

Dear Friends at Fellowship Greenville,

It's early in the morning on April 15th—tax day—and we have been rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord this past full year of ministry here in Japan so I thought I would write you a quick letter expressing our heartfelt appreciation for your prayers and your support of our ministries by writing a “year-in-review” letter today. (We arrived back in Japan after our furlough last year on exactly April 15th, so it's been precisely one year in review since our return!)

We returned to a blitz of ministries, beginning with our Easter Worship Service the very next Sunday! Our weekly schedule since that time has involved preaching at the Sakahogi International Grace Baptist Church from 2:30 p.m. every Sunday in addition to preaching in the morning at one of several churches we minister together in each month, including our Japanese ministries with the Central Baptist Church, Yamagata GBC (led by Pastor Fujisawa—pray for him as he had a massive heart aneurism and almost died over the New Year), and the Mino Seki Grace Baptist Church (pastored by our son-in-law, Kyohei) and also our international Filipino ministries including the Sakahogi Filipino GBC and GCFF in Kani.

It has been a privilege to have my parents serving with us in the ministry and also living very nearby (four houses down) as Dad is currently under doctor's care for prostate cancer in addition to bone density issues (he had four breaks on two different occasions a couple of years ago, but is doing much better today) and I have the privilege of accompanying him to his appointments as he is hard of hearing and sometimes misses what the doctor is trying to communicate. We have dinner and play games together at least once a week and they both conduct Bible studies on Wednesdays in addition to distributing gospel tracts pretty much every day! They have attended both the Japanese Seki ministry in addition to the International ministry in Sakahogi every week ever since Pastor Fujisawa took over the preaching ministry in Yamagata a couple of years ago.

It has been a joy to serve the Japanese college age kids in addition to the international community students at the Chubu Gakuin University (where I have been asked to teach one Wednesday morning each week about six months out of the year—it's 5:50 a.m. on a Wednesday morning as I type this letter, and I will be teaching there again in a few hours). The last time we did an international event where I was invited to tell the Christmas story to the college students from other (closed) Asian countries only three out of around forty-five students had ever heard the story of why Christ came to earth.

The month of July involved several baptisms and a few baby dedications in addition to our annual church children's camp where we were delighted to welcome about 140 staff and students for a week of Christian camp at Camp Raphayada, followed the first week of August with our Missionary Kid (MK) Camp with I think around 70 including staff who were there for the week.

The 15th of August I traveled to the Philippines to Mindanao to speak at the Faith Tribal Ministries Bible School as well as several churches in the area. We spent about ten days traveling (sometimes three churches a day) throughout the island of Mindanao visiting churches and celebrating together. And then in September my brother and I traveled to Hokkaido for the annual Missionary Men's Retreat where we joined other like-minded missionaries here in Japan for a time of edification and mutual encouragement where I had the privilege of sharing on the subject of personal accountability in the ministry. (My brother, Tim, will be hosting the retreat in Nagoya in October of this year...thanks for praying for those plans as the missionaries here need all the encouragement they can get and as lots of new missionaries here means lots of encouragement needed.)

The Filipino SGBC hosted a family camp the last week of October, and Debbie had her first Carpal Tunnel surgery on the 5th of November. (Pray for her as she has her other hand scheduled for surgery on May the 13th.) She also has been struggling with the effects of a benign growth on her pancreas causing dietary issues the past few months since it was discovered last summer.

Debbie and I got to enjoy a couple of days away for our 43rd anniversary in December just before the Christmas events began in earnest with our Children's Christmas celebration and then Christmas and New Year's Eve fellowship in Seki and New Year's Day worship service in Sakahogi. And then we were blessed to welcome our son, Nathan, and his wife Stephanie and their four children to Japan as they just arrived as a family to serve as missionaries here in Japan. Their container will arrive sometime this week and they will finally be able to move into their home in Hasamadai later next week, Lord willing. (They have been staying with us and getting settled into schools and routines for the past couple of months.) Pray for Nathan and his family as they get adjusted to life in Japan and as he looks forward to helping with the establishment a Christian Counseling network here in Japan as he serves in the church.

In February Nathan and I traveled to Kanazawa together to help a fellow missionary move his belongings out of his home (having now left the country) and it was a blessing as well since many of the items he left behind were items that Nathan and Stephanie were able to use in their new home as they begin their ministry here.

We were able to host a camp group next to the last weekend in March and then our own church Family Camp was just held on the 3rd to the 5th with a joint Easter Worship Service the beginning of this month. Which brings us to today—one year later!

Looking forward we have a men's fellowship scheduled for this weekend and we are hosting another camp the last weekend of April and another the first weekend of May. Then I will be speaking at a Christian Retreat for international teachers serving here in Japan from the 3rd to the 6th, and then on the 7th of May I will be flying out to the Philippines once again to minister in the Bible school and area churches once again for about ten days.

We have a couple of missions teams we will be hosting in June and July and then the last week of July will once again be our annual church children's camp and the first week of August another MK Camp! Thank you so much for all of your prayers for each of these ministries, past and future. God has been so good to us and we are SO blessed to be able to serve together here in Japan!

In His Love,

Phil and Debbie Melton

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Phil + Debbie Melton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.