



# AN UPDATE FROM JAPAN

*Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Could it be? News from Tiana!!*



Hello dear friends!

Hope you've all been well! Apologies for the delay, but here's an overdue update from the other side of the Pacific. Thank you to those who have been encouraging me on this!

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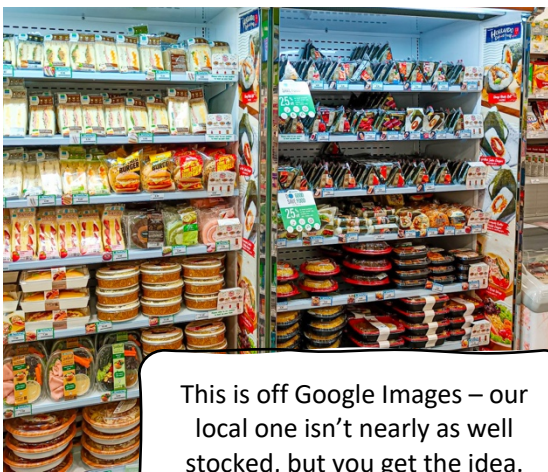
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# WHERE DO I LIVE

I live in Higashimurayama, a town on the suburban outskirts of Tokyo. The convenience store, which sells just about all the necessities you would need (food, clothes, kitchen cleaner, etc.) is a 5-minute walk, so it's far from inconvenient, but people will still refer to it as rather 'countryside'.

It's only a little over an hour to travel into central Tokyo, but every few blocks of residential buildings -packed ridiculously close (you could probably shake hands with your neighbour through the window), you'll see a field growing whatever crop is in season (right now, that's broccoli).



This is off Google Images – our local one isn't nearly as well stocked, but you get the idea.



The 'Konbini', or convenience store. Sells just about everything you would need to survive. Detergent, rice, screwdrivers, curry cubes, toilet cleaner, you name it!



A photo of the outside of our local konbini. It's a FamilyMart. The other big ones are 7/11 and Lawsons.



Not AS packed as this, but pretty close.



Right, so, every 200 metres or so in our neighbourhood, you'll probably find a field 'hatake'. The Japanese people who live here say it's pretty much as country as Tokyo gets.

# SETTLING IN

The apartment I moved into was way bigger than I had expected -about twice as big as the Japanese houses here (apparently the houses were built American sized). Having this sort of space is quite an opportunity, and I would like to be able to do something with it - host some sort of gatherings etc.

*\*Interesting fact: Japanese people generally don't host gatherings in their homes because there is very little space.*

It did feel quite alien when I first moved in, but I've found that the more changes I make: filling shelves, moving furniture etc, the more settled in I feel.



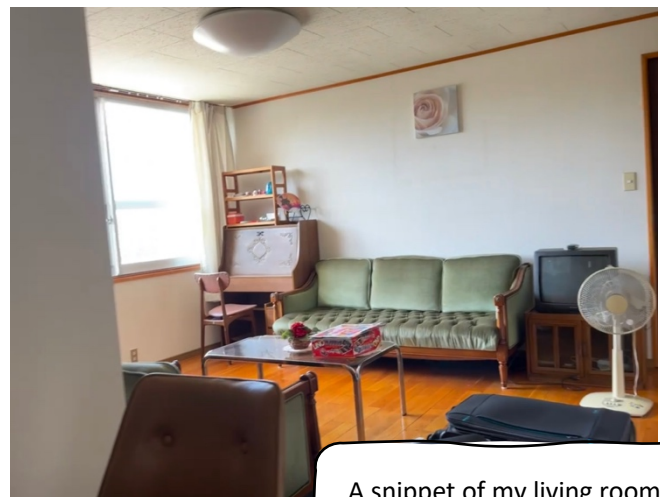
Here's a picture of campus! I live on the second floor of the building circled in red.



There's a gap in the fly screen (so I keep the glass firmly shut), and while most insects are smart enough to find their way out easily, stink bugs are not. One finally breathed its last after a month of trying to get back out.



The low desk in my bedroom which I carried up the stairs and assembled on my own! (mostly -at one point it wasn't working out and I had dad on facetime.)



A snippet of my living room (what it looked like when I first arrived.)

# PEOPLE

The people around me played a large part in helping me settle in. There are two missionary families on Campus -the field leader for OMS Japan's, and a family with another organisation. They have been kind and generous -lots of grace and slow to anger (given I broke the washing machine by the end of my first week here and locked myself out twice by the end of the first month).



A picture in terrible lighting of all of us (and others), taken at the Wilkin's place on Thanksgiving.

# FIRST FRIEND

I met Mion on my 3rd day here. She was the only person under 50 who was sitting in the afternoon service at OMS. One of the ladies expressed how glad they were to see her and described her as one of the most 'aggressive' girls she knew (its meaning being closer to assertive in Japanese). For some reason, that struck a chord with me and I thought, 'Please Lord, a friend'. After the meeting, we hit it off - she was fun, friendly, assertive and really good at English -we arranged a dinner, then a sleepover, a day out and it went from there.



First dinner out. Went to a sushi place with her family!



Taken by her sister from the second floor. Not a drone!



A gathering of some friends at her house.

# COMRADE

Lindsay (From Indiana, America) is the other single missionary here. She was in Japan for a year a few years ago here for sports ministry, and returned to Japan a month after I had arrived. Prior to this, I had only seen her briefly in group ZOOMs and was worried we wouldn't get along.

