

The Pearl

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Preparing for
Christmas
Page 2

New Zealand
Mission Trip
Page 8

Nakatsukas
In Hachinohe
Page 10



Pastor Sterling Lee

Words from the Pastor

Prepping for Christmas

A really good friend of mine, Dr. Robert Mullins, shares these words in his devotional book entitled, Prepare The Way (it's sort of a devotional/journal for the Advent season). He says, "In the Advent season, we have a unique opportunity for true introspection in our lives. We have to be the ones to decide to Prepare The Way for Jesus to come into our lives!"

I think it's important to understand the meaning of Advent (as Robert shares it, as well as how we use it in the church). The word itself means coming or arrival, and it signifies the start of an event or the arrival of an individual. So, as we prepare for this Advent season, know that this season represents the birth and the

arrival of the Savior of the world.

I started with this because I wanted to begin with this question: What are we doing to prepare for Christmas? It's an easy enough question, but I've found that it's not as easily answered. Some of us do a lot to prepare or get in the season. We listen to Christmas music, we send out Christmas cards, we go shopping, we try to get into the Spirit of things by eating gingerbread or peppermint-flavored treats, and some of us may even watch all of the new movies on the Hallmark channel. On the flip side of that, some of us may have no plan on preparing for Christmas and just stumble our way into it.

Whichever scenario we may find ourselves in, I'd like to encourage us to

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thank you
FOR VISITING WITH US!

Thank you so much for taking the time to come and worship with us. We'd love to see you again, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us!



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a couple of things that I believe will definitely aid in our intention to prepare for this season in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

The first is to discover or perhaps rediscover anticipation, meaning to look forward to with expectation. I remember as a child so looking forward to Christmas. Maybe it was because of the days off from school, or the music, or even the weather, or perhaps just the gifts, but whatever the reason, I also remember counting down the days with anticipation that this next Christmas would be more memorable than the last! With that said, I want us to remember that Christmas is not just for kids. As followers of Jesus, each year we should look forward to with anticipation the opportunity before us to celebrate and remember the birth of our Savior!

The second is to practice the blessing of giving. This simple practice allows us to ensure that this season is not all about us. It's not only about our happiness, or about us being on the receiving end

of the gift getting. The practice of giving allows us to move past ourselves and discover the blessing that comes through giving. I'm talking about the giving of our time, our talents, our resources, and most importantly the giving of ourselves. To practice these things is to truly experience the blessing of giving.

Each year we spend a great deal of time decorating, buying gifts, shopping for the right holiday food, wrapping gifts, and making cookies, all in the name of Christmas. Let me first say that there's nothing wrong with any of these things, but when our focus is solely on these things and not on making our hearts right, making sure Jesus is the focus of this time of year, then we've lost sight of why we celebrate this season in the first place.

My prayer is that as we prepare to enter into this Advent season, we're intentional about preparing our hearts and minds for this gift that we've been given, and that is to celebrate and remember the birth of our Savior!



Youth Group Update

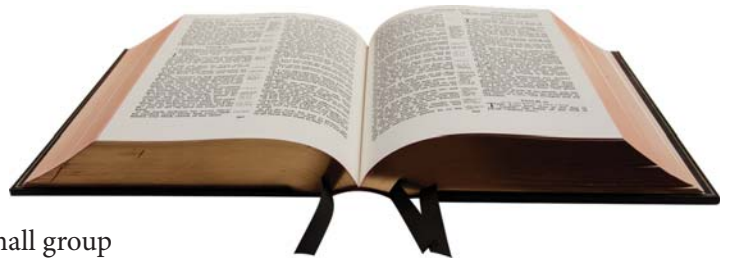
By Associate Pastor John Lee



Thank you for your prayers for our FBCPC Youth Group. We may not have the weekly numbers of 100's of youth, but we sure do have a lot of fun, eat delicious food, and learn more about how Jesus changes our lives. By the time this is printed, our Youth will already have been blessed by a former Youth Pastor extraordinaire who took time from his busy schedule to lead a Friday night hangout. If you are curious to know who taught the Youth, then you need to ask one of our middle schoolers or high schoolers.

The 1st quarter is done and things will be moving really fast as the end of the calendar draws near with lots of exciting events around. Our Youth group will be having a fun and festive Christmas Party on Friday, December 6. It will be a great time of playing some Christmas-based games, fun prizes and gifts to be given, and maybe even an Ugliest Christmas Sweater contest. A big mahalo to church members who have donated their culinary talents to feed our hungry bellies.

