Allison's San Diego Reflection

OMF / Morioka Bible Baptist Church　Allison Smith



It is truly a blessing to witness how God is bringing people to himself and to be connected to the larger family of believers. This short-term trip showed me another small glimpse of how God is working, both in Japan and in San Diego. I enjoyed getting to know the team members and seeing how strong their faith is. I was encouraged that they took this step of faith, many of them college students, and trusted God to provide for them as they traveled to another country to learn more about what God is doing around the world. It allowed me to reflect on my first trip to Japan when I was a college student. God used that time in my life to give me a heart for people in Japan to come to know Him and His love, eventually leading me back here full time. My desire is not only that more people in Japan come to know God but that they live out their faith, sharing it with others. To see these team members doing so was amazing! I'm excited for how God will continue to use this trip in their lives for them to bring back what they have learned to their own churches.

I was also encouraged by the work Pastor K is doing in San Diego and blessed by the brothers and sisters who graciously welcomed us for two weeks. Pastor K has a heart for evangelizing and reaching out to the communities in the San Diego area. One example of this was during our outing at Balboa Park. Pastor K heard some young people speaking Japanese and went up to talk to them. Our plans had been cancelled the next evening, so he invited them to have dinner together and do a short Bible study. We didn't know if they would be interested, but five of them came! We started the evening with some games and then had dinner together. After dinner, Pastor K shared from the Bible and then we broke up into small groups. The girl in my group asked a lot of really good questions about God and faith, which allowed the two team members and me to share about God and part of our testimonies.

OMF / Morioka Bible Baptist Church Allison Smith

Later we found out that Pastor K's wife had been praying that we would meet people at Balboa park that we could share with! It was incredible to see such a tangible answer to prayer and we were all deeply impacted. The girl who was at my table is also interested in meeting online for English practice. In a few weeks, a few of the team members and I plan to meet with her and also hope to share a short Bible study or story.



Thinking back on this time, I couldn't help but realize that we could have missed this opportunity! I was in charge of managing the team budget and we arrived at the parking lot 30 minutes before it would be free to park. It seemed like a waste to pay for 4 hours of parking for only 30 minutes, and I wondered if we should wait and come back.

However, Pastor K and David considered the risk of having to load the entire team back into the car and drive to another location—especially since it was the day of the event—as well as the uncertainty of whether they could actually make it back in 30 minutes, or, even if they did, whether they would be able to park in this nearby lot again. This was because this parking lot was the most convenient option for first-time visitors and would avoid causing confusion for the team. Taking these factors into account, they decided, "There's no helping it this time. Let's just pay."

Afterwards, I realized that if we had done what I thought was best, then we would not have been in the same place, at the same time, and would likely not have met the students. What seemed like a waste to me, was actually part of God's perfect timing. This trip challenged my own principles and showed me that I can trust God's provision even when things don't seem the most efficient. It is easy for me to focus on little details and lose sight of God's bigger picture at times. It also gave me insights into American culture from a Japanese perspective, as well as deepened my understanding in areas of Japanese culture. Through the challenges and the encouragements I experienced, I am reminded that God is working in so many ways to draw people to himself all for his honor and glory - in San Diego, in Japan, and around the world.









San Diego Short-Term Mission Trip 2026

Beside still waters Church　Sakura Harada







First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the churches of the Conservative Baptist Alliance and the mission team for supporting us with your many prayers and donations. During this short-term mission trip, I learned a great deal through new experiences and fellowship with others, and I experienced God's grace every day. Over these two weeks, I was greatly encouraged by the presence of those who prayed for us, and I truly felt that God is a God who answers those prayers. I would like to share with you what I gained from this mission trip.

Unlike the other team members, I had only been baptized this past May and was still a newcomer to the Christian faith. I had a desire to deepen my understanding of the Bible and was praying to God for an opportunity to study when, right in June, I saw the call for this short-term mission trip—so I applied without hesitation. I didn't know a single person there, so I was a little anxious, but thanks to the support of my brothers and sisters in the church and the wonderful teammates I was blessed with, I had a fantastic experience and met friends I deeply respect. For me, simply being given the opportunity to go on this mission trip was a great blessing.

