JCFN Director Letter

July & August 2026

Hallelujah! I hope this letter finds you well. Both North America and Japan have been affected by floods, typhoons, wildfires, and extreme heat. I pray that you and your loved ones are staying safe. The world continues to face many troubling events, and our hearts are often burdened by the news. Yet it is especially in times like these that we are reminded that the Lord is with us, sustaining us with His comfort and strength. May we continue to hold firmly to the hope we have in Christ. This month, I, Setsu Shimizu, would like to share our ministry update with you.

◎ JCFN's New Fiscal Year: Personnel Update ◎

JCFN's new fiscal year begins in July. Currently, two candidates for JCFN staff positions, **Yu Hoshino** and **Akari Hirase**, are receiving training through Samurai Projects while engaging in deputation to raise prayer and financial support. Please pray that they will be able to officially join the JCFN staff during this fiscal year.

At the end of June, **Yuka Onoe** concluded her service as an associate staff member. We are deeply grateful for the dedication she has shown in providing member care and building ministry networks. We are also thankful that **Sayaka Nakakuki** has joined us as an associate staff member serving the Kansai region. Asuka and her husband have faithfully led ANRK, a gathering for Japanese returnees in the Kansai area, for many years. Beginning this year, she will become more directly involved in JCFN's ministry as an associate staff member.

In addition, **Kaori Redington,** who has been serving in North America as an associate staff member responsible for leadership development, will now begin serving toward a full JCFN staff position. For the time being, she will engage in deputation as a staff candidate. Drawing on her ten years of experience serving with InterVarsity in the United States, she plans to be based in Kochi Prefecture and serve as a JCFN staff member in Japan, focusing primarily on networking and follow-up ministry. We sincerely ask for your prayers and support for each of these staff members and candidates.

◎ Annual Board Meeting Report ◎

From June 9–11 (June 10–12 in the U.K. and Japan), JCFN held its annual Board of Directors meeting online. Despite the challenges of multiple time zones, we spent three meaningful days discussing the future direction of our ministry, personnel matters, and the overall vision and structure of JCFN as we seek to respond faithfully to a changing ministry landscape. We would like to share a few updates. In Japan, we are moving forward with establishing JCFN as a nonprofit general incorporated association. In North America, in an effort to reduce operating expenses, we plan to vacate our current office at the end of September and are exploring more cost-effective office-sharing options.

With several personnel changes taking place, the Board has also committed to providing leadership development for our staff and associate staff throughout the coming year. One of the most significant discussions centered on the changing needs of those we serve. Over the past several years, JCFN has been prayerfully reviewing and refining its ministry in response to these changes. As we continue to seek the Lord's guidance, the Board is excited to see how He will lead JCFN into the future. Although financial challenges are an ongoing reality, we are deeply grateful that the Lord has faithfully provided for every need. As our staff team grows, we anticipate that the scope of our ministry will continue to expand. We trust that God will continue to provide all that is needed and use JCFN powerfully in the follow-up of returnees, in ministry throughout Japan, and in outreach to Japanese people living around the world.

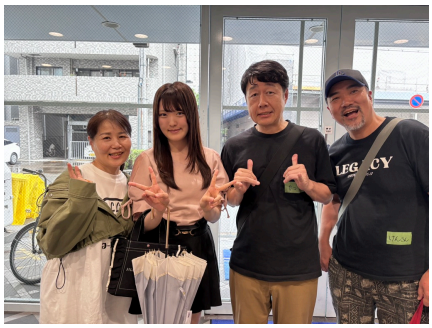
Thank you for standing with us in prayer as we move forward together.

◎ A Blessed Time at ANRK (Kansai Returnee Fellowship) ◎

On June 20, ANRK (the Kansai Returnee Fellowship) gathered at J-House. It was a joy for me (Setsu) to attend ANRK again after some time away. Returnees who had been back in Japan for only a few months, as well as others who had returned several years ago or even longer, came together for fellowship. Through God's Word, we were reminded of the privilege and blessing of trusting the Lord who is always with us, regardless of our circumstances. Our small-group discussions that followed were also a great encouragement to everyone.

