

## Hitoshi---Planting and Reaping in the Land of the Rising Sun

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*Note: Excerpt from A. Brent Cobb, Hands for the Harvest,*

When both Paul and Mitsuko graduated, they prayed to know God's will for them next. They sensed His leading them to return to Japan. Arriving in Tokyo in the summer of 1973, they contacted Nazarene leaders of the Japan District. Superintendent Harada was kind to them as a Japanese couple who became Nazarenes abroad and then returned to served Japan. In some cases where this had happened, Japanese churches had not seemed anxious to welcome such "outsiders."

They stayed temporarily with Paul's mom in Kochi City, hoping that Paul would be called to be an associate pastor, but it did not happen. After they had been there a short time, Paul became ill, quickly going from bad to worse. When paralysis set in, he was rushed by ambulance to the hospital. The cause of the illness remains a mystery even to this day.

During Paul's recovery, he read a book that God used to inspire him to pray about pioneering a church. Searching the Bible for a clear word, he came to Haggai 1:8, which says: "Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored."

When Paul's strength returned, he and Mitsuko looked for a place for planting the Church of the Nazarene. In November 1973, they bought a small house with help from their parents. It became their home and worship center, as well as a place to earn their livelihood \_ teaching English to neighborhood children. Their home was a true multipurpose facility.

Through seven years of planting the church, people came and the church grew. The need for a sanctuary grew, and so did the Fukue family.

Their son, Tomoki, arrived in 1975. Four years later their daughter, Airi, increased the Fukue family's size and joy.

God used the Fukues to lead Paul's sister to Christ, then his mother, brother, and brother-in-law. Later his father-in-law came to Christ, as well as Mitsuko's brother and mother. Many others came to the Lord through their ministry.

Both the congregation and the pastoral family felt the need for a separate church facility. But first they needed land, which was extremely expensive. Paul's brother-in-law, now his brother in Christ also, had a compelling dream one night in which he saw a church building on land that he owned. It was a heavenly vision for him. The next morning, he told his wife they would give their property for the Church of the Nazarene. In 1979 the land's value was about 50 million yen (U.S. \$200,000). A miracle!

In the early years of planting the Church of the Nazarene in Kochi City, Hitoshi's mother, who had studied under a famous Japanese ventriloquist, started a Christian ventriloquism ministry. She continued for many years, serving in churches, schools, hospitals, and homes.

After the church building was completed and the congregation was strong and growing, Hitoshi sensed the Lord leading him to pursue further studies. He and Mitsuko sought God's will, and he announced their plans to the district superintendent, who found an interim pastor for the church. Then the Fukue family left for Boston University in America where Paul worked on a doctorate of theology and Mitsuko earned a master's degree in education.

Their three years in Boston area went quickly for them. As clearly as the Lord had led them to graduate studies, He led them to return to their church. The congregation rejoiced to have them back. Paul worked on his doctoral dissertation as he led the church in outreach. After his dissertation was completed and accepted, Boston University conferred upon him the Th. D. degree.

Altogether, including their time in Boston, the Fukue's ministry in Kochi extended across 20 years, from 1973 until 1993. They expected to stay for many more years. So it came as a surprise in the fall of 1992 when Paul

received a call about taking a different pastorate. The district superintendent, pastor of the Oyamadai Church, wanted Paul to replace him when he soon retired.

As Paul searched the Scriptures, God clearly spoke to him from the words of the prophet Nathan to David: "Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you" (1 Chronicles 17:2). After much prayer, Paul knew the move was God's will.

In early 1993, the Fukues left the more rural setting of Kochi for Tokyo, a city of 13 million people. "Our lives were deeply rooted in the soil of Kochi," Paul says. "We had close relationships with the people there." Oyamadai Church is the Mrs. Florence Eckel Memorial Church, which honors a pioneer Nazarene missionary in Japan.

The Fukues fell in love with the people of that great, historic congregation, and the people quickly took them to their hearts. Deep, strong relationships between the church family and the pastoral family developed. Paul, Mitsuko, and their children enjoyed a rich ministry and found much fulfillment at Oyamadai, a church of considerable influence.

The choir director, Makoto Ibuka, is the son of the former head of Sony Corporation. Dick Sano, president of Buena Vista Videos, a branch of the Walt Disney Corporation of Japan, is president of Oyamadai Church's men's fellowship and chairman of the evangelism committee. Mr. Hirota, a godly layman, is an executive for Dunkin' Donuts and the Yoshinoya Restaurant chain.

For years, Dr. Fukue was an adjunct faculty member of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary (APNTS), going to Manila every May to teach. Additionally, he taught at Japan Nazarene Theological Seminary in Tokyo and served during a crisis time as president of Japan Christian Junior College (JCJC), a Nazarene educational institution. Today he serves full time as a key professor at APNTS. Mitsuko also teaches at the same school.

The Lord has brought great things to pass through Hitoshi Paul Fukue. Three generations of Japanese are serving Jesus today because of what God's grace has accomplished through the life of this godly man. Many more lives

continue to be changed because he and Mitsuko are channels through which Christ's Spirit is flowing life-giving water to make seeds grow for a harvest for God's glory.