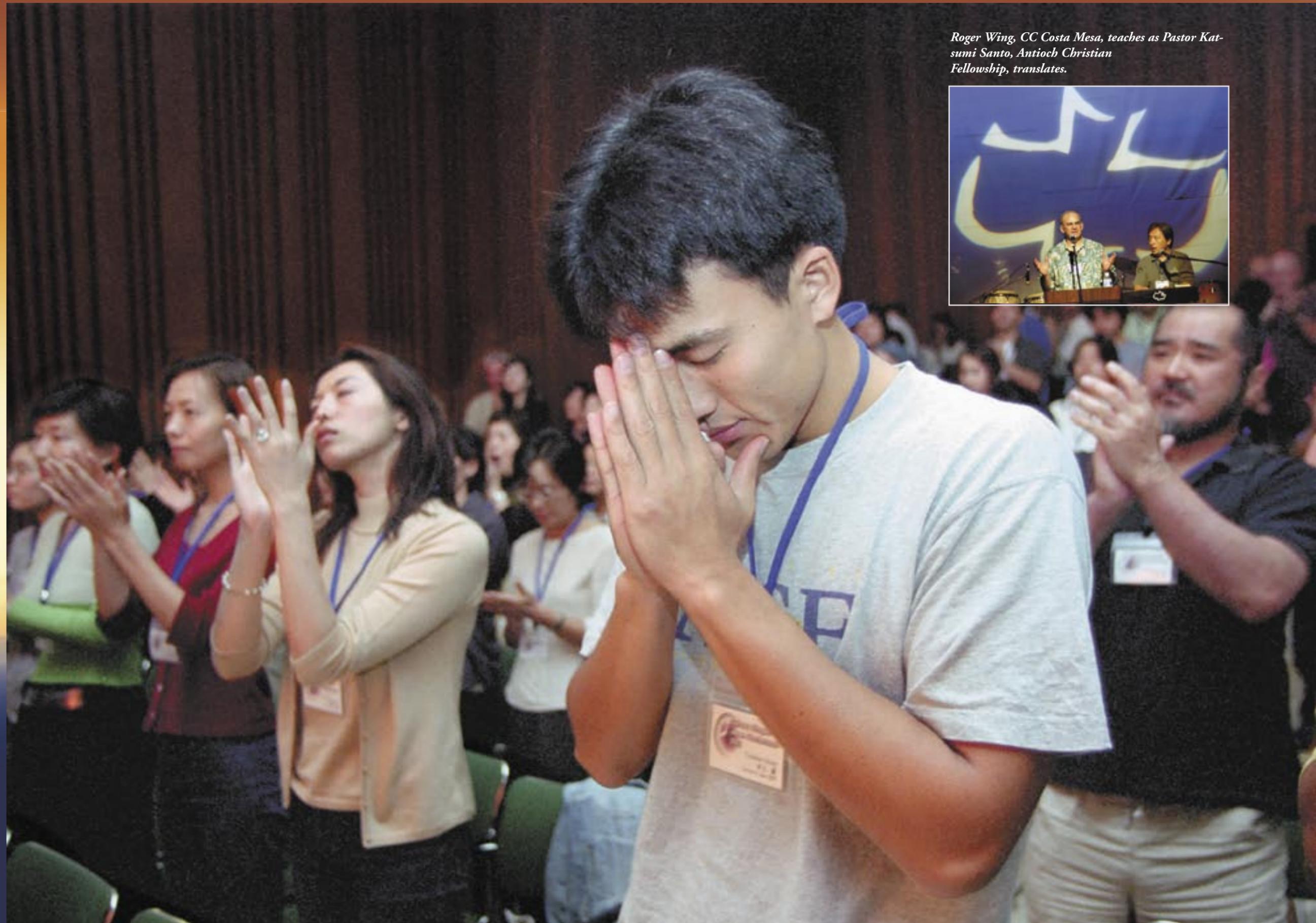


J A P A N

Revering the
Risen Son,
in the Land of
the Rising Sun.



Mount Fuji



Roger Wing, CC Costa Mesa, teaches as Pastor Katsumi Santo, Antioch Christian Fellowship, translates.



Japanese worship at the first annual CC Pastors' Conference in Japan this past fall. Twelve pastors journeyed from America to teach the Calvary Chapel distinctives.



