

The Holy Spirit at Work in Japan

Can you believe that a Muslim student who studied at Slippery Rock University is being influenced by a Japanese Christian family who have been guests at All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center? Campus ministry is able to provide such wonderful opportunities. Even though we often doubt that God can open doors of faith in the hearts of others, the story of Steve (not his real name) and Kenzaburo from Japan shows what God the Holy Spirit is doing.

Kenzaburo from Japan came to All Saints, where he became a baptized Christian. After All Saints and Slippery Rock University, he attended graduate school in Pittsburgh and continued studying the Bible at First Trinity with Reverend Eric Andra  . Because he loved being in America so much, he was reluctant to leave, but he did. He stayed in contact with us for years. He always wrote saying how he continued to read the Bible. His parents later told us that he read Luke aloud to them every night.

Only a few years later sad news came to us from Japan. Kenzaburo had died of a heart attack. Since he had not had a Christian memorial service, All Saints and First Trinity Pittsburgh had one for him. Ken's sister, her son and her mother came from Japan to attend. The service was a great comfort and we got to know his sister, Michiko, her son Shun, and his mother Reiko.

Steve, an outgoing, friendly student from Pakistan, is a Muslim who attended SRU about three years ago. While here, he made time to attend worship once or twice at All Saints. He had wanted to come more often, but his schedule was too full. He loved the worship service and the hymns. After he left SRU, we continue to correspond. When he wrote saying he is studying for a masters degree in Osaka Japan, we immediately wrote back telling him how to connect with Ken's sister Michiko, who lives in Osaka and with his parents, who live in nearby Kyoto. Steve said he had become fluent in Japanese so we knew he would be at ease speaking with Ken's family. Because he is interested, Michiko told him about Christian churches in Osaka. They preach in Japanese and English and are welcoming. He plans to attend.

What a blessing! Steve called from Japan describing the visit he had just had with Ken's family. He followed up the phone call with a letter describing the visit.

... I contacted Michiko here in Osaka.... She invited me to visit Kyoto with her and also to meet her parents who live in Kyoto.... She told me her son, who is now in high school, is very active in church and also spends time at church camp. Michiko herself also goes to church.... Later, we went to see her parents at their home. They were the loveliest people, so welcoming and loving that I was moved.

Steve closed his letter thanking All Saints for introducing them. He told them he will be Osaka for least two years so he hopes to meet them again. He ends by saying thank you for praying for him and his family. He added, "I need yours and your churches' prayers."

Campus ministry is on the cutting edge of missionary work. This is not just one story. It is a story taking place more often than we think. An SRU international student so I just put it on the disk from Turkey came to the recent concert by The Choir. He enjoyed the music even though he had had to leave early because he had to study. He met the next day for lunch where we talked. He is quite familiar with the Christian faith, but is still committed to Islam. Even so, he listened to the Gospel. He accepted an invitation to visit the Amish during SRU's fall break next week. We will talk about the faith of the Amish as well as enjoy seeing their horse-drawn buggies and famous blue doors on their houses. We won't mind enjoying the leaves changing colors at the same time.

Another Muslim international from Africa comes regularly to All Saints student meals. Her name is Helen. She dresses in traditional Muslim clothing and is very careful about what she eats at the meals. Yet, she was moved by a church member at the meal who realized the glasses she was wearing were broken (one of the arms was missing) and asked if we could help. She declined the help, but was stirred by the concern shown.

It is wonderful how God plants seeds of faith. All Saints is thrilled with what God arranges. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will bring faith to many college students.

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