

Lisa Ritenour

From: Lisa Ritenour
Sent: Monday, April 01, 2019 10:31 AM
To: Partners
Subject: FW: Saunders March Ministry Update!

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From: Jeff and Katie Saunders <jeff.katie.saunders@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 31, 2019 9:23 AM
To: Lisa Ritenour <lisa.ritenour@2pc.org>
Subject: Saunders March Ministry Update!

Saunders Ministry Update, March 2019





The Longing for Spring

What is it about springtime that invariably seems to elicit so many great feelings and emotions? Is it the scenery? Or the start of the baseball season? Maybe the end of a long wait to fire the grill back up? The fact that you can actually go back outside again? For the Japanese, this is an incredibly beloved time of year. April marks the starting again of literally everything. The School year commences, a new host of eager and young employees are hired into various companies, annual budgets are formed, and the creation and implementation of new plans and ideas are brought about. But in a sense what inaugurates all is the blooming of the Sakura. Towards the end of the year, as hoped for grades begin to slip, dreams of a promotion or salary raise begin to fade, or the subtle voices of pessimism encroach upon and interrupt what was ostensibly "full-proof" just a year ago—such bitter reality and disappointment is assuaged through the captivating beauty experienced through this stunning flower.

The Saunders are definitely in a season where we can identify more deeply with these sentiments, these longings. We are looking towards the future of the next church plant here

in Tokyo, but we're in the midst of a difficult reality wherein the future doesn't seem as clear as we desperately want it to be. And so by faith, we're actively searching out answers for questions that will considerably shape the ministry here in Tokyo for the seasons to come.

- Where's the best place to plant?
- How can we be sure?
- What will the college ministry look like?
- How are we going to hire people?

But if only the situation was one where we just didn't have the answers, well, that would be okay. Instead, though, this uncertainty has led us to more easily believe that God's simply just functioning as an antagonist in our life right now rather than an advocate. And it's in this disassociation from the reality that we often wonder if maybe there's just some practice or discipline we've been neglecting that would unlock the door we're trying to get through. Well, it's been a couple of months since we've last sent an update and so I wish we could say that we've risen above or somehow been carried out, but sadly that's not our testimony. However, what we do have is a desperate need for you all to come alongside us. As our partners in the gospel, we long for you to pray in this season for what's ahead, pray for the unknown, the risk. Pray for *us*. It certainly does feel like a season that's a lot more conducive to stripping one's joy. And so, we would love for you to pray with us and against that as we wait. In the last few days, however, I've taken some comfort through the reading of God's promises in scripture. And as I was reading through Hosea I was drawn to one in particular.

"Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers,
as the spring rains that water the earth."

Hosea 6:3

As hard as it is to hold on, we still take hope knowing we're being led. It's perhaps fitting that this is also the Lenten season. As we pause to reflect on our sin and mortality, we remember this sorrowful journey eventually finds its way to the cross and resurrection. The promise of a savior brought to fruition. The firstfruits of what will inevitably be true for God's people. We are sure of this! So in this assurance of hope in the promises of God to expand His kingdom and establish His church, we ask you to pray alongside us for the details of the church God is leading us to plant here in Tokyo. Please pray for us to look to God's promises, to look to his good creation as a surety that spring will come for us too.

A Call to Prayer

We ask you to pray fervently and specifically for the Lord's guidance on a location for our new church plant where --

- Universities are located.
- College students regularly gather.
- Young families live.
- Housing is available and affordable.
- There is potential for owning a church building.
- Train lines provide a quick commute to the centers of the city.
- The families of the core team can thrive.
- MOST OF ALL - where God is already at work preparing people's hearts to hear and understand the beauty of the Gospel for the first time.

Recent Activities

Language school - Jeff is working with a tutor on honing his Japanese conversation while digging deeper into studying the Bible in Japanese.

Discipleship - Both Katie and Jeff are currently meeting with young Japanese Christians to read the Bible together and encourage them in their faith. Both are working in the incredibly difficult Tokyo business environment where long hours and

Moms' Bible Study - Katie recently joined in a moms' Bible Study that meets at a friends home on Wednesdays. We are studying through Mark as well as a book on prayer together. The ladies come from across the board spiritually - and a few are just now exploring Christianity

Emerie - She "graduated" from her daycare and has come back home full

no Christian coworkers make life as a believer particularly difficult.

time with mom and Ezra as Katie wrapped up her language study period.

Ezra - is almost crawling!

Park Festivals With Friends



Emerie with her friend Hannah at the "Kids Shopping Street" at our local park.



Local school kids built make-shift stands and sold everything from hair accessories to slime to minestrone soup.



Our local park also had a month-long Plum Blossom Festival complete with food stands and a grove of 200 plum trees.



We brought friends along to enjoy this with us nearly every weekend. From L to R: Iro, Kanzan, Emma.

Emerie and Ezra

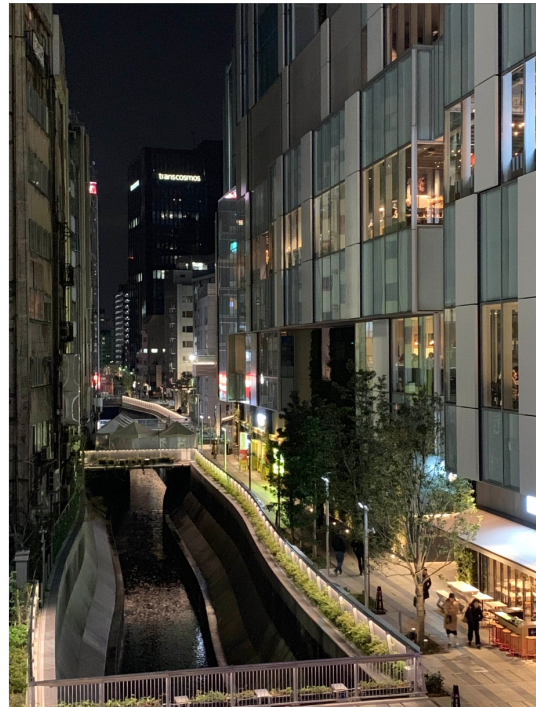
Bonding and fighting more and more every day





Around Town

Some of our favorite shots of our favorite place over recent months. If you are interested, Katie does a little Instagram Story of our adventures around the city every week. Follow her [@ksaunders611](#).









We say this every time, and we mean it every time. We couldn't do this work without you and are incredibly grateful for the sacrifice of generosity you give to this ministry.

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6-22-7 Matsubara
Setagaya-ku
Tokyo, 156-0043
Japan

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Jeff and Katie Saunders, MTW · 397 Roseland Place · Memphis, TN 38111 · USA



