

Executive Summary for the 4/14 Window Movement Global Team of the Japan Leadership Summit By Jonathan Wilson - CRASH Japan



Servant Team Leader, Reiko Sugimoto reported: "Churches from about 30 different groups and around 140 people attended. God's incomparable presence was with us to the end. I was so pleased that people came from as far away as Wakayama, Miyagi, Yamagata, Fukushima and Nagano and ranged in age from 0 to 80. Thank you for your prayers and attending and for each of your contributions to making this event successful."

Dr. Luis Bush and East Asia Coordinator John Hur's presence was a great encouragement for our team and for those who attended. As we talked around the lunch table, conversation turned to the critical moment that Japan is facing in its history and how God is positioning His people for it. I will try to summarize and give some of my own insight.

Japan is currently approaching an existential crisis that it must resolve if it is going to survive. The most simple way to describe it is that decades of low birth-rates and falling marriage rates combined with ever increasing life-spans has created a top heavy society with roughly a third of Japanese over the age of 60 and only 28% under the age of 30. This problem is actually compounded in the Japanese church where Masakazu Sukuki of CRASH Japan writes, "based on 2012 data, out of the average sized church in Japan with 35 attending worship on Sunday, 18 are over the age of 60 and only 2 are under the age of 30. This means that the church has 20% more elderly than the national average and 20% less of the younger generation."

Part of the task that the 4/14 Window faces in Japan is to raise awareness of this crisis within the church and "draw the hearts of the fathers to the children." We are making good progress towards this with the successful events now in April and July that is growing towards a national conference in November. We have enjoyed a broad base of support including organizations such as Samaritan's Purse, OneHope, Awana and CRASH Japan and 7Media on the servant team as well as cooperation from the Japan Evangelical Association, the Lausanne Movement in Japan and independent churches. The events have been given good coverage in the Japanese Christian press and the Leadership Summit will be broadcast in seminar format on CGN Television.

This is a "Kairos" moment in Japan's history and it would be short-sighted to assume that God has left His people unprepared to meet the challenge. The church in Japan has just been through a period of great change in response to the Great East Japan Disaster of 2011. It has been said that during that time three walls have come down; the walls between churches, the walls between the church and community, and the walls between Japan and the outside world. Let me make a few comments on each of these.

1) The walls between churches. -- The 4/14 Window Movement is interdenominational and so far there has been great cooperation and unity between differing groups. One of the key ingredients to making it work is that we focus not on specific methodologies or doctrines, but on doing theology together and sharing resources without territorialism.

2) The walls between churches and the community -- The bottom line is that without engaging the community there is no way to reverse the declining trend in the children and youth in the church. We are past the point of expecting that children born in the church will be enough! I am hoping that this can be the challenge that Pastor Nam Soo Kim can bring to the conference in November.

3) The walls between Japan and the world. -- The general attitude in Japan has been that things that work other places in the world won't work here because of Japan's unique nature. But the tsunami forced us to work together with volunteers from around the world. It is still difficult and never an exact match, but I believe that the contributions of the 4/14 Global leadership will be well received and help the church in Japan to find the way forward. That said, I am encouraged that the Global Leadership is not dominated by Western Christians. It is important that Asians (Korean, Mongolian, Indonesian, Philippines) be at the forefront and that there is plenty of time for Japanese leaders to present from the stage.

The biggest thing that the church in Japan learned through the tsunami crisis was that what Japan really needs from us and has no other source of is hope. The hope of the gospel must be clearly communicated to the next generation so that they can find purpose and strength to meet the crisis coming to this nation.

4/14 Window Japan Servant Team
Jonathan Wilson