

MIDWESTERNER ON PACE TRIP

(Prayer And Cultural Experience)



Odawara Castle

journey to Japan. Pauline Carlson from Fujisawa was key in sculpting our itinerary.

Covenant women love excitement and adventure! The celebration, rejoicing and feasting prevalent at Triennial XII is still in motion with the advent of lively PACE trips. I was lucky enough to be one of seven women from around the U.S. who met for the first time in May 2008 to embark on a



PACE team from the U.S.

Prayer prevailed everywhere and with every person we met! It was a delight to be with six missionary families in their homes. They freely shared themselves, Japanese cuisine, and their prayer concerns with us. They particularly asked us to pray about ways to love the Japanese into faith in Christ. We visited a host of Covenant churches of all shapes and sizes, one staffed by Japanese pastors & workers. We had un-imaginable times of prayer with these ministers of the gospel.

We visited other Covenant outreach ministries such as the Christian Academy of Japan and the Covenant Seminary. We had prayer walks around both of these schools. These missionaries are extending themselves with the love of Christ in incredible ways – a shelter for abused women (see the Fall 2007 *Inspirit* article), a downtown café staffed with the mentally challenged, a kindergarten, a local hospital, sports activities, classes in English and the Akagi Bible Camp.

After our visits my prayer journal was bulging! Our team concentrated on praying most the time, even in unlikely places – near the mountain of Akagi, by the side of a river, and at the top of a skyscraper. We even prayed on the sixteen trains we rode. Some were so crowded that we had to stand and hang onto ceiling rings. I called it “swaying and praying!” I think Paul would have been pleased that we were “increasingly devoted to prayer and prayed without ceasing.” Prayer gave us an incredible privilege of partnering with God to change lives. We trust our prayers lead to lasting change, glory to God and joy to many – including ourselves.



Prayer at the Konna River

I thought that the cultural part of our trip would put me out of my comfort zone, however, rather than “cultural shock” I experienced “cultural appreciation.” The Japanese are very cleanliness-oriented. I was glad that we were advised to bring shoes we could easily remove. In every home and church we shed our shoes and were supplied slippers. The slippers were all EXTRA large! Our team rapidly learned to do a new dance I called the “slipper shuffle!” It’s tricky to do this dance up and down stairs!



Worship at IBF Church



Christian Academy of Japan

As we were always greeted with a bow by the Japanese we met, I tried to learn their bowing technique. You must duck your head a bit while tilting slightly from the waist. I don't think I did this well but I made an effort. Even a visit to a McDonalds was a cultural experience. We all had a shrimp burger and a green tea milkshake. The milkshake probably wouldn't sell well in our hometowns!

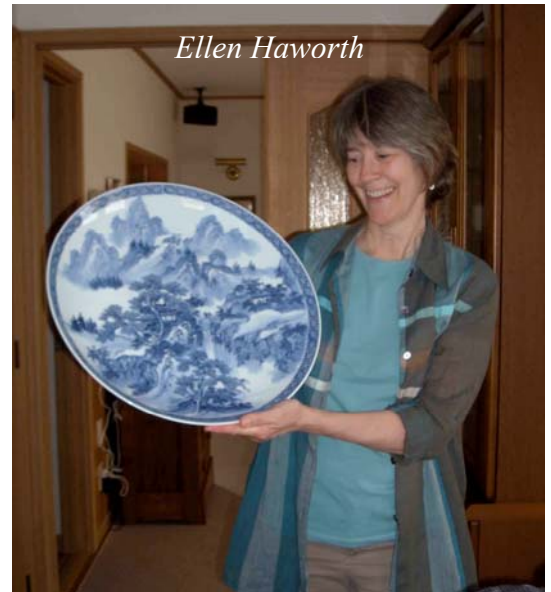


Tea Ceremony

At a Japanese tea ceremony at Shibukawa Church, we discovered that it's not at all about drinking tea but how to control one's body. I know I couldn't do in my exercise clothes what they do in their kimonos! We visited a Japanese Inn that has a historic bathing process. We tried it all!

It was heartbreaking, however, to learn more of the Asian's religious belief system. It precludes the need of a Savior. Viewing a multitude of written paper prayers hung on a rack outside a Buddhist temple, I was thankful that our prayers actually reach our God!

I was the only one from the Midwest Conference on this PACE team and was pleased to learn that Ellen Haworth is one of our Special Interest Missionaries. We were in her home for several meals and enjoyed being with her husband, Jay, and their family. I especially related to Ellen as we are both nurses.



Ellen Haworth

To round out the depth of our trip, I need to add an "R" to the PACE acronym. I was blessed with **R**elationships. The relationships I forged characterized my trip. I was thankful for all the people I came to know and love in Japan. I now have a host of brothers and sisters in Christ that all speak Japanese!

Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to consider participating in a PACE adventure? There is an opportunity to be on an upcoming PACE trip to China. (See the Covenant Women's web site for details.) If that isn't a possibility, create a mini-PACE experience by connecting with a missionary on home assignment. You could also select a country you'd like to know more about, then use the Covenant Missionary Prayer Calendar to look up a missionary working in that country, and e-mail them, telling them you'd like to pray for them. You can be certain they'd be thrilled to hear from you!

Joyce Carver

Joyce Carver and her husband, Bob, attend the Evangelical Covenant Church in Pomeroy, Iowa. She can be contacted at lake2carvers@iowatelecom.net

