



# JCFN Japan & North America

## Directors Letter July 2020

### ✿JCFN Japan Ministry Report✿ (Chihiro Okada, Japan Director)

We are praying for God, who is always in control, to continue to guide us as the Corona pandemic continues to spread in Japan, especially in the Tokyo metropolitan area.

### ◎BBWIT20 online

BBWIT20 (Bridge Builders' Whatever It Takes) Leadership Camp, which had been in the planning since February, took place online from July 23-24 through zoom. However, due to the Corona pandemic, the initial plan to hold a 3-day camp during the holidays in May was pushed back to July. In early June, we finalized the plan to hold the camp online and shorten it to a 2-day program. There were seven people in the planning committee, including staff. Although we had to make some big adjustments throughout the planning process, we were able to always communicate well with each other and remain united in preparing for the camp.

There were 23 participants, including the planning committee members, that took part in the 2-day online BBWIT. We created a Facebook group so that people could start getting to know each other beforehand. The games and team building activities we did online created great enthusiasm. It was a pleasant surprise to see how online platforms can serve as effective tools for those purposes.



The theme of the training camp was “Knit Together in His Love” based on Ephesians 4:16. We focused on two main areas for training, which were networking and self-care. Due to the online format, we had participants attending from various locations. We created time for the leaders to reflect

on what they are learning and share about how well they are taking care of themselves. The training ended by hearing a message on having an eternal perspective, leaving everyone with the hopes of seeing more people praising and worshipping God in Japanese, and recommitted to serving Him with each other.

Of course, there are constraints to having to do everything online. However, we also experienced many blessings from doing an online camp. We pray that the participants will continue to stay in touch with each other as they continue to serve Him wherever they are.

Here is a testimony from a participant. “I thank the Lord for bringing us together from different corners during this time of the Corona pandemic. The Lord showed His love to me and encouraged me in many ways. One thing that God impressed on my heart deeply was that He uses other people to reveal His plan and glory. I realized that having to stay at home more these days had affected my faith to become more self-serving. I had never experienced the words from Ephesians 4:16 speak so much life into me. God has given me a sincere desire to become part of bringing forth His plan, being rooted in the Lord and in community with my brothers and sisters, and being joined together for His Kingdom. After the camp, I hope to remember what I learned in small group and the sessions and continue to support each other through prayer.

### ◎Summer Special Fundraiser

We are currently holding a Summer Special Fundraiser until August 31st. We are praying that the Lord will provide us with 1,000,000 yen to cover scholarships for GRC21, to assist our staff candidates, and cover staff compensation and other operational needs. We would appreciate it if you could consider giving during this time.

### ✿Please pray for JCFN Japan ✿

- ◎Please pray for those who attended BBWIT20, that they will stay encouraged in their faith and ministry.
- ◎Please pray for the financial needs to be met through the Summer Special Fundraiser.

## ✿JCFN North America Ministry Report ✿ (Setsu Shimizu, North America Director)

The Corona pandemic has led to uncertainties and confusions in many areas of people's lives. The Trump administration recently revoked the order to deny the issuing of visas to highschool and college students who were enrolled in institutions that only offered online classes. This is a big relief for international students who were very concerned about their visa status and the possibility to enter the US. Nonetheless, the situation is still very unstable for those who hold visas in the US.

The decision by many colleges and universities to offer online classes for the fall has led to many international students returning to their home country, either to continue their education from home, or to take a leave of absence. Many exchange and study abroad programs are being postponed too. On top of all this, international student ministries and campus ministries are no longer able to carry on their work as before.

JCFN is no exception in this, being faced with the need to reevaluate how to reach out to students on campuses. We are feeling the challenges of switching our ongoing ministries to the online format, but have also clearly seen God richly bless the online conferences we have done, such as CC20 and WIT20.

We are currently praying and exploring ways to connect with new people. As the start of the fall semester closes in, we are networking with campus ministry organizations to exchange information and ideas on how to reach out to international students. There are also expats and people who have recently arrived to the US that we want to continue to reach out to. We are praying fervently for wisdom in adapting to the "new norm" in reaching out to Japanese people.

### ◎Moving Forward with "EC20 Beyond"

Many of you have already heard that EC20 will be held online. We renamed the conference as "EC20 Beyond" with the hopes that God has something different but nonetheless great in store for this online conference. It is our hope to have participants not only from North America and Japan, but from all over the world for a time of expanding the network of those ministering to Japanese people from around the world. We are aiming for the conference to serve as a catalyst in expanding and strengthening the network of returnees in Japan. It is our wish that the conference will especially be a time of encouragement and finding practical help for the many people who had no choice but to return to Japan because of the Corona pandemic, who still haven't found a Christian community to join, and those who are in the midst of life transitions.

If you are one of those people who have always wanted to attend EC but found it difficult to go to California at the end of the year, we hope that you will consider attending it this year. For those who have attended EC in the past, those who have heard a lot about EC from others, those who are returnees, and even those who have never lived abroad....., please consider attending EC! We are aiming for "EC20 Beyond" to be an opportunity to bless and serve Japanese churches and Japanese fellowships all over the world. You may even consider taking part in the general sessions and workshops offered during EC as a retreat with your church community. More information about this will be coming soon.



### ✿Please pray for JCFN North America✿

◎EC20 Beyond is presenting us with many new challenges and opportunities such as how to broadcast it, how to do small groups, etc. Please pray for the planning committee as they rely on the Lord's leading in preparing for it.

◎We are seeking the Lord for direction on how to continue reaching out to Japanese students, expats and their families. Please pray that we will be able to clearly hear His voice and follow His lead.

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