I am EXTREMELY grateful for Lindsay. It's wonderful companionship and fellowship. She lives in the apartment directly below me on the ground floor, so we often share conversation together over a meal or go for walks together in the morning. Not only is it great fun, but it's also a great place to bounce ideas and discuss plans. However, the best thing has undoubtedly been accountability on the follow through on commitments, ideas and plans.



Some sort of tea ceremony experience.



We started going on morning walks to wake up better in the mornings and be more productive.



A look under the mask...



Lindsay's main ministry here is the sports court we have here on Campus. As things have slowed down as the weather cools, she was offered a coaching job for the basketball team at an international Christian high school.

That's her response to one of the ref's calls. P.S. Her team won.

## STATION OUTREACH CHRIS

Chris is from the missionary family with a different organisation living on Campus. One of the things he does weekly is go sing at one of the train stations around here to try to get the gospel out there. While such has never been my personal conviction, I like to tag along and make myself useful by carrying the gear and singing along. I've found it helpful in desensitising oneself from worrying what other people are thinking of you.

On my first week with Chris, we met Tess, a Filipino Christian living closeby who shares Chris' conviction for musical outreach. She comes with us every week. Lindsay also joins us, and hands out tracks to passerbys.



There's Tess in the front.



Terrible photo for the guy in the back (Kiyohiro) who joins us from time to time. He's a spectacular guitarist -jaw droppingly good.



Here's a picture of the inside of the train. Was shocked by the amount of advertising there is inside!

# ENGLISH CLASSES

One of the main tasks assigned to me is teaching English. It's one of the most common and traditional ministries assigned to foreign missionaries, mostly as a way to gather people. Here the image of the church is linked with cults, and people are wary of attending 'christian' events.

While some missionaries avoid it, I'm very happy to teach it until Kingdom come. In doing so, I've found that my spelling has greatly deteriorated since graduation, and my vocabulary and understanding of ways to express things are unfortunately lacking. Currently, I teach 3 English Classes: Kodaira, OMS and TBS.

## KODAIRA

The class I teach on Wednesdays in the neighbouring suburb of Kodaira. The class consists of 6 ladies in their 70s and 80s. One of them is a Christian, and some of them have been attending the class for almost 30 years. The class runs for about an hour and there is a chapel time afterwards where the pastor there speaks for about 10 minutes. The class is great fun, and hopefully an opportunity for something more.

## OMS

I have two classes on Campus on Thursday: a beginners class and an advanced one, about 8 people. Between the two classes there is a chapel time in Japanese. I've been holding off so far as I didn't really have an idea as to what to say and wasn't particularly confident in being able to convey it in Japanese. However, lately, I've been having more ideas and may start doing some myself soon.

## TBS TOKYO BIBLICAL SEMINARY

This is the beginners' class for the seminary students. There are 4 of them in my class this year. I wasn't sure what to expect in my first lesson, and unlike my other classes, these were genuine beginners. The first lesson went so terribly that I half considered looking at some tickets and flying back to Sydney. Luckily it gradually improved from there.



# CHURCH

## SEISHO GAKUIN CHURCH

This is the Church that is right next to campus. It's quite a large church with about one to two hundred members. I attend the service on the first and third Sunday of every month.

After the service, there is a **Youth group** (for secondary school kids). There used to be a few of them, but they really took a hit during COVID, and now there's only one regular. It's quite common here for kids from Christian homes to drop out of the church once they hit middle school when their workload increases and they become more involved in club activities (which apparently can take place on Sunday).

On the first Sunday of every month, after the youth group, there is a **Sunday Kids program** for preschool-primary school kids which we have been joining. This is run by some of the young adults at the church (about 5-6 people). We also hope to get to know these young people more.

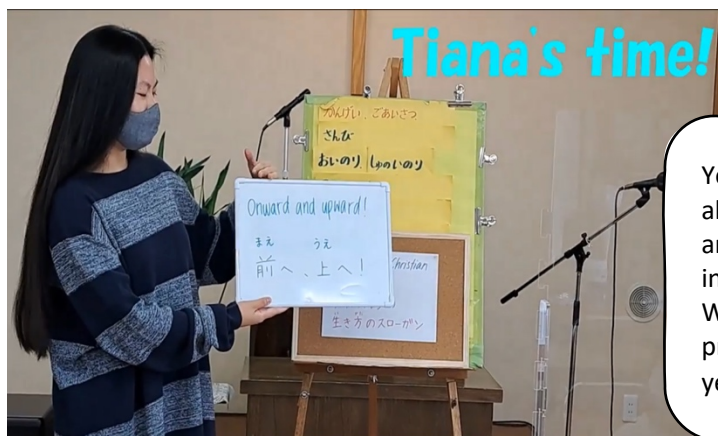


Here's a picture of the inside of the main hall! The organ is also very much still in use here!

# TACHIKAWA

This is the church that I've been assigned to see if there's any way we can help out. Like many churches here, there are only about 10 members (often less). I think the pastors here (that generally live in the second storey of the church building) sometimes feel discouraged by the low numbers.

At the church there are 5 girls (ranging from about yr 3-8) that attend the Sunday School regularly. The pastor at the church has added a segment in the Sunday School. Initially, the idea is that I teach some Christian phrases in English, but it is flexible and can change with ideas.



Yep, that's me. I make sure to always stumble over my words and always finish faster than I intend to.

Will probably be starting a program from February next year...DETAILS COMING SOON...



That's the outside of the church in Tachikawa. It's situated in a residential area. Once I master bike riding, I should be able to get there in about 35 mins by bike.

So... that's what things are looking like so far. Writing this newsletter was like pulling teeth, so to help me along, please let me know what you would be interested in hearing about :)

Thank you for supporting me in spirit and in prayer!

God be with you all!