

In the “new normal”?

Looking back at what we were doing last year in April, it’s amazing to see how we’ve adjusted to the “new normal”. This time last year we were neck-deep in totally online schooling. We were juggling workspaces in our small house and getting on each other’s nerves. But we survived and got to the end of that period in early June when summer holidays began. It felt like we’d done the hardest part of this. However, twelve months later it’s still with us.

But one thing looks different: school is operating relatively normally: in-person. They can only do this because of the hard work David and his colleagues did this time last year to put in place protocols to make school as safe as possible, and it’s worked. Despite many infections in the greater Tokyo area in recent months, there have been few issues at school and no dramatic closures.

We’ve adjusted and leaving the house no longer seems as challenging as it was a year ago. Putting on a mask, washing our hands, keeping our distance from people, etc. seems closer to normal. But it is tiring. We’re all longing for things to be more certain, aren’t we? We’ve just begun another state of emergency, but we’ve seen no panic buying. Zoom meetings are the

norm, and doing church online in our lounge room has also become normal.

Our jobs have continued on fairly much as usual, but many missionaries are feeling the pain of not being able to get out and meet people, do outreach, and build relationships with not-yet-believers. As one of our colleagues put it, “Ministry in Japan was slow before, now it’s even slower.” It’s discouraging. Please pray.

In 2019 and early 2020 there was lots of excitement in Japan about the upcoming Olympics, with many plans laid for outreaches and events. But most of that has been scrapped. No foreign spectators will be allowed into the country, and we’re beginning to hear rumours that even Japan-residents will not be able to attend Olympic events. The question then is: is there anything left to salvage? Can any Olympic outreach happen?

We detect a sense of fatigue in our missionary colleagues. We’ve seen a good amount of creativeness, but are Christians running out of the energy to come up with new, creative ideas? Please pray for resilience and perseverance. Pray that God would work in ways we can’t anticipate or expect. Pray that we will trust him no matter what our situation is.

COVID-19 update

Tokyo and three other major metro areas in Japan have begun another state of emergency on April 25th. Infections have been increasing since early March, this is the fourth wave. Vaccines are rolling out, but Japan has the largest proportion of elderly population in the world, it will be some time before people in their 40s get access to a vaccine.

There has been little change in our daily lives. School remains as usual, the boys have had one athletics meet cancelled and training scaled back a little. Our Japanese church continues to hold online-only worship.

On April 29, the 7-day average of new cases in Japan was 5,031. Compared to:

- UK—2,259
- US—51,465
- India—357,040
- Australia—23

A number of short-term and new long-term workers continue to wait to join us here in Japan.

The home stretch

May is the month that heralds the end of school approaching for this year. Year 12 graduation is on June 4, and the last day for the rest of the students is June 8.

Some things are happening normally: Advanced Placement exams (APs for short) for those students who want a chance at earning university credit early, final projects and presentations for all classes, elementary school sports day and graduation ceremonies. Of course, many of these have a different atmosphere, as safety protocols mean they can’t be done exactly the same way. Graduation, for example, will likely be only students and two family members, with a few teachers. The crowded, joyful gathering of the community with plenty of snacks afterwards will not be possible.

Some things we are missing: (most) interschool sports, excursions, student banquets, music concerts, and farewell parties. There is less chatter about summer plans, as most of us aren’t going anywhere, or holding our plans loosely at best. Some people are able to travel overseas at an affordable rate, or without quarantine at one end of their journey. Others are not even sure it’s a good idea to leave Tokyo.

Finishing well will be a struggle for all of us. The older students have studied hard, and the younger ones have played hard. The teachers have worked hard. The weariness is real, and motivation will be hard to find. Please pray that we will have the stamina to live to God’s glory until the last day of school. Pray, too, that we find joy and gratitude in what we have and are able to do.

CAJ
corner



Students playing soccer on the field next to the new building at CAJ. During summer holidays the field will be converted to artificial turf, changing the look of campus considerably.

