



The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

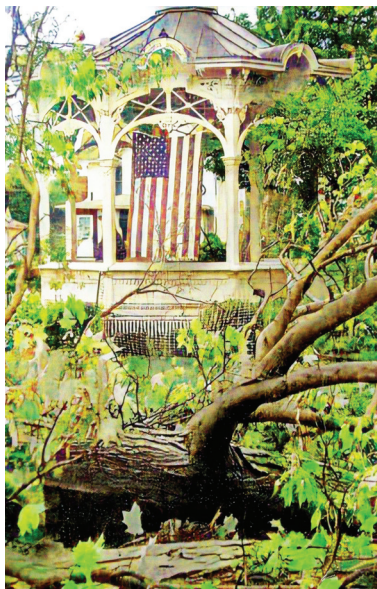
ElderTalk

Ed’s Note: Andy Heining’s article is timely. As we go to press, the whole city of New Orleans is without power due to Hurricane Ida. Our hearts go out to these people along with those currently attempting to flee Afghanistan. Pray for them all!

In our neck of the woods, losing power is a common occurrence. An ice storm, spring/summer thunderstorms, the effects of Hurricane Ike, and the unfortunate auto accident have all been past instigators of our home being without electricity. But last week, the cause was much closer to home.

One of our trees was a victim of the emerald ash bore, and it didn’t take much to encourage it to topple across our road and sever the neighborhood power lines. I was glad no one was hurt, but very disappointed that our tree was the cause of our neighbors’ inconvenience.

As we cleared the road to make it passable again, I asked Marie to see how long AEP estimated the outage would be. All that the website said was “undetermined duration.” How could we prepare for that? Food would spoil, showers were needed, dinner had not been made, cell phones needed charging, the washing machine was in mid-cycle, and my favorite TV show was on that night. We have a small generator we use for short power outages, but it can only support one or two items at the most. The refrigerator usually takes priority, but what about the rest of our needs?



After winds from Hurricane Ike hit Mansfield square Gazebo area in 2008 (News-Journal photo – colorized)

The Power Source

ANDY HEININGER

As we passed around the power cord for phones, lights, and refrigerator, it occurred to me that this was not sustainable. The gas in the generator was going to run out soon. We needed reconnecting.

Our home, much like yours, is designed to be connected to a power source. Well pump, water heater, refrigerator, freezer, stove, internet, air conditioner, lights, fans, entertainment...none of these function apart from electricity.

In John 15:4 & 5, Jesus told His disciples, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me, you can do nothing.” It’s that last line that seems the most impactful... “for without Me you can do nothing.”

The house and all its amenities become useful primarily through electricity. Without it, we could do nothing that it was set up to do. I have experienced this in my walk with Christ as I ebb and flow, coming in close to Him, and then trying to do it all myself. What usually results is my oven with no heat, my darkened television and a pool of mint chocolate chip ice cream. As always, He’s correct and I realize that not being connected to Him, my power source, I can do nothing I was created to do. We must stay connected through prayer, reading God’s Word, fellowship with other believers, and the Holy Spirit “power grid.”



Two new teachers in Japan! 🍵 日本に2人の新しい先生!



*Sara
Mould*

サラモールド

*Sierra
Bantillo*

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I am a missionary kid who grew up in Guinea, West Africa. Traveling has always been a part of my life. God has blessed me with some amazing opportunities to serve overseas. I worked with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in West Africa for two years and with the Peace Corps in Armenia for two years. I am thankful that God has blessed me with the freedom to follow His will wherever that may lead me, whether it is being present in the States or being present overseas.

Covid lock-down in Ohio left me unemployed and questioning what plans God had in store for me. It was a time of surrender and trusting that His ways are better than anything I could imagine. Cue to two months later when I received a call from the Area Census Bureau in Mansfield asking me to come in for training.

I was thankful to finally have a job, but even more thankful for all the wonderful people I met while working there. This is where I met the wonderful Nancy Solon! One day she overheard me talking about wanting to teach English in South Korea and told me about the Wakakusa English Program. Japan was not even on my radar until Nancy said something. Through prayer and talking with Nathan Tucker and Rebekah Stefaniuk, I felt as though God was leading me towards Japan.

The journey to Japan was not the easiest travel to do during Covid, and meeting the requirements of the Japanese government kept pushing our departure date back. There were times I questioned whether this was where God wanted me, but the door was never fully closed, so I kept pushing and praying that God would

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I was born and raised in Gettysburg, PA. I am 26 years old. I never wanted to be a teacher growing up, but when I got to college and had to choose a major, I figured out I could most be myself teaching small children. Around that time, I found myself on an overnight layover in Japan with family and it was everything I thought it would be. It was then that I decided to return to Japan one day.

