



# Fowler Summer 2024

Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan

Thank you for allowing us to share our hearts with you! We are excited to be planning this time of Kingdom work, and we hope that you will be willing to partner with us to make it a reality.

We seek to serve the Living God, and we believe He has given us experiences, opportunities, and gifts which may prove useful in ministry to those living in Japan. Ultimately, this work is God's work and we want to join heartily in whatever ways we can.

This PDF is a "self-service version" of what we would normally share with you in person. The images at the top of each page are the slides which would be projected, and this middle area of text will serve as a narration of what we likely would be saying during each one.

We hope you find the following useful. Moreover, we would love to connect further if you have any comments or questions. Contact info appears near the end.

May God be praised for the opportunities He sends our way!

# A Bit About Us

- ❖ Born near Dallas, TX
- ❖ Grew up in Lubbock & Plano
- ❖ Soccer, Computers, and Band
- ❖ Raised in the Prestoncrest CofC Family
- ❖ Active Youth Group
  - ❖ Mission Trips, Workcamps, Bible Bowl
  - ❖ Weekly Devos & Service Projects



## A Brief Introduction

Since you may or may not know us very well, we will begin with a brief time to get to know us a bit better.

Clay was born near Dallas, Texas, and spent most of his formative years in nearby Plano (with a handful of years spent in Lubbock). As a young man, he enjoyed playing soccer, tinkering with computers and basic programming, and played the French horn in the band.

He was raised in the Prestoncrest Church of Christ family (Dallas, TX) and still maintains many friendships there. His parents are still active members, and his brother Mark is raising a family of his own there as well.

Clay was an active youth group member growing up and frequently participated in just about every activity that was available. Highlights include mission trips, workcamps, and countless hours preparing for the area-wide Bible Bowl meetings. He also enjoyed the weekly Wednesday devotionals and service projects around the city.

# A Bit About Us



- ❖ Born in Memphis, TN
- ❖ Tokyo, Japan ~ age 3 - 12
- ❖ Crafts, Flowers, and Music
- ❖ Park Avenue CofC Family, Memphis
- ❖ God's child ~ Preacher / Missionary's daughter
- ❖ Mission trips & International travel

Emily Rachel was born in Memphis, Tennessee, to aspiring missionaries Dwight and Josephine Albright. Indeed, by age three their family was on their way to Tokyo, Japan, where they would spend the next nine years on the mission field. They returned to Memphis when Emily Rachel was twelve years old.

She enjoys many activities, but particularly is drawn to crafting, enjoying flowers and flower arranging, and especially music! After returning to Memphis, Emily Rachel grew up as part of the Park Avenue Church of Christ family. Her Dad will celebrate 50 years in ministry with Park Avenue this Spring (2024). While at Park Avenue, she participated in Lads to Leaders / Leaderettes as well as mission trips and youth activities.

Emily Rachel sees herself as God's child and strives hard to live in ways that follow Christ's example daily. She understands the dynamics of being a preacher's & missionary's daughter, and seeks to use that experience to connect with others.

International travel, especially mission trips, is something she enjoys - mostly because it involves seeing new places, experiencing new things, and meeting new people.

# A Bit About Us

- ❖ Met at Harding University (in the Band!)
- ❖ Graphic Design & Music Ed Majors
- ❖ 1996 HU Campaign to Japan together
- ❖ Clay: Graphic Designer, Educator, Minister
- ❖ Emily Rachel: Kindermusik, Homemaker
- ❖ 3 Adult Kids: Ben, Anna & Ryland (in-law)
- ❖ MACM at HST (Dec 2025)



We met in the Fall of 1993 through the marching and concert bands before our first semester at Harding University. Clay obtained a degree in Graphic Design and Emily Rachel earned a Music Education degree. During the Summer of 1996, we had the opportunity to travel to Hidaka, Japan, as part of a Harding Campaign.

In the years since, Clay has experienced careers in Graphic Design, Art Education, and Full-time Ministry. Emily Rachel began teaching Kindermusik classes which also provided the flexibility to remain a homemaker and focus on raising kids of our own.

