

The ELFCN mission's strategy is to evangelize the least reached people groups in the world and has missionaries in the Middle-East, Mali, and Japan. The first missionaries came to Japan in 1950 and started their work in Mie Prefecture. During the next few years, through home meetings and many Bible studies, churches emerged. In 1961 in cooperation with The Norwegian Mission Society, that was and still is working in the Kansai area, the churches were united into a denomination with Japanese leadership called Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC). It became a denomination working in both cities and rural areas where not many churches existed.

### One era ends, another begins

In 2014 the cooperation with KELC was brought to a close and the mission agency of ELFCN prepared to move us (the five missionaries in our mission) to a new location. After praying, networking, and surveying, we moved to the east part of Nagoya to do evangelism.

As we have maintained a strong focus on evangelism and mentoring, we have also stressed good relationships with local churches. At the same time, we have been working to clarify our calling as a mission here in Nagoya. We believe there is a need for many different approaches, but we think our calling is in one niche: the house church.

### House churches

Coming to Nagoya, we saw some churches which were growing, but others looked like they weren't. After living here just a few weeks, we realized that there were also healthy and growing house churches. What we used to believe was that Japanese people do not usually open up their homes. But we see Japanese people running their house churches from their homes. They are growing and branching out, even



without connections to foreign missionaries. House churches can be done in Japan. And there are no startup costs. We find that "house church" is just a term; the location is not so important. Cafés or open spaces work well too.

We are exploring, and starting to use a house church evangelization method which is known worldwide: Training for Trainers (T4T). We are also connecting with missionaries doing the same in other parts of Japan. There is a unique Japanese method of doing house churches: *Ten Gai Nai*<sup>1</sup> that we are also using. Both are great tools to quickly tell the Good News and connect people to Jesus and other believers.

We believe that God wants us to start healthy networks of house churches, which we call Life Church Network. That is why we are also looking for partners: both mission agencies and independent missionaries. We want contact with Christian businessmen and women who desire to bring good change to their workplaces.

A house church usually starts with a group consisting of three to seven people who meet regularly. As they incorporate basic church activities of teaching, worship, fellowship, giving, etc., they will become a church. They also try to send out one or two from their group to start another group.

### Life Church Network's...

**Vision:** Loving God, connecting people with Jesus, living life like Jesus.

**Mission:** To reach and influence Japan, by building a network of Bible-based house churches that will change life and communities.

**Goal:** Four generations of house churches in Japan by 2020.

### Core Values ("EPIC"):

- Empowering believers to fully use their spiritual gifts.
- Planting simple, healthy churches which reproduce.
- Interaction with honest, intimate fellowship, both with God and with other believers.
- Creative flexibility in sharing and living the Gospel. **JH**

1. From Mitsuo Fukuda's book, *Upward Outward Inward*, (UK: Wide Margin, 2010).



The ELFCN missionaries: Marianne Jacobsen, Nathan and Inge Mikaelson, Ruth and Knut Ola Topland with children Karen, Marie and Julia