What I learned most through this trip was the proper attitude toward mission work. I had hardly told anyone outside my family that I had become a Christian, and I hadn't even been able to tell my close friends. I had two sides to myself—one as a Christian and one for the wider society—and there were quite a few moments in my daily life when I wasn't conscious of God. However, as I spent time with Pastor Kashiwakura, I saw that he never missed an opportunity to share the Gospel, no matter the situation, and always made sure he was ready to speak about it. Seeing him constantly pray to God and rely on Him inspired me to remain true to myself as a Christian and to speak the Gospel boldly even after returning to Japan.

Interacting with the international language students I met at Balboa Park provided a great opportunity for practical experience. It was my first time sharing the Gospel with anyone, and I was very nervous, wondering how I should go about it and how I could get them interested in the Bible. However, once I actually started talking, they asked me far more questions than I had imagined. The members at our table each shared their own testimonies, and I was also able to listen to the international student's story, making it a very meaningful discussion. What surprised me even more was that one of the students mentioned he liked philosophy. Since my own journey to church began when I was studying philosophy in college, and since he said he was interested in modern philosophers like Nietzsche, I felt it was all the more worthwhile to share the Gospel with him. I truly enjoyed the experience and was able to openly exchange thoughts with him. I had thought they probably wouldn't pay much attention to what we had to say, but it turned out that I was the one who had built a wall in my heart. I felt God's guidance in being granted this kind of encounter, and I was deeply moved to learn that there were people who had been praying for this very thing. Amid all these lessons, there was one event that transformed my own heart and gave me a strong motivation for evangelism. On Sunday, while driving to a church in La Jolla, I had the opportunity to speak with Pastor Kashiwakura. Even before participating in this short-term mission trip, I had a desire to dedicate my life to God, but I was struggling with doubts and inner conflict, and I had been seeking Pastor Kashiwakura's advice on the matter. Among the things he shared, what particularly made me reflect was that "a calling from the Lord is essential" for a lifelong commitment to God. Upon hearing those words, I asked myself what God was expecting of me, and I prayed earnestly, asking Him to reveal His will to me.

Beside still waters Church　Sakura Harada

At the evening service in La Jolla that followed, there was a sermon on the birth of the church, during which the verse from 1 Thessalonians 1:4 —“We know that you have been chosen by God”— was quoted. Hearing this verse, I realized once again that God had chosen me, and I prayed that I would trust Him completely and respond to His will. Then, after the sermon ended and we were singing hymns, the words “Preach the gospel to everyone in the world. Enable all Christians to proclaim the gospel” suddenly came to me. I was surprised because this was my first time having such an experience, but in that instant, I was deeply moved by the meaning of those words and felt that this was what I must do; tears welled up as I gave thanks to God for answering my prayer. These words remain deeply etched in my heart to this day. I held back my tears until the service ended, but as soon as it was over, I could no longer contain them, and a friend who saw me took me to another room. My friend stayed by my side until I calmed down and, along with some other sisters, prayed for me. Later, Pastor Kashiwakura, Eriko, Alison, and David also prayed for me. I also learned that one member had been praying that everyone would be able to feel God’s presence during this mission trip. I am truly grateful to have had such brothers and sisters by my side.

Through this mission trip, I feel that a fire has been kindled within me for evangelism. Based on my many experiences, I realize that mission work in Japan is an urgent priority, and I feel deeply that I must not remain passive toward mission work, as I once was. I also came to realize that behind the grace God bestowed upon me during this trip there were always someone’s prayers, and that I have a family in Christ who prays for me. And God certainly answered my prayers. I want to keep what I’ve learned firmly in my heart and, together with God, take steady steps forward—boldly moving from faith to faith. I am now very much looking forward to seeing how God will use me and my fellow travelers in the days ahead. I am truly grateful to the Kashiwakura family, who provided this wonderful opportunity and supported me every day; to everyone at the churches of the Conservative Baptist Alliance; and to the members of the mission team. If anyone is thinking about participating in this mission trip in the future, I strongly encourage you to take that first step!