“Did Christianity not intrigue you?” Marré asked the Buddhist monk named Myosei as they stood outside of a temple in Tokyo. Myosei neither blinked nor lost her serene smile as she replied, “No one ever told me about Christianity when I was in America.”

Marré Ishii, pastor of Committed Tokyo, a ministry of Calvary Chapel in Japan, studied the Japanese woman. Her head shaven and wearing a loose fitting gee, she had just taken part in an ancient ritual at the temple.

story by Tom Price and Sean Lawrence, photos by Tom Price

Marré Ishii and Myosei



Buddhist priests perform ancient rituals.



Two businessmen sheepishly touch a statue of Buddha.

*From the west, men
will fear the name of
the LORD,
and from the rising
of the sun, they will
revere his glory.*

Isaiah 59:19 NIV

Myosei had not been interested in her faith until she took language courses at California State Berkley in the U.S., which brought her face to face with many different religions. It was there she adopted Buddhism and upon returning to Japan trained to be a monk.

Myosei listened politely as Marré shared that there was only one path to heaven and that was through Jesus Christ. Indisputable historical evidence, he told her, showed how Jesus had personally fulfilled hundreds of ancient prophecies written a thousand years before. His death on the cross would have been useless had He not risen from the dead. He went on to explain how over 500 people saw Jesus in the weeks following His resurrection until His ascent into heaven.

As Myosei's available time drew to a close, Marré promised to return for further discussion. Their encounter was the result of a group of Calvary Chapel pastors who were there in Tokyo for the first annual Calvary
(continued on p. 36)



A monk pounds on a giant drum to 'wake up sleeping spirits' for a ceremony. For several hundred yen, the monks would include visitors' prayer concerns in their incantations.

Shintoism and Buddhism

Japan's two main religions are Buddhism and Shintoism. The two religions coexisted for several centuries and are now blended together to a certain degree. Culture dictates that all Japanese are born Shintoist.

Shintoism believes that all humans are fundamentally good, and that evil spirits cause all bad. The purpose of most of the rituals is to avoid evil spirits by purification, offerings, and prayers. Shintoism does not have a founder nor does it have scriptures like the Bible. The objects of

worship in Shintoism are spirits. They are believed to reside in natural elements like the sun, mountains, trees, rocks, and the wind, or abstract things like fertility. However, ancestors, national heroes, and protectors of family clans are also included.

Buddhism regards the world as transient and sees it as a source of suffering for those who remain attached to it, a view that contrasts sharply with Shintoism's ready acceptance of the world. However, there was an optimism in some forms of Buddhism that meshed well with Shintoism—an optimism about human nature, for it was committed to the belief that all human beings had the potential to attain the wisdom that brings

an end to suffering. Once human attachments are discarded, Buddhism teaches, the world takes on a new and positive significance. Buddhism, an Indian religion, reached Japan in the sixth through eighth centuries A.D. from Korea and China.

Religions do not play a big role in the everyday lives of most Japanese people. The average Japanese follows religious rituals at births, weddings, and funerals. Still, over half of the population consider themselves both Shintoist and Buddhist. Religious affiliation does not translate into regular worship or attendance.

“The Japanese were very serious about putting their lives on the line for others by spreading the Gospel. The sound I heard was their tears—splashing like rain on the floor.”

Pastor Lance Cook



One of the Committed Tokyo men entertains the children during the pastors' conference.



Rickshaws are still used in the city center.



Young children walk home from school.



Pastor Lance Cook, CC La Habra, gets an opportunity to share with an elderly man at a Shinto shrine.

Chapel Pastors' conference in Japan. They were there that day to observe the traditional ceremonies performed by the monks to the statues. This blending of Buddhism and Shintoism make up the majority of faith for Japan's 10 million people.

“This is the problem with my fellow Japanese,” Marré said after bidding good-bye to the monk. “They are like the Athenians, even making a statue to an unknown god. It is hard for them to understand that people can only worship one true and living God.”

Calvary Connection

Marré and his wife Kumiko hosted hundreds of pastors and leaders from throughout Japan this past fall. They were gathered to learn the Calvary Chapel distinctives from a dozen visiting pastors, including Lance Cook from Calvary Chapel La Habra.

Lance and Marré met eight years ago while Marré was in America recording a Gospel album. Their introduction led to an invitation for Lance to visit Japan which eventually birthed a relationship that began the planting of Committed Tokyo. Eight years later Calvary Chapel has ten churches throughout the Land of the Rising Sun, each bearing witness of the seeds that God planted.