Adult Sunday School Option



Here at FBCPC, we want everyone to be involved in a small group studying God's word together. We have a variety of options during the Sunday School hour and throughout the week. We have a class that started in July called *In His Steps*. We started meeting in the carport of the Hoolaulea house but currently we are meeting in the living room. Our class discusses and digs into the previous week's sermon topic for more understanding and application of God's words into our lives.

If you are looking for a Sunday school class to check out or have a friend visiting our church, we would love to have you check out our class. Our class consists of young married couples all the way to Kupuna and everything in between. We would love to be blessed by your presence as we study God's word together.



Keiko, Nagisa, James, and Daniel

Reunion in Yokohama, Japan

Keiko Ishiwata
(Associate Minister of the Japanese-speaking Congregation)

This September, I went on a week-long trip to Japan. One of my primary objectives was to visit the church where I grew up, Shinkoyasu Baptist Church, in Yokohama. It had been a decade since my last visit, during which my Sundays were devoted to supporting our missionaries in Japan except for the pandemic season. While I cherished those moments, I felt a deep longing to reconnect with my roots.

Pastor Susumu Takano, who baptized me during my college years, played a significant role in my spiritual journey. He guided me through the complexities of finding employment and pursuing seminary in the United States. Now in his late eighties, I felt compelled to greet him and express my gratitude for his unwavering support.

However, just two weeks before my

planned visit, I received heartbreaking news from my sister-in-law: Pastor Takano had passed away due to heart failure. The shock and sadness washed over me, and I couldn't help but think, "Takano-sensei, why didn't you wait for me for another two weeks?"

In light of this loss, I felt the Lord guiding me to adjust my plans. I decided to visit Seiro Church, another Baptist church located near Yokosuka City. Despite the short notice of less than two weeks, the church graciously offered me the opportunity to preach. I shared my plan on Facebook, inviting friends to join me.

To my delight, one of my long-time friends from the area attended the service. Additionally, I was reunited with Nagisa-san, her husband James, and their son Daniel that Sunday. This family had been part of our church community

in Pearl City while James was stationed here. Since relocating to Yokosuka, they had continued their journey of faith, and it was a joy to see them once again.

Nagisa-san attended the service at Seiro Church and after the service, James and Daniel came to pick her up. I joined them in their car parked along the street in front of the church. We shared a heartfelt time of prayer together in their car! I could hardly believe how God orchestrated this encounter, especially after my plan to see Pastor Takano had fallen through.

This experience reminded me that even when our plans don't materialize as we hope, we should never be discouraged. God's plans are often more profound and perfect than our own. My journey to Japan may not have unfolded as I initially envisioned, but it was filled with blessings and connections that reinforced my faith.

I encourage everyone to trust in God's plan, for it is always better than our own. Let us continue to support one another in faith, knowing that every detour can lead to unexpected blessings.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"

(Romans 8:28 NASB)



Keiko at Seiro Church in Yokohama.

Baptisms



August 25, 2024
Momoyo Oshiro
(JSC - Japanese Speaking Congregation)



September 15, 2024
Grace Vaughn



September 15, 2024
Axel Achiu
Gavin Shiosaki



November 3, 2024
Reynaldo Santana Polanco

Baby Dedication



November 3, 2024
Valentina Santana
(Parents: Reynaldo
Santana Polanco, father/
Yurianna Santos, mother)

Please Join Us!

Thanksgiving Day Worship Service

**Thursday, November 28
at 10am**



*Bring your
"take out box"
to present as
an offering for
Kealahou West Oahu*

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

***Tuesday, December 24
at 9pm***



NEW ZEALAND

MISSION TRIP

By Jeannette Choy and Sarah Amend

Aloha Church Family!

We had such a wonderful and refreshing time with the Thommarsons in Auckland, New Zealand. Even though we were only there for a little over a week, we were able to see the amazing things the Lord is doing through them there. We met their partners, served with them, and joined in on their Friday night Bible study group.



Jeannette's Highlights

AILEEN

We met Aileen at their Friday Bible study night. She is a Chinese national woman in her 50s who was temporarily staying in New Zealand with her teenage son. She was supporting him as he was finishing up his time in high school and transitioning to college. She took an English class at a nearby church and was invited to join in an Alpha class. At the last Alpha class, which was the day before, she decided to follow Jesus. Even though she spoke minimal English, she was so excited to share that she decided to follow Jesus. We rejoiced that another soul was saved! She told us she started reading the Bible in July, and by the second Friday night we were there she had already read through Romans!