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1-19-10 Shinkawacho, Higashikurume,
Tokyo, Japan. 203 0013
Wendy’s blog:
www.mmuser.blogspot.com
Webpage: ido.com.au/marshalls.php
OMF Japan website: omf.org/japan
OMF Japan social media:
Facebook: facebook.com/OMFJapan/
Instagram: [omf_japan](https://www.instagram.com/omf_japan)
OMF Australia: www.omf.org/australia

On the home front

Prayer points

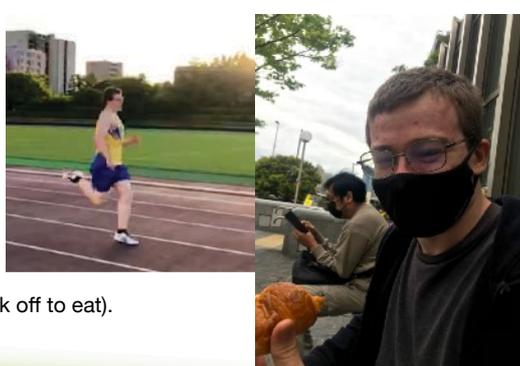
- Continue to pray that God would provide us with all we need to continue to work in Japan.
- That we'll be able to trust God for all that's to come, especially in this time of transition from having boys at school to post-school life.
- For God's guidance for each of our boys for the future. And for motivation to do the best they can in their current studies.
- For wisdom to be the best parents we can be in this time.
- For the COVID-19 situation in Japan, and that they will be able to roll out vaccines as fast as possible.
- That Japan's borders will open to people holding new visas.
- For a new head of school for CAJ from the 22-23 school year (current head is retiring).
- That students and staff at CAJ will finish the school year well.
- For those struggling with mental health (and those who support them)—for the peace that only God can give.
- For *Beneath the Surface*, that it will soon be available to be ordered outside of Japan.
- For the uni conversation club Wendy will help a colleague lead on the 19th.

Praise points

- Our support continues to be over 100%.
- For family: being able to celebrate traditions like birthdays together.
- For good progress on the CAJ building projects.
- God's daily provision of all we need.
- Continued opportunities to use the gifts and skills God's given us.

Top—Wendy at the BBQ with friends on her birthday; Jamie doing shot put.

Right—Doug running the 400m (image is a screenshot from an iPhone video); Doug enjoying a bakery item (he took the mask off to eat).



Coming up...

May

3 CAJ holiday

10 OMF prayer and praise day

14 Track and field finals (all the other meets cancelled due to state of emergency)

19 Australian-themed conversation club with university students in Hokkaido, Brisbane, and Canberra.

29 Callum's birthday

Thank you for praying for us during April. It's a beautiful month in Tokyo. We enjoyed the warmer weather and the visible signs of spring arriving.

David and Wendy had fun at a BBQ with colleagues on Wendy's birthday early in the month. It was perfect weather, even warm enough for our British friends to be seeking shade! It stands out as one of the few social opportunities we've been able to enjoy in the last 12 months (as well as our camping trips) and we're very thankful.

We also went out on for a rare night-out: eating at a local Indian restaurant run by friends of ours, and then we went walking to hunt for a photograph for Wendy's social media work for OMF (followed by a stop for ice cream).

We also got to share briefly about our respective ministries at an online regional OMF meeting.

Doug and Jamie have been able to participate in three track meets in April (but one was cut short due to a storm), though they've struggled a bit with injuries. It's been great to have them out training and enjoying being with teammates.

Unfortunately, one of the COVID-19 precautions is that no spectators were allowed, so we had to rely on self-reports, but did get to see some photos/videos that fellow students or parent-coaches took.

Wendy enjoyed getting together with two Japanese friends in April. We used to get together every few weeks to talk in English and Japanese, but we've done it less often during this pandemic. This time we sat outside with our hot drinks on a busy pedestrian-heavy street.

We've loved talking with **Callum** once a week on a family video call. His exciting news for May is that he's going to Sydney to compete in the Australian National Wrestling Championships. He's continued to train at a local club since he moved to Australia and is looking forward to a serious competition again. As his number one fans, we're hoping they might have a live video link so we can see his bouts.

In Christ, David & Wendy

Special request:

The school is encouraging family and friends to send a special note of congratulations to our year 12 graduates. We'd love it if you sent Douglas a note. You've prayed for him over many years, and he doesn't know many of your names, but this would be an encouragement.

Send a letter/card no larger than B5 size. Please don't send packages or things of value (e.g. gift card).

Send letter/card to:

Douglas Marshall

Christian Academy in Japan—Graduate Letters

1-2-14 Shinkawacho Higashikurumeshi,

Tokyo, Japan, 203-0013

These need to arrive before May 22. Mail from Australia to Japan has been unreliable in the last 12 months, so please be sure to send it early.