Lance Cook and his daughter Kelci befriend a little boy.

Over the years Calvary Chapel La Habra and the Japanese Calvary Chapels would come together annually to host outreaches throughout Japan. These events called “Gospel-fests” brought rock, hip hop, punk rock and Gospel acts from the U.S. to Japan to introduce young people to the good news. These concerts were followed by brief messages from Pastor Marré and various pastors from America.

The Gospel-fests concluded with an invitation to accept Jesus as their Savior. Once, during one of these altar calls, a constant pitter-patter disturbed the reverent silence that had filled the arena. “I opened my eyes and realized that the Japanese were praying so earnestly that they were all weeping,” recalled Lance Cook. “I was overwhelmed at that point, and felt the Holy Spirit move, confirming to me that the Lord wanted Bible-teaching churches planted here. The Japanese were very serious about putting their lives on the line for others by spreading the Gospel. The sound I heard was their tears—splashing like rain on the floor.” These outreaches led to growth in Marré's church that had not been seen in Japan before.

“Since 1945, missionaries have been spreading the Gospel in Japan,” said Marré. “It wasn't until we began teaching



Pastor Lance shares with a new believer at the Kick Back Café, the home of Committed Tokyo. Hosoda had just recently given his life to the Lord. The Kick Back Café serves as a restaurant and hangout for new Christians.

The number of young men and women attending the Calvary Chapels in Japan bear witness to the fresh movement that God is doing.

through the Bible that we started attracting a balanced section of the population. In the past, the churches only seemed to attract older women.” The number of young men and women attending the Calvary Chapels in Japan bear witness to the fresh movement that God is doing.

...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Philippians 2:2

“It is such an important time in the growth of the church,” said Lance. “Japanese mentality could easily raise the pastor into a sensei or elevated state above the people,” continued Lance. “We need to help ground the pastors and the congregations in the teaching of the Word.”

To help accommodate this, relationships with Calvary pastors including Raul Ries, David Rosales, Pancho Juarez, and many others have developed, as they have traveled annually to share the Word and equip the church. As time has passed, the role of the American Calvary Chapel churches has intentionally diminished as the reins of ministry have been transferred to nationals throughout the country. While cultural and language differences have led to some confusion and frustration over the years, God has continued to move the ministry forward by developing relationships as Christians—not as Japanese and Americans. It also has expanded into a team of Japanese churches working together to reach the country.

Heart of a Servant

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:42

Over the past eight years the fruit being manifested in the body of Christ in Japan have exemplified the book of Acts being



Participants from the first Calvary Chapel Pastors’ Conference in Japan pose for a group shot.



Pastors Bob Grenier, CC Visalia, and Tak Ahnmasan, Committed Hamamatsu, pray for a young man in the fellowship.



Jason Stead, of CC La Habra, says good-bye to

Ricky Barnett, from CC Okinawa.

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lived out in modern times. Pastor Bob Grenier, CC Visalia, is a frequent visitor to the Committed Fellowship in Hamamatsu, as well as a veteran of the Jesus Movement. He draws a comparison to Calvary Chapel's beginnings in Southern California and what is occurring now in Japan. "This is the real deal. This is the book of Acts happening." The teaching of God's Word has been leading to salvation throughout the nation and true discipleship is beginning.

Lost Values

The commitment to the Word of God is also producing a generation of men and women who possess qualities of traditional Japanese society that have been lost in the modern world. In Committed Tokyo's discipleship homes (housing for young people to live, study God's Word, and work) the old ways of Japan—servanthood, humility, and hospitality are traced back to a source with much more history than this nation—the Word of God.

Japan's long post-war occupation by U.S. troops gave it a deep affinity for American pop culture. While the brashness of the Western culture has introduced ideologies that conflict with older Japanese ways, they have also opened a door for a Calvary Chapel style of worship and teaching. The laid back atmosphere of Committed Tokyo is evident in the name of its sanctuary that doubles as a coffee shop throughout the week—The Kick Back Café.



Japan is an island country.