Report on the Short-Term Mission Trip to San Diego

Keisen Christian Church, Yonezawa Chapel, Tomoe Yamagishi



I am truly grateful for your prayers and donations that sent us off on this short-term mission trip. Though it is only a small token, I would like to share a bit of the blessings we received. If asked what left the deepest impression on me during this trip, I would answer without hesitation that it was the encounter at Balboa Park. In that park, where Missionary Kashiwagura had taken me sightseeing, I unexpectedly ran into a Japanese international students. That encounter—which should have ended with us simply saying, “Let’s both enjoy San Diego”—took on great significance thanks to Missionary Kashiwagura’s single remark: “Why don’t you come to the church dinner tomorrow?” At that moment, I was truly overwhelmed by the way Missionary Kashiwagura instantly took action when an opportunity from God presented itself right before our eyes. I feel he demonstrated the spirit of mission work through his actions. Later, I learned that before this happened, Missionary Kashiwagura’s wife, Haruka, had actually met a Japanese person at Balboa Park and had been praying that our team could connect with them. This made me realize that behind every miracle lies someone’s prayer, and I felt the power of prayer. At the dinner the next day, Missionary Kashiwagura asked those students about “God.” I was worried that they might react negatively to religion. However, they were the ones who often initiated conversations and asked questions—mentioning that they liked philosophy and were interested in theology, that they had attended a mission-affiliated high school, and that they had gone to Sunday school. I was simply amazed by God’s grace, which far exceeded our expectations. I truly felt that God is alive and at work.

At the end of the dinner, we exchanged contact information, and I thought our role had come to an end there. I was satisfied that they might have come away with a positive impression—that Christians aren’t strange, hard-to-understand people, but rather people just like this. I wasn’t planning to reach out to them proactively; I figured it would be fine just to stay loosely connected through social media.

But then it happened suddenly. On the day before he was set to return to Japan, Missionary Kashiwagura announced that he was giving everyone a challenge: to stay in touch with them and pray for their salvation. Honestly, when he told me this, I thought, “Ugh… so this is where the challenge from God comes in… (￣□￣lll).” I thought I fully understood that spiritual learning isn’t just about intellectual understanding—that we are most blessed and can truly experience God when we take action—but even so, I really didn’t want to do it… I think behind that feeling lay a fear of evangelism. Thoughts swirled through my head: “What if I’m rejected? What will they think of me? What if they feel like, ‘See, I told you so—it’s just another religion trying to recruit me’?”

However, if I were to say that during this mission trip I was filled with the Holy Spirit, set ablaze, and charged forward without fear to share about God—that would sound very dramatic. But that wasn’t the case; it seemed to me that I lacked both the courage and the words to evangelize. I simply sent the message while trembling, thinking, “Since God has shown me to do this, I’ll obey.” It was a huge challenge for me. There was another challenge I faced in this regard: asking my team to pray for me as I reached out to people. Up until then, even though I knew it was better to ask for prayer before taking such action, I couldn’t bring myself to do so because I was embarrassed about having to tell them if I failed. However, during this mission trip, I learned the power of prayer and of evangelizing as a team, so I asked for their prayer support.

