them to be stronger in what we believe. Ki Sunday School and youth ministry began to be structured on a very simplified, grade school version of apologetics – bible basics and why it stands alone as inspired from the one true God, while prepping the foundation for laying the Gospel message. Real good news is just news if there's no bad news first,

right? Apologetics immensely has and still is strengthening my own faith. Too often in today's young generation, tons of energy is spent on fleeting and fading things while the real food the soul needs is being watered down, twisted or swept to the side. The modern landscape is unrelenting and unforgiving in distracting or destroying young people. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Matt 24:35, also Isaiah 40:8 & 1 Pet. 1:24,25) Each time in Sunday school, the students are being immersed with scripture and presented with real world backup. It's all that we're doing and can only do right now. I pray that these guys are guided to be "in the world but not of the world!"

2014 was a year riddled with storms and battles, and the church was stretched and challenged in ways I never would've imagined. Although it would seem at times, like it was hard even to comprehend reality or go on, I realized with more glaring clarity that being grounded in the whole Word was the only real light of hope and that the Gospel message is urgent. In the midst of these trials, we have to stand and cling even more desperately to the unshakable rock of Christ, training and teaching the youth that Jesus is the only real bomb shelter & fortress that protects and guides and strengthens us.

While the world around us moves with unexpected violent force, the Lord is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.



Chilling after
Sunday School Class

Gracepoint Fellowship - Youth and Young Adults

English department of the Calgary Japanese Gospel Church

Greetings from the Gracepoint Youth and Young Adults group! Our Fall and Winter ministry at GPF continued on with our weekly youth and young adults bible study. Our study focus this year has been based on Francis Chan's book, "Making Disciples". The studies have been focused on what it means to be a disciple ourselves, our call to be disciple makers, the call of the church family in our lives, how to study the Bible and going through a survey of the Old and New Testament. It has been exciting for me to see three of our youth, Will H, Brandon O and Jared H take on leadership roles in our weekly bible study. Seeing them study the material and lead discussions in their small groups every week is absolutely awesome!

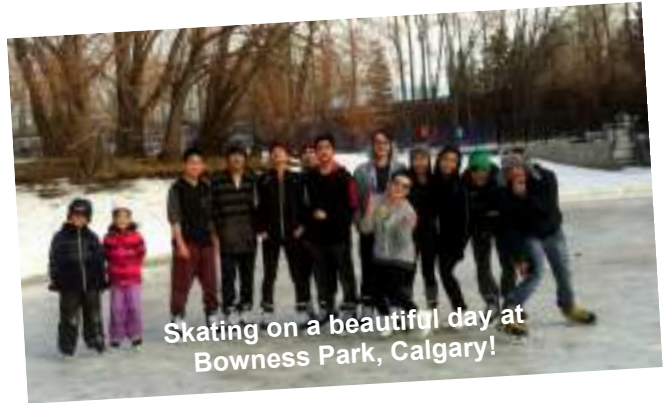
It is great to see our youth and young adults living out their Christian faith. I am encouraged to see them reading their bibles, praying together and learning together. We've also had a lot fun this ministry year with different activities, going bowling, having our year-end Christmas party, and going skating, all with great food of course! We're looking forward to participating once again in World Visions 30Hr Famine on April 24 to 25 too! We'll be spending the night at the church, having fun, fellowshipping and fasting together! This was one of the highlights last year and I'm sure we'll have a great time again this year! God has blessed this ministry and I look forward to what God has in store for us for the rest of 2015. For those attending CJM Sunnyside Family Camp (August 2~8, 2015), looking forward to seeing you all there!



Rob Hasegawa
GPF Youth and Young Adult Leader



GPF Youth & Young Adults
2014 Christmas Potluck Party!



Skating on a beautiful day at
Bowness Park, Calgary!

God's Perfect Timing!

By Ornella Francis, Detroit JCF Church



Hello Youth Leaders. Thank you for your contributions to this newsletter. It's so good to hear what is going on in your neck of the woods. We aim to put out the CJM Reporter with the Youth In Action attachment twice a year; our next publication will be in Fall 2015. Looking forward to your article then! Thank you! YIA Editor