This year holds many exciting firsts for Calvary Chapel in Japan as plans to begin a full-time Bible college in Tokyo come to fruition. In the past, Japanese interested in learning more about the Bible and

systematic teaching had to travel to the States to learn the Calvary distinctives. This new school will provide an opportunity for instruction in their own country, taught by nationals in their own language. The

school will also present an opportunity for those in the States with a calling to Japan to go overseas to learn the Bible as well as experience Japanese culture and language.

While Japan has been a place of frustration for Christian missionaries because of a lack of revival, current economic hardships in Japan show once again that God is in control and His timing is perfect. With

financial and social uncertainty facing the nation, Japanese are once again questioning their spiritual certainty and Calvary Chapel is providing a home for the Word of God to go out and liberate a nation. 🙏



Pancho Juarez, CC Montebello, anoints leaders with oil. The American pastors pray and lay hands on their Japanese counterparts.



Pastor Tak Tanaka, CC Kanakura



Committed Tokyo worship band

Japanese are once again questioning their spiritual certainty and Calvary Chapel is providing a home for the Word of God to go out and liberate a nation.

Divine Kinship Across the Pacific story by Sean Lawrence

While oceans separate East from West, the love of God has erased both distance and borders, creating a divine kinship. Powerful bonds of friendship, brotherly love, and mutual respect have developed between visiting American Calvary Chapel pastors and their Japanese counterparts. These relationships are the result of a growing number of churches catching and sharing in the vision of God's work in Japan.

The Lord opened the doors for Calvary Chapel La Habra and their mission entity, Limitless Boundaries, to minister in Japan. Pastor Lance Cook soon realized that "the harvest was indeed ripe, mammoth, in fact. The task was too big for just one church to do alone."

"From the very beginning the Lord told me this wouldn't be a venture we'd take on alone, since so much of the country was unreached," said Lance. To reach the nation, God has raised up like-minded pastors from the West with a common goal of building relationships with nationals already ministering in Japan and offering themselves and their churches as a resource.

One of these pastors has been Stan Mitchell of Calvary Chapel Lighthouse in Surrey, BC. "The movement has spread quickly because Lance has passed the vision for Japan along in a very wise way. He didn't just dispense it to his church; he gave it to

other pastors, and that has led to us sharing this vision with our congregations."

Stan further explained these relationships, "We want to be a scaffolding to the Japanese church, not a crutch. Scaffolding is there to assist during construction, but is removed once the foundation is finished and the work is complete."

Upon seeing the growth in Japan firsthand, Pastor Bob Grenier, CC Visalia, was reminded of the early work that God did at CC Costa Mesa. "I have run into so many younger Japanese pastors who are so excited about knowing Jesus and really interested in God working in their lives. They are very open to being taught and equipped for ministry work."

Bob also found comparisons between the two movements in the area of music. "It's exciting to see young

"That your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations."

Psalm 67:2

people responding to the Holy Spirit in the areas of worship and music ministries being raised up by the Lord."

This excitement was apparent to Pastor Jim Stewart, CC Kansas City, as well. "What is happening in Japan parallels the book of Acts," said Jim. "God is establishing a work through various people who have opened up their lives to be used by God."

The movement in Japan started in Tokyo and has spread to ten cities throughout the nation over the past eight years. This growth has led to a need for personal fellowship with the growing church. Every two months a team from the U.S. visits Japan or Japanese come to the States. A team from Japan will be coming here this summer to minister to the local Japanese communities in California.

"We're focusing on building relationships with the Japanese," said Lance. "God has really connected our hearts in regards to Japan. Many different churches from around the world have come alongside and adopted Japan as their mission endeavor."



At Mount Fuji (l-r) Lance Cook-CC La Habra, daughter, Kelci; Jim Stewart-CC Kansas City; Stan Mitchell-CC Surrey, BC; John Milhouse-CC Moreno Valley; Roger Wing-CC Costa Mesa, son Sean; Lloyd Pulley-CC Old Bridge; Ray Jaramillo-CC Rio Grande Valley, NM; Jim Orate; CC Rancho Cucamonga; Pancho Juarez-CC Montebello; David Rosales-CC Chino Valley; Loren Lew; Tak Abnmasan-Committed Fellowship Hamamatsu



Roger Wing, CC Costa Mesa, enjoys the friendships of his Japanese brothers at the Kick Back Café.



Pastors pray as the conference begins. Ray

Jaramillo, CC Rio Grande Valley, NM, and Jim Stewart, CC Kansas City, struggle to sit properly.