Keisen Christian Church, Yonezawa Chapel, Tomoe Yamagishi

At that moment, a team member told me, “God is ultimately in charge! Even if you’re turned down, taking action will help you grow!” That encouragement gave me the push I needed to take that first step and reach out to them. As you can see from what I’ve written so far, it’s not as though I was dramatically transformed by the mission trip and suddenly became able to take action without any anxiety or fear about missions. I’m still the same insignificant person who thinks, “There’s no way I can do missions…”—but thanks to everyone’s prayers, I’m groping my way forward, taking steps as best I can. I believe I’m still a work in progress, currently walking the path of faith one step at a time. Even if, at this very moment, I don’t feel any dramatic inner change before or after the mission trip, I hope that when I look back decades from now, I’ll be able to remember this trip as a major turning point—a time when God transformed me so that I could live a life dedicated to the mission of evangelism. Finally, I’m so grateful that I’ve stayed in touch with one of the international language students, and we’ve scheduled an online meeting for the end of October. At that time, I plan to share my testimony of salvation. I truly feel this is all thanks to everyone praying together as a team for the mission. I don’t know how God will lead me from here, but I intend to move forward, always praying and giving thanks for whatever the outcome may be. I would be grateful if you could continue to pray for me in this matter.
Once again, I sincerely thank you all for your prayers and financial support. Thank you very much.







San Diego Short-Term Mission Trip

Morioka Bible Baptist Church—Ohji Kondo



I am grateful for the opportunity to visit San Diego this time. Thank you so much for supporting us through your prayers and donations.

I set out on this mission trip determined to enjoy and make the most of my 15 days in the United States. However, God blessed me with so many wonderful encounters, lessons, and experiences that far exceeded my expectations. No matter how much I thought about what to write here from all that I received during this time, I just couldn't decide. I kept writing and erasing, writing and erasing, and before I knew it, the deadline had passed.

As I read the reports written by the other members, I realized once again just how truly blessed this mission trip was—but at the same time, I couldn't help but think, "Is there really anything left for me to write?" Everyone else has already covered everything I wanted to share, so please be sure to read their reports.
Rather than looking back on each event that took place over those 15 days one by one, I'd like to write about what this trip made me think about my future.

I have a dream of starting my own business someday. This trip has made that desire even stronger than before. Now that I'm a junior in college and have started job hunting, I've begun to think seriously about my future. Going on this mission trip at just the right time has made me feel that my future and my life as a Christian are more closely connected than ever before.

Until now, I had felt a slight disconnect between my dream of "starting my own business" and my desire as a Christian to "walk in obedience to God." I tried to force a connection between the-two,walk in obedience to God." I tried to force a connection between the two, but I wasn't fully convinced, and I struggled with this inner conflict. During my trip, I had the opportunity to visit a shop started by a Christian. At one hamburger shop, Bible verses were printed on the bottoms of drink cups and on the hamburger wrappers. At another bakery, they were handing out free Bibles, and verses were written on the walls inside the shop. I honestly thought it was interesting to see that faith could be expressed in ways like this. I haven't decided exactly what kind of business I'll start, but of course, I want to live a life that reflects God's glory through whatever work I do. To be honest, I want to make money. If I were to say "I want to be rich" in Christian circles, people might think I'm not very faithful, but I'm serious.

