



Yuri Nakano

Ministry Development in Japan



Yuri was born in Calgary, Alberta, to Japanese immigrants. She came to faith while attending a Christian camp at the age of 10.

Her non-believing parents would not let her get baptized until she was an adult, so she got baptized right before her 18th birthday. Yuri studied two years of sociology in university before transferring to a local Bible college in Edmonton (formerly North American Baptist College, now known as Kairos). She intended to only take a one-year course but ended up graduating from there with a bachelor of Religion degree. Yuri's calling into ministry came at this time.

God spoke through His servants, Scripture, and circumstances to show that He clearly wanted Yuri to serve Him in full-time ministry. As 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, "For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." This verse was given to Yuri while praying for God's specific direction for the future of her life. She decided that she wanted to serve the living and true God!

Yuri's mission professor encouraged her to consider going to Japan. She served for four years, teaching English conversation and doing friendship evangelism through the NAB. Though Yuri wanted to continue on as a career missionary, the doors seemed to be closed at the time, so she returned to Edmonton. Yuri tried various jobs but found no joy in them. When asked to speak to various churches about her experiences in Japan as a missionary, she discovered her passion was really for full-time service for the Lord. She decided to apply to Taylor Seminary, while at the same time God made it very clear to He wanted her to serve at her home church, Edmonton Japanese Christian Church, as the English Pastor. What was to be just a one-year contract ended up being more than 10 years of ministry experience! She was able to study part time and work at the church at the same time. After six years of study, Yuri graduated with a master of Divinity from Taylor and concentrated fully on pastoral work for four more years.

Yuri was invited by her former mission field director to consider going back to Japan as a career missionary. Her Japanese heritage and the knowledge that Japan has such a low percentage of Christians has given Yuri a burden and passion to see more people in this land be transformed by the love of Christ. Yuri started serving in the Kansai region of Japan in 2010, working with Paul and Melissa Ewing and Shan Reed at the Komyo Christian Church, a plant in Southern Osaka. In 2015, Yuri started concentrating on helping other Japan Baptist churches in the Kansai region that were without pastors. She did some preaching ministry, led Bible studies, and learned ventriloquism as a tool to reach out to children and youth. Since 2020, Yuri has focused on supporting women's ministries of the Japan Baptist churches, with an emphasis on empowering women leaders and encouraging intentional fellowship for spiritual growth. Mentoring and facilitating seminars are some of the ways leadership development is being realized. While continuing to serve as an NAB missionary, beginning in 2026, she has been seconded to TEAM, another mission organization serving in Japan. She will be working at the Tsu Christian Education Center in hopes of starting a new ministry as a spiritual director. Yuri has a passion to see people live out their Christian lives with joy and victory.

Birthday: December 28

Life Verse: 1 John 3:1

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