

From the Editor

This month saw WEC Japan's field conference: we heard inspiring messages from the WEC International Directors on the theme of "Deep love for Christ, Passion for the lost"; we received excellent teaching on multicultural team building from our Regional Directors; and we also adopted a new field goal, to expand our church planting activity in the coming years.

Simon

News and Prayer Points

Pray for those new missionaries studying Japanese full-time at the moment: **Sophia, Rosa** and **Kaki**. It's around now that the difficulty really starts to increase!

Rita Feldt has gone back to Germany for six months deputation. **Jill Smith** will be pastoring Ishiyama church while Rita is away, and asks for prayer for "wisdom and understanding, grace and love, humility and good relationships."

Also at this year's field conference, we discussed our relationship with the SFDK, the network of Japanese churches we have planted. We want to find the best way to work together in partnership. We are still deciding the details and need to do so consultation with them, so please pray for God's wisdom and direction.

Where next?



Homeless on the streets of Osaka

At our field conference this month, we committed ourselves to a new church planting goal: three new church plants in the next five years. We're going to be forming teams and sending people out—but first, we need to decide what sort of churches to plant, and where! At conference, we heard two reports from people who have been researching new church planting possibilities.

Kin Fai Choi has been looking at the south of Osaka. Joto, Higashinari, and Abeno districts are the most densely populated parts of Osaka, but also with the least churches—Joto-ku has 5 churches for over 150,000 people. The areas are mainly residential, with large apartment blocks and housing estates, but Nishinari-ku, which neighbours these districts, has the highest homeless population in Japan. 30,000 day labourers live on the streets or in extremely cheap hostels. The Osaka YMCA offers Japanese classes with a generous discount to missionaries, making it an attractive place for new workers!

Kin Fai also visited Ikoma, central Nara, and the Saidaiji area of Nara. WEC has been involved in a church plant in Saidaiji before; it remains a strategic area with opportunities reach into Nara and Ikoma.

I also presented about Kansai Science City, an area between Kyoto, Osaka and Nara. Since the 1970s, the Japanese government has encouraged universities and research laboratories to move into this area. Seika-cho, the town in the middle of Science City, now has Japan's fastest growing population, with continual growth over the past 30 years. It is also one of the youngest places in Japan, with 50% of residents aged between 20-40. Most of them are new to the area, away from their ancestral homes, and live in new developments which have no shrines or temples.

However, while it's a strategic area, it may also be a difficult to reach; with very little "shared spaces" within the estates, there are few natural opportunities for meeting people. There is also no obvious "center" to the estates, meaning that it's not possible to simply open a church building where people are likely to pass by. Missionaries will have to be creative in getting out into the community to reach Seika!



Parks and gardens in Kansai Science City

We don't yet know where the three new church planting teams will end up, but it's exciting to hear of missionaries' passion for new outreach. We will keep you informed about how our church planting goals progress!