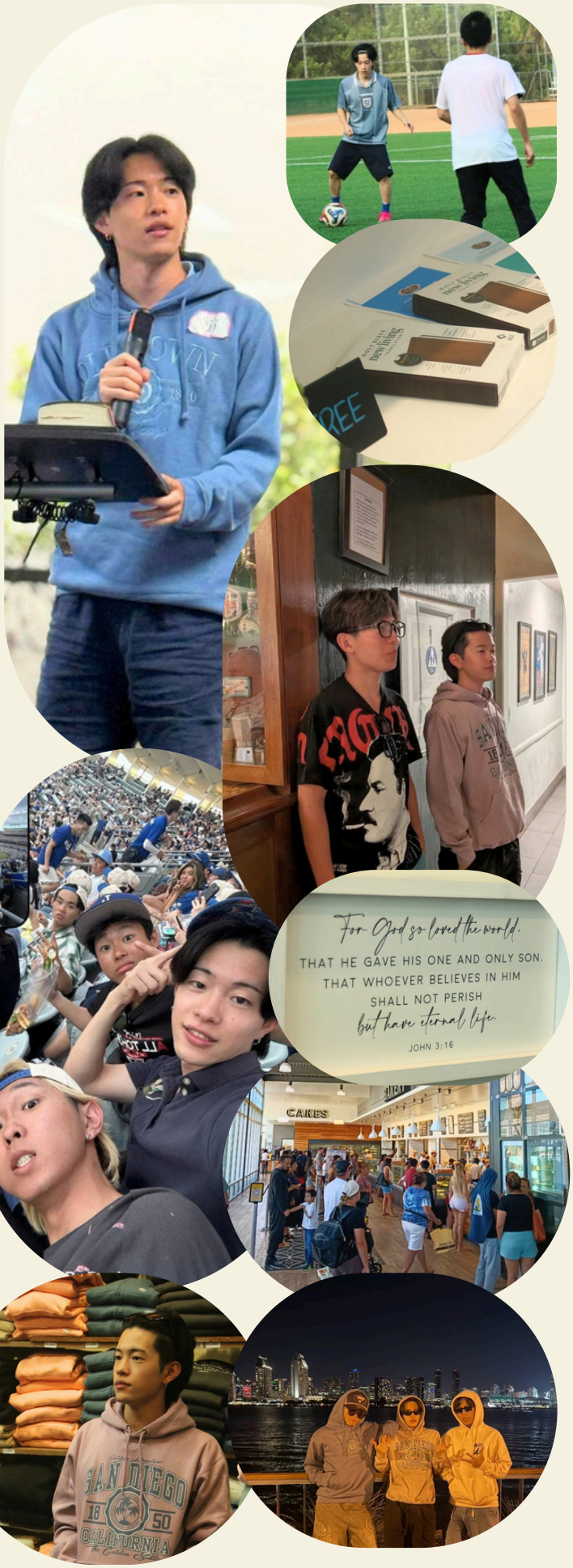
I visited three churches in the U.S. All three were facilities unlike anything I'd ever seen in Japan. They weren't just beautiful or spacious and large—I could also sense the boldness and attention to detail in their design. Of course, the environment surrounding churches and the economic scale are completely different between the U.S. and Japan, but what left a particularly strong impression on me was their attitude toward welcoming visitors. American churches go to great lengths to invite non-Christians—doing everything they can to make people want to come. One of those efforts is having beautiful, large buildings. Of course, the most important thing isn't a grand building or flashy appearances. However, if the exterior is too run-down, people won't even want to come in the first place—no matter how good the church's work is.

Morioka Bible Baptist Church—Ohji Kondo

In that sense, too, the churches I saw in the U.S. conveyed an attitude of always striving for the highest possible quality—both in appearance and substance—and welcoming people with all their heart.

I want to start a business, earn money, and use as much of it as possible for the church, for missions, and for evangelism. That desire became even more concrete through this trip. The power of money is certainly immense. It's necessary for survival, and there are times when I catch myself thinking, "If only I had money…" At the same time, it's a major temptation and can even become an idol. The church, evangelism, and missions. In reality, I believe that having money would allow us to do more and expand our possibilities. But that doesn't mean these things can't be done without money. That's why, rather than thinking, "If I have money, I can do something for God," I want to adopt the attitude that "whether I have money or not, I will live for God first. On that basis, if God grants me money, I will consider how to use it." I don't know if God will grant me wealth. I might start a business and succeed, or I might fail. In fact, I don't even know if I'll actually start a business in the future. Even so, this experience has reaffirmed my desire to live for God. These 15 days in San Diego were, for me, "15 days of learning about missions" as well as "15 days of reflecting on how I should live from now on." I want to record these thoughts here so that when I reread this report years from now, I can look back on them. Once again, thank you so much to everyone who supported this mission trip.





