

2025 MAT report

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The prayerful consideration at the end of 2024 of spending a short term at Fukuoka came true in 2025. Preparation was made and the trip took place from April 8 to May 15, covering five Sundays and close to six weeks. I and my wife Ada stayed in this period at the church which is a residential apartment.

The trip was somewhat fruitful though challenging. We were well looked after by Rev. Ken Shao, the Senior Pastor of the church, and his wife. While we were not new at the church, since I visited and preached at this church back in 2019 and was invited to preach once a month via zoom during the COVID times, we were informatively introduced to the ministry there. We served in one (東區) of the two Fukuoka Chinese Alliance Churches, while Ken and his wife remained at the one (早良) which was planted about 5 years ago.

Before we departed, Ken suggested to me that I should focus on Alliance teachings during my 6 weeks' of stay. So other than the Easter and Mother's Day messages, I preached on Christ Centred, Spirit Empowered and Mission Focussed in three Sunday worship services. The worship service took place in our location and was joined via zoom by the other church. In addition, I covered as much material as possible in the Alliance History and Thoughts in five Friday evening prayer meetings before the praying time started. This is a joint event between the two Fukuoka Chinese Alliance Churches. It was a challenge to cover all the rich material in the course in five one-hour sessions.

There were not a lot of other activities happening during the week as the members were very busy with work and family. Nevertheless, we were able to engage with the members of the church through fellowship after worship services, a visitation to a sick member, and some activities during the week-days. Ken took us to the first restarted joint Bible study meeting among three churches. One of them was a Japanese church. The languages used include Mandarin and Japanese. During my presence, English was also used. But every conversation had to be translated so that everyone could understand. This is an effective outreach activity as non-believers welcome this kind of gatherings, especially when lunch was also served.

It did not take long for me to realize that Japan is indeed a hard ground for the gospel as I've heard earlier. There were only few opportunities for me to reach out to the non-believers. It was amazing that one afternoon God sent two Jehovah Witnesses people to knock on my door. After a few exchanges, I found out that the two Japanese could actually speak some Mandarin. They were very courteous and allowed me to share the gospel with them. I challenged and asked them as to how did they get saved, and I was surprised that they said by way of Jesus. I pressed them further as to whether they would accept Jesus as their Saviour, and they said yes. Even though they were reluctant to accept Jesus as the Son of God, I thought that was not a bad outcome after a 45-minute conversation. I also invited them to come to our upcoming worship service before they left. After their departure, I was left with a faint hope that they might one day use their diligence and persistence to spread the true gospel to the Japanese populace.

We returned to Ottawa at the end of the trip with the understanding that for the rest of the year there would be pastors coming to serve a month or two from different parts of the world. I can see the need of a more stable arrangement with a resident pastor serving in the church. This arrangement would alleviate the work load of the Shao's, but the constant burden in orientating visiting pastors may also be taxing. I can also see that these visiting pastors are bringing the bests that they have such as their gifts and expertise to benefit the church.

I've not planned for 2026 yet, but Fukuoka remains as one of the possibilities if a resident pastor has not been identified for the coming years.

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