



MAY 2025

## CHERRY BLOSSOM REFLECTIONS

### *Praises*

- Praise that I was able to pack and move my belongings into storage in Mie prefecture, with the help of many wonderful friends. I could not do so without them!
- Praise that an incredible amount of things could be accomplished in a short amount of time for both Shan Reed and me and that we could both come back to our respective countries in time to celebrate Easter with our families.
- Praise God that He is mighty to save and that He will continue to bring salvation to this nation of Japan and strengthen His Body, the Church.

### *Prayer*

- Pray that my short trip back to Japan May 16–22, 2025, will go smoothly. I will be closing down bank accounts and other final documentation needed to end the legal entity of the mission.
- Pray for wisdom in scheduling church visits with supporting churches and supporters.
- Pray for provision of a car or other means of transportation during this one-year home assignment.

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart;  
yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

ECCLESIASTES 3:11 (NIV)



*Sakura "cherry"  
blossoms*

Japanese love cherry blossoms. I do, too. Every year around the beginning of April, families and friends go out and have picnics underneath the blooming trees. I didn't have time to go and have a picnic underneath the trees this year, but I was able to take a few pictures. I am very glad, however, that I was able to enjoy them before coming back to Edmonton to start my home assignment year. As I was walking from my hotel to clean out my old

apartment that I have lived in for the last nine years in Sakai city in southern Osaka prefecture, I looked at the cherry blossoms as a great image of my state of my mind at the present: A time of transition. Cherry blossoms only bloom for a short time. It represents the fleeting nature of life, new beginnings, and the arrival of spring. I saw the wind blow off the pretty pink petals and cause them to fall onto the ground to create a pink carpet. Over 70 years ago, the NAB sent out the first missionaries to Japan. Florence Miller was one of them, and many missionaries after her have come to Japan to plant churches and have them "blossom with beauty." The legal entity of the North American Baptist General Mission in Japan has "ended,"



and as sad as this sounds, I also equate this with hope of new beginnings. After the cherry blossoms fall to the ground, bright, new, green leaves start to come out and fill out the tree. Florence Miller, at the age of 100, went home to be with her Lord on the same day that I arrived back in Canada, April 14. Her legacy and the many other missionaries who came after her are found in the foundation of the Japan Baptist Conference, which is now made up of eleven churches. Though the “petals” have “fallen,” the trees continue to grow and bear new leaves and growth to again blossom with beauty when the time comes. My prayer is that there will be new growth, hope, and vision for the Christian church in Japan. I look forward to going back next year in partnership with TEAM Japan and to continuing to serve the Japan Baptist Conference churches and beyond.



*My apartment is empty!*

It was hard and tiring work getting my apartment packed up and cleaned and my belongings put into storage, but I'm so thankful it got done! I will be living in Tsu city, Mie prefecture when I go back next year. I have not found a place to live yet, so I have temporarily rented some space in a warehouse in a nearby city. I am thankful that several friends helped out with packing and phoning places to deal with shutting down gas, electricity, etc., for me. I am also thankful that Shan Reed could stay a bit longer to help me with driving down to Mie prefecture. She could have left for the States earlier but decided to help me out, as she knows I am not a confident driver. I am not sure how well I will cope without my trusty “driver” to go to places with! I will have to practice driving on narrow and curvy roads when I go back next year. Speaking of driving, I covet your prayers for this year of home assignment, as I have to drive to many churches, and I am not fond of driving, especially in the winter season. Please pray for wisdom and provision regarding transportation.



*Thanks, Shan, for driving!*

I am also thankful for the ways God has shown me and also Shan the many wonderful relationships that have been built over the years. Your support and your prayers have allowed us to be here and to share the love of Jesus. There were many farewell visits and many words of encouragement from friends, church members, and neighbors.

I will need to make one more short trip back to Japan May 16–22 to close down bank accounts for the mission and to hand in final documents to the government. It's been a long and arduous process. I'd appreciate prayer that all will go smoothly and there will be no more hiccups in the process.

I am thankful that I could enjoy Easter celebrations back here in Canada. I haven't had such a meaningful, reflection-filled Holy Weekend in a long time, especially in English and with so many people. I truly am thankful for the sacrificial love of our Saviour, Jesus, and the resurrection hope and power we have in Him!

It's been a long time since my last visit to churches. It has been since 2019, before COVID hit. I am still in the scheduling process. I need wisdom, as I have at least twenty-seven churches to visit. I am also taking a Spiritual Direction course, which requires much travel for training/retreats. I will be in contact with various churches soon, if I haven't already! Please feel free to contact me directly via my email address: [nakanoyuri@hotmail.com](mailto:nakanoyuri@hotmail.com). I look forward to sharing with you what has been happening in Japan and also what to hope for in the future. I hope to see many of you soon.





Returning to the cherry blossom theme, I reflect on how each individual pink petal represents the beauty of each prayer that makes up the blossom. Thank you for your prayers. The picture below is of the cherry trees near a park where I used to live. There are people sitting underneath enjoying the blossoms and also seeing the petals fall to the ground. Many people in Japan are receiving the blessings of your prayers. I look forward to seeing how your prayers will blossom and also how the seasons of change and transition will lead to new growth and more opportunities in the years to come. Thanks for partnering with me!



*Cherry trees in a nearby park*

*Yuri Nakano*

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