Through the San Diego Short-Term Mission Trip

Morioka Bible Baptist Church—Zion Watanabe



Thank you so much for sending us off with your many prayers and donations. I am truly convinced that this would not have been a journey we could have undertaken without the many prayers supporting us from behind the scenes. Even while I was in the United States, I felt the power of those prayers deeply. It was my first time abroad and my first mission trip. Everything was new to me—it was all so fresh, and every single day was a continuous series of exciting experiences. Now, as I look back at the thousands of photos sent to our group chat during those two weeks, just seeing the pictures brings back vivid memories of the conversations we had, the things I heard, and the things I wanted to share when I returned. That's how intense those two weeks were for me—a wonderful time I will never forget for the rest of my life.

It was March, and after failing my national exam, I had absolutely no idea what my path would be starting in April. Even so, I decided to stay in Morioka for another year, trusting in God and entrusting myself to Him, believing that this, too, was part of His wonderful plan of hope. It felt like I was at rock bottom, but Pastor Kondo gave me a little push (?) by saying, "Zion, you can go to San Diego!!" I've come to see the fact that I ended up staying in Morioka (since I was originally from Hokkaido) as having some kind of meaning, and I've been able to look at it positively. I began praying, "If God will open this path for me, I want to go to San Diego." I remember praying and praying, then—feeling nervous—going to tell Pastor Kondo, "I want to go to the United States."

From August 28 to September 12, I visited the San Diego Nikkei Christian Church. I attended worship services in Oceanside and La Jolla, as well as evangelistic meetings. I was surprised to find so many Japanese people in San Diego.

There were three events that left a lasting impression on me. The first was meeting international students at Balboa Park. Orignaly, I had planned to have a Bible study with another international students said they were too busy, so it didn't happen—which I was very disappointed about. Afterward, I went to Balboa Park and met some Japanese international students there. It started when asked, "Are you Japanese?" and before I knew it, Pastor Kashiwagura was inviting them to the dinner party the next day. Watching Pastor Kashiwagura's example, I realized there are different ways to evangelize; I learned so much and was truly amazed. Because of this approach to evangelism, here in the United States, I was able to connect with people whom I would have never interacted with if we had merely passed each other on the street in Japan.

