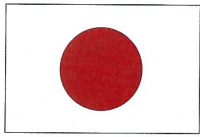
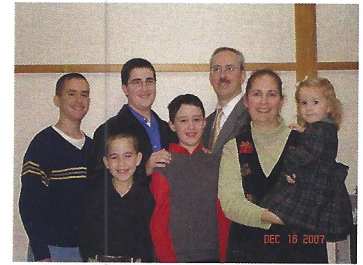


# The Stanford Family



## Establishing Independent Baptist Churches in **JAPAN**



*"... I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." Acts 13:47*

Dear Pastor and praying friends,

I have a lot of exciting things to share with you in this letter. We are experiencing some very big changes in our lives as a family and in our ministry. The Agape Bible Baptist Church in Nagaoka, Japan is experiencing exciting things and moving forward for the glory of the Lord. Let me begin by explaining what has happened and is happening in our family's lives.

This process began about 6 years ago. At that time, the Lord began to quietly speak to my heart. He has continued to speak to me and used these last 6 years to reveal something to me. The Lord has put in my heart a new and very different ministry. This has involved our returning to the US. I would like to briefly explain this new ministry and then I will update you on what has been going on in Japan. Going forward, we will begin working with special needs/handicapped/differently abled people and their families. Those of you who follow our family are familiar with our son, Andrew. Drew, as we call him, is one of these "special needs" people. He is 22 years old now and has dealt with Autism since he was a young boy. As he has gotten older, he has developed some more issues. Simply said, the world is full of "Drews". We found this in Japan as we prayed and asked the Lord for help with Drew and the challenges he faced. As we have chronicled over the years, the Lord provided amazing help for Drew and allowed us to meet lots of other "Drews" along the way. As I prayed about this new ministry, I thought, maybe the Lord will use us to develop it there in Japan. But, the Lord made it clear, that at least in the beginning, our work would be in the US. As I said, the world is full of "Drews", people that God loves and has not forgotten. You could look up, as I have, the statistics and find what I have found. There is a large population in the US and around the world that deal with these varying issues, these challenges. And, again, God loves them and has not forgotten them. That is what the Lord has put in my heart, to love these people and to share the Love of God with them. Right now, we envision this work being 2 parts. The first part will be what I describe as more "hands on" or practical. We will be developing a "work center" type place for these dear people. A place where they can find purpose. It will be a place of employment and, prayerfully, so much more. Of course, this will be Christian based. The second part will involve working with churches and individual Christians. It will involve reaching out to this "community", to these dear people that God loves. We want to share with them and their families the love of God.

Let me now catch you up on what God is doing in Japan. We came back to the US in October. Leading up to our departure, we remained busy up until almost the last minute. The process of our leaving opened up doors for us to share what the Lord wanted us to do with others there. We continue to pray for all the dear people God allowed us to meet there. One good example is Drew's therapist. She was such a help to us over the years. After we concluded our professional relationship, she has now become Joy's friend. We are continuing to pray for her salvation. The Agape Bible Baptist Church continues on reaching the people of Nagaoka, and around the world for the Lord. It was very hard on our hearts leaving there. We began our time in Japan in 2005 in the city Joetsu. There was a veteran US missionary couple and a Japanese couple starting a church in that city. They allowed us to join them and we remained with them there for over 2 years. Then, 13 years ago, the Lord led our family to move about an hour north to the city of Nagaoka. The veteran missionary couple that we worked with in Joetsu came with us and the Lord

allowed us to start the Agape Bible Baptist Church. That couple, was Joy's brother and his wife. We have worked with them for our entire time in Japan. It has been such a blessing being with family and being able to share so much. Leaving Japan was difficult but leaving family was that much more difficult. But, I have learned something very important. Nothing is more important than finding and following God's will for your life. We knew that God had a new plan for us and he has helped us all along the way. Just over a year before we left, our co-workers son and family came as missionaries. This was again, an answer to prayer on our part. As I wrote earlier, the work there in Nagaoka goes on. The Agape Bible Baptist Church continues to do their part in following God's command to reach the world, that is all people, with the gospel. They continue to be a Lighthouse, a place where people can come and learn about God and His word.

For the last several years, we have been telling you about the new building the Lord provided for us. We were able to share with you how God allowed us to obtain this incredible property and then to remodel it to be used for the ministry of the church as well as housing for the pastor. The Lord led some of you to give extra toward this project. Since moving in to the building last year, we were looking forward to having a dedication service for this building. As we were making these plans early this year, along came the Coronavirus. That made having people come from other areas of Japan to share this time with impossible. We all prayed, and were able to have a building dedication service and our final farewell service combined on our last Sunday in Japan. This was quite emotional to say the least. Bro. Kajisa, the Japanese pastor from Joetsu who we worked with when we first came to Japan. Came and preached for us. It was great to see him and his family again. The farewell portion of the day was tough on our hearts but also such a blessing. Let me share with you some of these blessings. Mr. Sakai came to the service that day. Going back several years, you can find him mentioned in our prayer letters. Joy met him at a local store several years ago and invited him to church. He has come off and on since then. He is a very kind and generous man. Due to the coronavirus, he has not been able to come for quite a while. How excited we were to be able to see him again before we left. We continue to pray for him to trust the Lord. There were so many other blessings that day. There were pictures shared, gifts given and memories shared. Of course there were lots of tears shed as well. We will, of course, continue to pray for the dear people there. In the age we live in, we stay connected electronically and keep up with our friends and family there. But, God has led us on a different path now. We certainly would appreciate your prayers going forward as we get settled into life here in the US and develop this new ministry. I will be sending out another letter soon, along with a letter from Macedonia World Baptist Missions. At that time, I will give more details about our support going forward and more details concerning our new ministry. We are living on the south side of Atlanta, GA in the Fayetteville, GA area and will be based out of there. I will include below my contact information. Please contact me with any questions or inquiries you may have. As always, we desire to follow the Lord and to help others learn of His love for them.

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In His service

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