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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The summer was (and still is) very hot, but has been made much more enjoyable by the retreat we had at the end of July.

For one thing, the temperature is a lot cooler up in the mountains.

Another thing was how much time we were able to have just studying the Word of God. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, we are studying Old Testament Law on Sundays for bible study, so we took a break from that and studied the life of Paul. Each year I have each of the ladies (since we have no members who are men) to study a separate item and give a report on it during the retreat. This year, I had each to study a city which Paul was involved with through the course of Acts, and to study the relation between the nature of the city and the nature of the church, and how that was reflected in the Epistles.

One thing we envy you folks in the States for is the vast amount of study and reference material you have. We have very little such material in Japanese. Even so, the advent of the Internet has made things much, much easier. And given the depth of these themes, material on history, geography, archeology, etc., is very helpful. The ladies who waited to the last minute to get started found themselves looking at some long nights at the study desk. However, everyone agreed that it was well worth it, and along with the time spent for fellowship and the like, it was a wonderful experience. We look forward to more in the future.

The kids started back to school today. While we have opportunity for testimony through school activities, our faith also means that the kids are easily isolated. Many special school activities are on Sunday morning, and also the neighborhood children group's activities include the summer festival at the Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple.

I know about how disappointing this can be for the kids, since I myself went through Japanese school and often missed out on Field Day and the like. Please pray for our children that they will decide to take a stand as a testimony, despite the fun and friendships they often miss out on.

Thank you again for your continuing prayers and support.

In His Love,

Nathan, Ikuko, Joe, Ray, and Kanon Elkins