

Land of the Risen Son

イエス・キリストは日本を愛する

(Jesus loves Japan)

Dear Friends and Family,

This year, we thought we'd do something a little different. We're sending you a New Year's card (年賀状, pronounced "nen-gah-joe") instead of a Christmas card. In Japan, Christmas is not the most important holiday at the end of the year; New Year's is a time for family, and Christmas is for couples. Japanese people send New Year's cards to their friends and gifts to far-flung family, and spend several days celebrating with closer family. Stamps for postcards like this one usually cost ¥62, but New Year's cards get a ¥10 discount. You may notice some writing just below the stamp. These characters tell the post office that this is a "New Year's Greeting", which ensures it won't be delivered to the recipient until January 1st, along with all the other greetings. We hope you enjoy looking at your own Japanese card!

This past year has been one with a lot of upheaval for us. In January, the company that originally published my (Valerie's) book closed its doors. I've been working since then to get it re-released with another publisher, and the new version should be out soon, hopefully by the end of the year.

April was a fantastic and difficult month for us. Peter ran into a recurrence of adrenal exhaustion, brought on by an adverse reaction to some new medication. He's taken several months to recuperate, and is now starting to feel a little more like his old self. In April, we also saw four of the kids associated with our ministry decide to become Christians and be baptized!

In May, I was diagnosed with "thoracic outlet syndrome": a problem with the nerves that go to my arms and hands. Writing by hand can be quite bad for me, so I've created a new computer font out of my handwriting, to use in correspondence. Hopefully my handwriting font will make future notes feel a little more personal.

Through the year we launched several new ESL classes, many with a great success, including our Mummy & Me ESL class, Friday Night Noisemakers, and our Medical ESL class at a local hospital. After three years, our English worship services finally gained momentum, and I also had the opportunity to deepen my relationships with several Seaside Chapel members—which has resulted in some incredible chances to provide further discipleship in what it means to love and follow Jesus in our daily lives.

Every year, our church joins with a few other churches in our area to run two overnight kids' camps: one during spring break, and one during summer. I have a love-hate relationship with these camps. Though I'm called a "leader", in truth I'm anything but. My language and cultural knowledge render me virtually helpless, and usually the kids and other adults end up having to help me, rather than the other way around. At one camp, I learned how to cut meat with my chopsticks; at another, the kids showed me how Japanese people clean their 'ofuro' (bathing areas).

Being surrounded by one's ineptitude 24 hours a day for three days straight is painful, and at some point I usually end up weeping privately in a bathroom stall. By then, I'm usually insanely jealous of Peter, who—because he can play the violin—is able to contribute to the worship times in a meaningful, adult way. Yet each year Peter and I do our best to participate. And each year I'm glad I did.

Why?

Because during those times I become a living parable to the kids. And this year, my language was finally at a place where I could explain that parable clearly. "I am helpless here in Japan," I said to the kids. "I know less Japanese than you do; I know less about the Japanese culture than you do. But God is still using me. Living the Christian life is not about my power but about His. If God can use me, He can use you too."

A month later, I found out that two of the little girls (Anabelle and Kamilla) from our ESL class, who have become Christians in the last couple of years and attended spring camp for the first time this year, have decided they want to be a missionary and a pastor when they grow up. Anabelle's grandmother told her that God first asked me to be a missionary when I was a year younger than she is now. Her eyes lit up. Her decision, even though she's a kid, is important and valuable. On hearing this story, my eyes lit up too: God has used my story to affirm Anabelle's.

Well, we've now come to the end of our space, so we will close for now. We hope you each have a joy-soaked, peace-infused Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

With love,
Valerie & Peter Limmer

Japanese-Style Milk Pudding (See reverse for the recipe.)



ESL kids after their baptism.





Mummy & Me ESL class.



Preparations for Easter breakfast.



Peter with a new student.



Friday Night Noisemakers.



Yaku Yaku Cooking Club.

Japanese-Style Milk Pudding

I received this recipe from one of my friends in Okinawa and proceeded to modify it to be simple and familiar, if you've ever made Jell-o. An easy, fruity treat!

INGREDIENTS

- 15 g gelatin powder
- 270 mL water
- 5.5 tbsps sugar
- 200 mL fresh cream
- 600 mL milk
- 15-20 drops vanilla extract

TOPPINGS

Combine favourite fruit as desired (canned fruit is also good).

Possible choices: strawberries, clementines, apples, pineapple, dried cranberries, mint leaves, etc.

Preparation time: 10 minutes
Refrigeration time: 1-2 hours

Yield: 6-8 servings

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat water in kettle and pour into large bowl with sugar. After dissolving sugar, add gelatin and stir until dissolved.
2. Mix in cream, milk, and extract. Cool in fridge for 1-2 hours.
3. Spoon a little of the pudding into a tall glass, add a fruit layer, add more pudding, and repeat until the glass is full.
4. Serve & enjoy!

NOTES:

1. You can use almond extract instead of vanilla extract for a different flavour.
2. If you're in a hurry, cool the mixture in the freezer for 1/2-1 hour.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Thank You

Thank you for your interest in our work. We send out newsletters every two months. If at any point you decide that you don't want to receive them anymore, just write or email us.



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