Speaking of kids, our son Benjamin is a sophomore at Harding University and our daughter Anna is a senior at the University of Memphis along with her husband Ryland. Ben is studying Cybersecurity, Anna is majoring in Studio Art, and Ryland recently graduated and hopes to become a State Park Ranger.

Not to be left out, Clay is also pursuing the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry at Harding School of Theology and is on track to finish by Christmas 2025. Emphasis for elective courses favors multicultural ministry and textual studies.

# A Bit About Us



- ❖ Harding Campaign to Hidaka in 1996
- ❖ Emily Rachel: Park Ave. Friend-to-Friend
- ❖ Emily Rachel: Disaster Relief in 2011
- ❖ Family Trip in 2017
- ❖ Dwight & Josephine Albright
- ❖ Nao & Noriko Fukushima
- ❖ Les & Sarah Taylor
- ❖ Other Individuals

Our interest in Japan is not without some prior history. We have several connections across the years which we hope to strengthen during our time this Summer. While in college, we participated in a Harding Summer Campaign in 1996. That short-term mission trip was to the Hidaka congregation in Ibaraki. We conducted English study outreach using Biblical texts and shared fellowship opportunities with the believers there.

Emily Rachel has been able to join with the Park Avenue congregation's efforts as well through neighborhood Friend-to-Friend Bible studies with Japanese women in Memphis and as part of a disaster relief team sent in response to the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

During the Summer of 2017, our family was blessed to enjoy a two-week trip to visit with Emily Rachel's parents. We spent time in the Tokyo, Hakone, and Mt. Fuji areas, but most importantly our kids got to experience people, places, and congregations which they have heard about while growing up.

Naturally, Dwight & Josephine are a large part of our heart for Japan. We also have relationships with Nao & Noriko Fukushima (Tachikawa Minister), Les & Sarah Taylor (Missionaries in Matsudo), Masa & Mari Nonogaki (Yokota Minister), Jeanne Ray (Missionary in Tomobe), Yoshiya & Emiko (Ikeda) Noguchi (Ochanomizu Minister), and Shiro Obata (Haruna Minister), among others.

# Ministry Calling



God's call to formal ministry has been a long time coming. As mentioned, we were part of a short-term mission team during college. After graduation, Emily and I seriously considered becoming Assistant English Teachers in Mito, Japan, through Oklahoma Christian's connections with the school districts there. A little later, in the Fall of 1999 I enrolled at HST (then known as the Harding University Graduate School of Religion) and began taking courses to explore ministry. However, I settled into a vocational approach to Ministry and stuck with Graphic Design in Memphis.

Fast-forward to 2015 and White Station Church of Christ's Administrative Minister Charlie Michael asked me to join the Ministry Team. While serving as White Station's Community Engagement Minister (and Facilities Director), I felt a growing sense of calling and recognition that my gifts might be best used in a full-time ministry setting. So, I began again at HST in 2019, and started considering what full-time ministry would look like in the long-term.

While taking Dave Bland's Sermon Development course, I had the opportunity to speak at our youth group's Fall retreat. I asked him to sit in on that session since he would be there, and provide feedback as if it were a sermon in class. Dave was very encouraging regarding my message to the teens. He was especially encouraging regarding my involvement with ministry in general. This encouragement opened me to truly considering mission work in Japan.

He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go!”

~ *Luke 10:2-3*

Luke Chapter 10 is the account of Jesus sending out the 72 ahead of Him into the towns where he would soon go. He sends them in pairs and gives them some instructions regarding their interactions with the people they will meet, but he also speaks this passage to them.

It is a passage that seems to come up fairly often with regard to missions or even local outreach. Upon a recent reading of the text, though, it occurred to me that I usually hear this passage quoted as written right up to the words “harvest field” and then it stops.

Jesus says to pray for workers, yes. And we should. However, Jesus also says “Go!” directly after he says to ask for workers. In other words, we shouldn’t just ask the Lord for workers - we should ask the Lord for more workers expecting to be one ourselves.