After the meeting, nearly all of us walked to a nearby Indian restaurant, where we enjoyed lunch together in what felt like our own private gathering. It was a wonderful opportunity to continue building relationships. Some of those who attended are still looking for a church home. Seeing returnees encouraged through gatherings like ANRK, developing

new friendships, and being connected with local churches reminded me once again of how important these regional fellowships are.



This photo is especially meaningful to me. Many of you faithfully pray for "Friday," our student outreach ministry on the U.S. West Coast. The two men on the right side of the photo are among those who started Friday 33 years ago. The second person from the right is Pastor Iida of J-House, and the man on the far right is Kuroda—my younger brother—who serves in ministry while working as a counselor in Los Angeles. The woman on the far left is the very first person who came to faith in Christ through Friday. She is now Pastor Iida's wife, and together they faithfully serve and support the ministry of J-House. Standing next to her is R, the most recent person to come to faith through Friday. She returned to Japan less than two months ago. It was deeply moving to witness, at ANRK, the fruit of the Lord's work through Friday over the past 33 years. Seeing the first person who came to Christ through this ministry standing alongside one of the newest believers was a beautiful reminder of God's enduring faithfulness. Please pray that R will continue to grow in her walk with Jesus and that the Lord will lead her to a healthy local church very soon.

◎ Attending the ISI National Conference ◎

From June 21–24, I (Setsu) attended the ISI (International Students, Inc.) National Conference in Japan as a seminar presenter. This conference is held every three years and brings together those involved in international student ministry. The greatest encouragement was seeing the participants' passion for the gospel and their genuine love for people. I personally, and JCFN as a ministry, received much encouragement and many prayers. It was also a joy to reconnect with longtime friends who have supported JCFN since its early years, as well as others connected through EC. Their presence reminded me of how God has faithfully expanded the network surrounding JCFN's returnee ministry.

Another highlight was learning how international student ministry is growing in Japan. Today, Japan is home to more than **460,000 international students** and over **4.12 million foreign residents**, many of whom come from countries where openly sharing the gospel is difficult. When people encounter Christ while living abroad and later return home, they are sent back as ambassadors for Christ. This is why JCFN is committed to following up with returnees, equipping them to share Christ in their families, communities, and wherever God leads them. If you have a heart for international student ministry or cross-cultural outreach in Japan, we would love to hear from you.

✿ Please pray for JCFN✿

◎ The WIT Leadership Camp was held from July 8–11, and we received many blessings from the Lord. We plan to share testimonies from the camp in our September newsletter and on the JCFN blog. Thank you for your prayers.

◎ Please pray for God's blessing upon regional gatherings and small-group ministries throughout Japan. Pray that returnees will be encouraged and connected with local churches and Christian communities.

◎ Please pray for Yu Hoshino and Akari Hirase, our prospective staff members who are currently raising support through deputation. Pray that God will bless their studies and visits, protect them spiritually, expand their ministry networks, and provide for all their needs.

◎ Please pray for peace and justice throughout the world. Pray for the protection of those affected by the conflicts involving Iran, Israel and Gaza, and Ukraine, and for an end to the violence. Please also pray that the leaders of each nation will follow God's will and act with justice and peace as their priorities.

Contacts: Japanese Christian Fellowship Network www.jcfn.org
North America Office: P.O. Box 17982, Irvine, CA 92623-7982 USA ushq@jcfn.org tel 657-247-0233
Japan Office: OCC Bldg, 2-1 Kanda Surugadai, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0062 nihon@jcfn.org tel/fax:03-5217-2505

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(Bank Account) Mizuho Bank Kudanshita Branch Store No: 352 Account No: 1161342
Account Name: JCFN Nihon Daihyo Ryuichi Yamazaki