WILLIAM, ANNA, AND SOPHIA

The Thommarsons introduced us to a Chinese family—William, Anna, and their 6-year-old daughter, Sophia. They attend the Friday night Bible study, and Rob has been meeting with William for the past few months studying the Bible together. William

is a graduate student and was able to move his wife and daughter to live with him in Auckland just a couple of months ago. This sweet family told the Thommarsons they wanted to cook dinner for us. They were so extremely thoughtful about each dish. They knew it couldn't be too spicy, and it had to be "suitable" (one of William's favorite words to use) for us. The week prior, William and Anna sent 2 dishes home with Rob, after their individual bible study time, for us to try and see if we liked it. We tried it later that day so Rob could report back to them.

Anna was preparing and cooking for 2 days for this dinner as they felt 10 dishes were "suitable" for us. Since there was going to be so much food, the Thommarsons invited 3 other Chinese students who had attended their Friday night Bible study group—Jachi, Shawn, and Tina. When the day came, it was incredible to see all the dishes William and Anna made! We also made dumplings together. My favorite dish was a wonton dish in a slightly spicy broth. The other Chinese students were so happy to partake in the food as well as it reminded them of home.



CHINESE STUDENTS

The same night William and Anna made us an unbelievable feast. We gathered around the TV and did some karaoke. One of the students they invited, Jachi, loves singing, so he started the time off with some pop songs by Westlife and Ed Sheeran. Then the next few songs were Christian songs: “How Great is Our God,” “Beautiful Name,” “10,000 Reasons,” and “Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone).” I looked at Jachi while he was singing “How Great is Our God” and he was worshipping loudly with his eyes closed. It reminded me of Psalm 34:8 (one of Sarah’s favorite verses), “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” The Thommarsons had shared with us prior to dinner that Jachi, Shawn, and William had been baptized together just a few months ago at a student retreat. It is always incredible to worship with other believers from a different part of the world. We worship the same God of the universe, Creator of all things, and Friend.



Sarah’s Highlights

NEPALESE STUDENTS

Something I loved about our time in Auckland was how Rob and Donna were so hospitable. The students that they minister to and love, they welcome them into their home. Learning about them, what their goals in life are, and feeding them—both body and soul. We were able to make food and share a meal with some Nepali students. They requested American food from Donna, so we made mashed potatoes with gravy, oven-fried chicken, green beans, and brownies. It was such a sweet time together, gathering over a meal and talking to the students. They then did some karaoke and popular group dances. It was clear how we all crave community, and sometimes feeding people and gathering together is a way we can show Jesus’ love.

BRIDGETTE

Bridgette is a young woman from Peru, currently on work-study in Auckland. Rob and Donna met her at the Wednesday international lunch. She now goes to their church and also gathers with other students with the IMB missionaries in Auckland. She recently accepted Jesus into her heart and is starting to navigate what being a Jesus follower means in the different aspects of her life. Jeannette and I were able to spend



some time with her, she made a delicious Peruvian meal, and we chatted about life and relationships. Donna disciples her, and it’s exciting to see how she is growing in her faith.

IMB, ISM, & IBC

While we were in Auckland, we were able to meet the various partners the Thommarsons work with. There is an International Mission Board couple, some awesome people from International Student Ministries, and a beautiful International Baptist church family. We look forward to sharing more about the

mission support growing in Auckland at our sharing.

Please join us for our sharing night! There is so much more we want to share from our experiences and time in New Zealand. The Thommarsons are incredible ministers of the gospel and love people well. They are looking for people who are interested in becoming a missionary overseas or working with students. They are willing to disciple those who are interested and would love for people to stay with them for a period of time, to train and teach them how to share the gospel and disciple others.



Missions

Around the World



Aono is on the left, and Hayu is on the right. These are two students who recently received Christ!

Greetings from Hachinohe! First, Yuka and I would like to thank everyone for your prayers and financial support of THE WELL and the English School.

We are entering the fall season, and with that comes cooler temperatures, especially in the mornings and evenings. Personally, fall is my favorite season. Growing up in Hawaii, I couldn't really experience it, so now, I look forward to this time of year.

Just as the seasons are changing, so is our ministry. We feel God moving in our midst. Since March, two adults and four children have received Christ through the church and the school, and



The Nakatsukas

in September, we celebrated our first baptism.

It has been amazing to see these individuals give their lives to Christ. We're experiencing new things as the Holy Spirit moves and touches people's hearts. However, we also face challenges as we establish His church. One of the challenges is that parents are not allowing their children to attend church. As you know, sharing the gospel in Japan can be difficult. Many people are wary of religion, mainly because of the numerous cults here and the negative experiences people have had with them. As a result, when they hear about religion, they are often cautious or closed off.