Fast forward to 2020; the nation is shut down due to Covid. By the grace of God, I found a job that was willing to pay me to work from home, despite starting only days before we went into lockdown. But I was bored running numbers.

I graduated with a teaching degree, had a rough experience starting out, and found something else to pay the bills. So in May 2020 I was thinking about the path of my life and God said to me, “*What about teaching?*” My credentials wouldn’t easily transfer to PA so what did He mean?

Then He said, “*What about Japan?*” It had been awhile since I had considered teaching in Japan, though I had started studying the language again during lockdown. I went to the internet to watch videos and put myself into the headspace of teaching again when I stumbled upon a video for the Wakakusa program and was immediately hooked. I emailed my application that very night!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

After a grueling visa application process made difficult by government restrictions concerning the ongoing pandemic, I arrived in Japan in late June of 2021. After a two week quarantine in Tokyo, I came to

(continued on p. 3)

Two new teachers in Japan! (cont.) — 日本に2人の新しい先生！ (続き)

Sara サラ

be preparing both my heart and the hearts of those I would cross paths with.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: I am so thankful to be finally in Japan. Sierra and I were met warmly by Kawaii Sensei and Enchou Sensei when we arrived in Tamura. Some things that stood out at first were the people driving on the opposite side of the road; the bowing; and the number of spiders there are here!

I find so much joy in cross-cultural interactions and meeting new people. I am excited to see what God has in store for me!

So here's to the next two years in Tamura!

Thank you for your prayers!

(Ed.'s Note: Lori Barker's family knew Sara in high school when she and Megan Barker played soccer together!)

This beautiful view of the Otakine River, which flows through the heart of the part of Tamura City, formerly known as Funehiki and near the Wakakusa Gakuen school, was taken by one of the new teachers. That river will always remind them both of God's plans for the city and their "journey" while living there.



Sierra シエラ

Tamura in mid-July and now here I am! It's about as hot here as it is back home which you don't tend to notice until you're without a car with air conditioning, but you get used to it and work around the heat. Wakakusa is air conditioned (sometimes too well!) which was a pleasant surprise. The team members are just as animated as they were via the many zoom conversations I've had with them, and the family is just as hospitable as they were depicted to be.

I've grown to love the teaching profession and the children I impact every day; I thought my dreams of Japan had come to an end—yet here I am in the Japanese countryside. God certainly has plans. A friend of mine recently said, "Discovering them is the journey!"

My own Psalm 1

DAVID KORNFIELD

Blessed are those who don't walk in the ways of the world,
Plant themselves in the ways of the flesh,
Open themselves to the ways of the devil.

Instead, they sit at My feet and learn from Me.
They center on Me. They walk with Me and work with Me.
They watch how I do it, learning the unforced rhythms of grace.

They hear Me in their hearts, hearing both My Spirit and My Word.
And what they hear, they joyfully obey.

Those who have unveiled faces, move from glory to glory.
They let go of the glory from the past
And stretch forward to the glory of today,
The glory of being fully alive in Me today.
Living not just one day at a time,
But one moment at a time. The present moment—
with Me!

Within My church there are wheat and tares,
People who are genuinely growing and bearing fruit,
And people who are sucking up the resources and complicating the lives of the fruit-bearers.



There are two rare groups at the extremes.
At the positive extreme, the intentional multipliers of life,
The gardeners, the pastors, the disciplers.
At the negative extreme, the agents of Satan,
robbing, killing, and destroying.

Those who are fully alive are those who have learned to die to themselves daily
So that My life overflows in a multiplying way.

They are not only the right kind of disciples.
They are the right kind of disciplers.

And not only the right kind of disciplers,
The multiplying kind, stretching intentionally to the fourth generation and beyond.
Be the certain kind!

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 2** Women of Grace Bible Study 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at church.
- 5** Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on the “Theme for the Year.”
- 8** Connect Groups for all ages each Wed. 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
- 11** Women of Grace Tea at Janine Schwartz’ home, 10 a.m. to noon. Bring a breakfast item. New address: 600 Heidi Lane, 44904.
- 12** Eric Byrom preaching on I Cor. 1: 1-9. 
- 18** Men’s monthly prayer breakfast, 9:00 a.m. The location will be announced.
- 19** Elder Jon Vega preaching on I Cor. 1:10-17.
- 25** Harvest Party in the evening. Time to be announced.
- 26** Eric Byrom preaching on I Cor. 1:18-31. 

The past month at GFC in pictures...



Before ... and ... after



Doug Jackson teaching



BREAKING NEWS!

Community Celebration
8/28/2021

Grace Fellowship Church

365 Straub Rd East • Mansfield Oh 44903
419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com

- Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor
- Jadaé Fox Elder
- Andy Heiningner Elder
- Jon Vega Elder

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)