Morioka Bible Baptist Church—Zion Watanabe

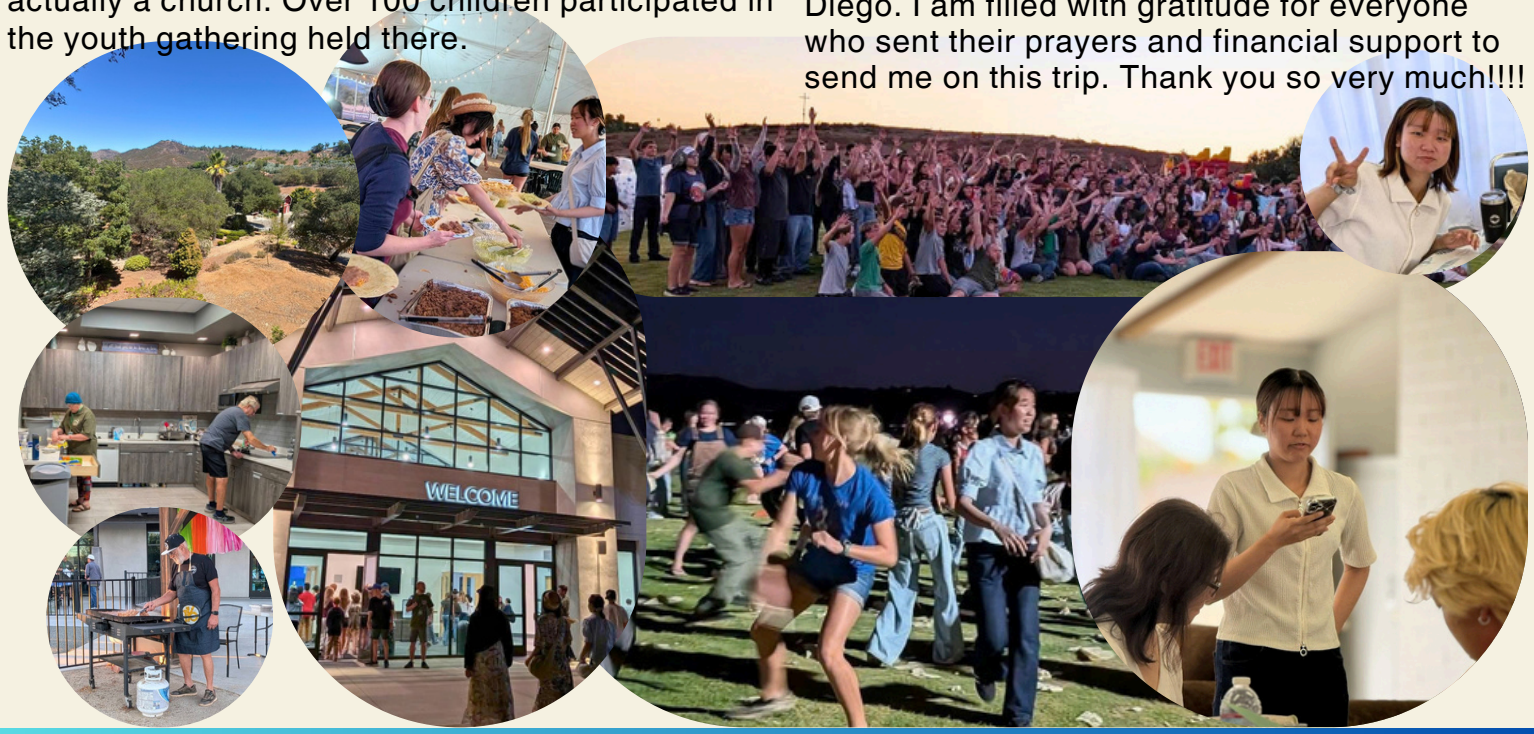
We all thought seriously about Pastor Kashiwakura's question: "Do you think God is Real ?" I feel it was truly a blessing to gain even a little insight into how non-Christians think about God and live their lives. Actually, I later learned that behind the scenes of our meeting with these international students, Pastor Kashiwakura's wife, Haruka, had been praying at Balboa Park that we would have a meaningful encounter. The power of prayer is truly amazing, and I was able to deeply sense that God is alive and at work.

The second experience was at Bethany Church. We attended our second Sunday worship service, and in the afternoon, we had a time where everyone could ask the pastors questions. The words that left the deepest impression on me were, "You are Christ's representatives in Japan." It really made me stop in my tracks, and it gave me time to reflect anew, thinking, "That's right." Sometimes I worry about what others think and hesitate to speak up, but I felt a sense of urgency: "In Japan, where only 1% of the population is Christian, how can I not share the wonders of this God?!" I heard that this church also rents out its rooms to other churches. They explained that this isn't about viewing other churches as rivals—as if they were enemies—but rather that since we all look up to and worship the same God, local churches need to help one another.

The third point concerns the youth gathering at the Valley Center. The first thing that surprised me upon arriving was the vast, expansive grounds—so large that I had to rub my eyes to believe it was actually a church. Over 100 children participated in the youth gathering held there.

Valley Center is like a small, rural town perched on a mountain, but even in such a rural setting, I was truly encouraged to see so many young people there. What moved me most was seeing the entire church community rallying to support the youth. In Japanese churches, I feel like college students often support events for middle and high school students, but there, grandparents were cooking meals, many adults were leading from the front, and others were serving behind the scenes as the unsung heroes. In other words, the entire church—across all generations—was giving it their all to make the gathering a success. They also had many creative ideas for attracting people. As I visited several churches in the U.S., I was struck by just how incredible their efforts to invite people were! I realized how important it is to have places to hang out, a spacious entrance, and attractive walls—all designed to make even non-Christians want to come. It also made me realize just how wonderful it feels to be welcomed. From now on, whenever someone comes to church for the first time, I want to be more proactive in reaching out to them and do my very best to help in any way I can.