For example, one girl's father said, "If you're interested in Christianity, you can go, but I'm not allowing you to commit to this religion." Still, this hasn't stopped her from wanting to know more

about Jesus. We see in these children a real hunger and thirst for Jesus. We take extra time to teach them the Bible—before English class or at home after Sunday service since they aren't allowed to attend church. Because the children are of different ages and come from various areas, we are prayerfully asking God to show us how to bring them together.

While we face challenges, we view them as opportunities to grow, learn, and strengthen our faith. It's also a chance to see how God will accomplish His plans and purposes. The challenge for us is to remain open to His ways, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us. While it's a new experience for us, the more obstacles we face, the more we see that anything is possible with Him.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

As we spend time teaching kids and adults, we are learning that everyone has different needs based on their personality, age, and background. We can see how God touches and ministers to each person individually. It's exciting to witness God's hand at work in each individual as they grow and discover their purpose in Him.

Blessings,
Brian and Yuka Nakatsuka

Pearl City Plaza Ministry



Several members of our church have been leading a Bible Study at the Pearl City Plaza since January 2023. It has been a great time of ministering to the residents of the Plaza. Those volunteers include: Doreen Kelley, our music leader; Bible Study teachers, Ailene Potter, Charlene Vaughn, Jackie Tom, Roy Oda; Rene Kurasaki (96) and Grace Vaughn (8) are faithful supporters; and John Vaughn is the director. We are always in need of more volunteers, if God is leading you.

We were told when we started not to be discouraged if only one or two residents show up. However, we have had four or five residents show up every week. Recently we had up to ten residents show up. We have had at least two people accept Christ. We have had people from various church backgrounds attend. They appreciate the opportunity for Bible study and fellowship. We also celebrate with the residents: birthdays, anniversaries, and alohas. We appreciate your continued prayers for this ministry.



MEN'S MINISTRY

Breakfast Cookout



Photos by Clyde Kakiuchi



By Dave Masaki

Our Men's Ministry held a breakfast cookout on Saturday July 27, 2024. It was a memorable time of seeing men supporting men. We even got to see Pastor Sterling really getting into flipping the French toast! Pastor Sterling commented that it was his first time cooking French toast. You would have never guessed from seeing him in action! We were also blessed with great wives supporting our Men's ministry by making and providing us with desserts for our breakfast meal.

The program started with a time of worship to the Lord. Jim Pratt served as emcee and provided endless laughs. Craig Murabayashi shared his testimony and was such an encouragement to others. Pastor John Lee shared a short sermon and Pastor Sterling shared his thoughts on the Men's Ministry. We closed our time together with the song "Amazing Grace" accompanied by Pastor

John Vaughn on the ukulele. The Holy Spirit truly was present among us that Saturday morning!

As we finish up this year and move into 2025, we will be seeking the Lord's leading by having a men's prayer group once a month. We will be praying for one another and for the needs of our church and community. I encourage men of all ages to come and join us at our monthly prayer meetings.

We will also be asking for guidance to build the Men's Ministry by hosting a variety of events though 2025.

Here are some examples of events:

- Service projects (church and community)

- Activity groups (outdoor activities: hiking, fishing etc.)
- Men breakfast
- Men's retreat
- Mentor group
- Bible study group
- Father-Son events
- Accountability group
- Men's leadership conference



Family & Fun Events

Amid the flashing “cosmic” fluorescent lights, 25 children and adults gathered to bowl on a Saturday afternoon at Schofield Barracks Bowling Center on August 17. From preschool to seniors, cheers and groans filled the air mixed with the sound of falling pins. High fives abounded and great fellowship was had for all.

Nostalgia for adults and a new

adventure for youth awaited a crowd of 20 children and 30 adults at Movie Night in the Shak on September 28 to view Wall-E. Though it first screened in 2008, it was a new movie for the kids and a fond memory for adults. Themes of taking care of the land and the power of love were as fresh as ever.

Movie food of hot dogs was enhanced by Leto Rivera’s delicious chili and nachos with toppings. Kids

were handed booklets of movie-related activities to do after they inhaled their food and waited for their parents to finish eating. Shouts of delight from the children added to the excitement of the movie between the munching on freshly popped popcorn.

After the movie, drawings for various prizes were distributed to the children to end an evening of fun family time.





TREKKING FOR TREATS

at FBC Pearl City
October 19, 2024



Trunk-Or-Treat

Helping at Highlands Intermediate School's event for students and staff



HIS Oct. 26





FBC PEARL CITY

The Pearl is a quarterly magazine published by First Baptist Church of Pearl City.
*If you want to contribute an article, testimony, news blurb, and/or photo,
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