

December 2016

MERRY GLORIOUS CHRISTMAS!

What a night! We had eleven of us at Higashi Murayama Station (East Village Mountain). Half of us passed out candy canes and tracts and the other half sang. We had a floutist with us, too. Before we got to the station we had to stop at the train tracks to let trains pass. A fire-truck broke the arm of the railroad crossing so we had to wait longer than usual to cross. After ten minutes of sitting I grabbed a box of tracts and went up to the tracks to loose a mighty Ho Ho Ho! We got started on time, just not in the way we anticipated. One fellow refused the offering, explaining: "I'm not a child." That was the only grey spot in a bright evening. One girl stopped to say: "I saw you last week at Tokorozawa-- she then showed me the picture she took. One Muslim gladly received a tract, candy, and a Salaam Alechem. The crowd was receptive--we handed out three hundred in about forty minutes. But the fun didn't stop there. As we were driving home, we stopped at a red light. I still had my Santa suit on. Some mothers saw me and said to their children--"Looook, it's Santa Claus!" Thence ensued wild carousings and giggles of the little multitudes.

At Nishi Tokorozawa one woman gave the boys a box of candy for their labors. Another gave me a tract she had made by herself full of Scripture portions. On the several occasions I was asked where I came from I replied: "The North Pole." Japanese people, however, are not aware of that part of the legend so I go back to being a New Yorker, which for some reason increases their admiration.

It was a great season. We had seven adventures caroling at five different stations. Church people and seminarians came along with us. The adventures had a double blessing of sharing His Word and empowering His Church.

Last night, we enjoyed a quiet time at home. It has been a glorious season so far. The boys and Yuko have been great going here and there, facing the crowds. You may remember I mentioned we have a new charge--the Administrative Board of the Church we will be serving at beginning in April, has been informed of our appointment by the Conference. I have known the Board for twenty-five years, so we are not strangers to them. A couple of them went to the train station to sing and hand out flyers with us recently. I will continue working with other churches, too, especially Katsuta and the English School.

Besides handing out candy canes and tracts, Corey, Caleb and I have all been part of the play, The Fourth Wiseman. We will do it again on Christmas day--that will make three times and two churches this month. Corey is the lead, and grows older during the course of the play. He ends up wearing my Santa's beard when he portrays an aged Altoban (Fourth Wiseman).

Tradition! Tradition! The week before last we made it to the Tokorozawa Station three times--we didn't have one night of freezing weather. On one of those evenings, Corey and I went out together. Caleb had come home from school a bit under the weather so he rested. McDonalds always makes it into our outings; our favorite Scotchman provides the treats after an invigorating evening. Corey and I were not remiss in following tradition! Besides, I'd have suffered had I stood between him and his Chicken McNuggets! As for the folks we meet when we sing, give treats, and pass out tracts or

flyers, the Japanese are usually a solemn people. At Christmas, however, many of them can't hold back a smirk when father Christmas arrives on the scene Ho Ho Ho-ing.

Some folks don't observe Christmas, even in a secular way. Caleb and I were walking Rosey the other day and spied two Jehovah's Witnesses approaching a house. We waited for them to be rejected and then went over to chat for a spell. I chatted with another two at Katsuta on Wednesday. I always share that I appreciate their zeal. This usually opens a door for friendly conversation. I then let them know that I disagree with their beliefs. Isaiah 43 is the Schema Israel--"The Lord our God is one." This is a favorite verse for them. In Isaiah 44:5,6 we have: "Thus says the Lord God and His Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, I am the first and I am the last." I like to share this with them. Another idea that is a "must think about" is this: "If a person were stranded on an island with nothing but a Bible, they would most likely come to understand the things of God in a way similar to that which I do. The Jehovah Witness belief system needs other books to explain what they hold to be true. We had a nice sharing time--mostly me talking, and I learned that they know Kanazawa san, the Jehovah's Witness I talked to last month. Caleb witnessed this most recent discussion. I don't think he remembers the ladies we had visit a couple times a month, for a period of months, while Yuko was pregnant with Corey in NY. I hope he learned something. Though our two parties were of different persuasions, we didn't argue. I guess an important lesson would be decorum in disagreement--if Caleb and his brother could grasp this our lives would be changed!

In closing let me tell you the last picture attached is not staged. This is how the boys fell asleep one night. They worked hard this Christmas. As Scrooge would say: "Remarkable lads."

Well, we pray your Christmas Season is blessed. We miss you and look forward to seeing you in the summer of 2017, the Lord willing.
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Your fellow soldiers in His love,

Chris, Yuko Caleb, Corey, and Rosey (pooch)

Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your Word with boldness...Acts 4:29