Over these past two weeks, I experienced so many things and was deeply inspired; time and again, I found myself thinking about how vast and wonderful the world God has created truly is. I want to remember all the grace and blessings I received in the U.S. and bring them back to Japan—and to Morioka—to put them to good use. I will also continue to pray for San Diego. I am filled with gratitude for everyone who sent their prayers and financial support to send me on this trip. Thank you so very much!!!!



Spending Time with the Short-Term Mission Team

San Diego Nikkei Chritian Church　Naoto Kashiwagura



My name is Naoto Kashiwagura, and I live in San Diego. Once again, thank you for your prayers—not only for this mission trip but also for the Kashiwakura family's ministry and daily life in general. Personally, while living abroad has brought various struggles and challenges, I want to express my gratitude that, thanks to your support, I am able to lead such a fulfilling life right now. Furthermore, I realize that this mission trip was made possible by your prayers and financial contributions, and that its resounding success was a miracle that could not have been achieved without your prayers and God's support. I am truly grateful.

Since I participated in many of the events during this mission trip, I'd like to briefly reflect on the experience.

With the exception of Eriko, I was meeting all the other members of the mission trip for the first time. However, we bonded quickly, and I had a truly wonderful time. Because the trip's schedule was quite packed, I was concerned about everyone's health at the beginning. While a few people did feel a bit under the weather, under God's guidance and protection, everyone returned safely without any major accidents or injuries. I was incredibly grateful and happy that we were all able to return home together.

Now, I'm currently attending Mesa College in San Diego, California. Since the mission trip overlapped with my college schedule, I had to squeeze in participation in the mission trip events between classes. However, through organizing this mission trip, I learned a great deal and gained many new insights. In particular, spending time with members close to my age—many of whom were traveling abroad for the first time—and seeing how they viewed things from various perspectives gave me new inspiration. It allowed me to see the surroundings I live in every day in a completely fresh light, as if they were something entirely different. Furthermore, the greatest benefit I gained from this trip came from sharing and discussing past experiences with the male members. Since most of the members, like me, were raised in Christian families, it was very easy to talk with them, and the time we spent sharing our thoughts was incredibly valuable to me. It has been over two years since I first set foot in the United States, and as I've lived immersed in English—speaking Japanese only with my family—I realized through this interaction with Japanese peers of my own generation that my Japanese perspective and way of thinking had unconsciously begun to fade.

San Diego Nikkei Chritian Church　Naoto Kashiwagura

Having spent my childhood in Australia and attended high school and college in the United States, I was born in Japan and can speak Japanese, but I feel like there's a part of me that can't quite become a "true" Japanese person. When I return to Japan, I'm treated like a foreigner because I'm a returnee. On the other hand, even when I live in the U.S., I'm treated as a foreigner because I'm Asian. Although I'm blessed with friends and am by no means lonely, I went through a long period of struggling with my identity. Subconsciously feeling a sense of loneliness, I had convinced myself that there was no perfect place for me to belong.

However, on this trip, I met everyone in the group and once again felt the warmth of the Christian community deep in my heart. It didn't matter whether I was ethnically Asian or Japanese, or culturally a foreigner. I realized that the Christian family centered on God and Jesus Christ is, above all else, where I truly belong. I had been thinking selfishly, arbitrarily deciding, "I'm like this, so that's why." But in the presence of God—this immense being—race and culture don't matter; the circle of Christians connected by faith is truly my truest home.

As I continue my college life and face various difficulties and obstacles regarding my future, I want to keep God at the center and walk forward with strong faith, trusting that He will guide me.

Human beings are weak. Even trivial matters close at hand can shake our faith and cause us to stray from the path. Since you are all members of this Christian family centered on God, I would be overjoyed if we could continue to pray for one another in the days ahead.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped organize this mission trip and offered their donations and prayers to support us, and I pray that the Lord will sustain, guide, and bless you all. Thank you to all the members! It was an intense two weeks.Hope to see you all soon!!