The need in Japan is great. It is a land filled with people who are made in God's image, but which have little to no opportunity to hear about His love. Japanese culture holds many deep-rooted beliefs and traditions which present obstacles to faith, but we believe our God can overcome any of them if we will listen to His voice and walk with His Son.

# The Need in Japan



You may be familiar with the Valeriepieris Circle (pictured above). A teacher in Texas researched population densities and decided to depict his results with this singular, yet powerful graphic.

There are more people living *inside* this circle than *outside* of it.

In America, we can tend to have a bit of “tunnel vision” when thinking of the world. Afterall, the power of the American economy, the American military, and the American media and entertainment realms can have us thinking everything revolves around us. We lose sight of the reality that for most of the people on Earth, America is a far-away, strange place.

There are more angles to the Valeriepieris Circle than just sheer numbers of people, though.

There are more Muslims living *inside* this circle than *outside* of it.

There are more Hindus living *inside* this circle than *outside* of it.

There are more Buddhists living *inside* this circle than *outside* of it.

Yet, there are vastly fewer Christians living *inside* this circle than there are *outside* of it.

There is work to be done! “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go!”

# The Need in Japan

- ❖ 126 Million People
- ❖ 80% Buddhism and / or Shintoism
- ❖ < 1% Christian (in any form)
- ❖ Far fewer are Actively Faithful



Japan is a large, industrialized nation. It boasts the fourth largest economy in the world and many Japanese companies are at the forefront of their respective industries from semiconductor chips to consumer electronics to automobiles. Japanese culture also wields significant influence through culinary and martial arts as well as passionate followings for both anime and manga.

Approximately 126 million people call Japan home, and roughly 80% practice some form of Buddhism and / or Shintoism. Buddhism came from China via Korea in the sixth century, but the Japanese have developed their own Buddhist traditions in the centuries since. Shintoism is native to Japan and believes there are myriad deities which inhabit everything from mountains to streams to pretty much all of the natural world.

Less than 1% of the population claims to be Christian, and that's in any form - Catholic, Protestant, non-denominational, etc. In reality, though, the number of individuals who we would characterize as active followers of Jesus are far fewer.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

*–Matthew 11:28-30*

We believe that in spite of these cultural headwinds, there is great opportunity for the Gospel among the Japanese people. Though they have accomplished much, there is an undercurrent in Japanese culture that lacks hope. The double jeopardy of prolonged economic downturn and significant changes in the employment structure that used to virtually guarantee corporate jobs leaves many without prospects for future stability. Despite living in densely populated cities, the rise of social media and mobile access has led to a decrease in face-to-face social habits. Many choose to self-isolate to a world they try to fully control. The environment lends itself to a despair that many try to keep hidden, but which also contributes to one of the highest suicide rates in the developed world.

Jesus is the answer. By living a life of gratitude for what He has done, and seeking to bring others into His kingdom as well, the Japanese may experience the sort of rest that seems so hard to find among this culture. The rest that Jesus offers also comes with purpose and honor - highly valued traits in Japanese culture.

# The Need in Japan



- ❖ The Gospel is still Good News!
- ❖ Honor/Shame Culture
  - ❖ Restored Honor as God's Children
  - ❖ Life of Purpose in God's Kingdom

This is certainly “Good News” for the people of Japan! As many find discouragement in life, the Gospel can be a light that shines brightly. Like most Eastern cultures, Japan is an Honor/Shame culture. While the concept of sin and forgiveness are understood by the Japanese, the Gospel truth of redemption and restoration is a much more powerful message. Through Jesus, the Japanese people can experience a restoration of honor as they become adopted children of God. This new reality, that anyone is welcome in the heavenly community, can speak to the Japanese heart in ways that we in the West struggle to realize. For an honor/shame culture like Japan, the restoration of status is a big deal.

This new Gospel community also offers purpose in life to many cast adrift and unconnected. It is our hope that becoming a part of the kingdom of God, and therefore a valued worker in Jesus's harvest, will inspire the Japanese people to live their lives from a place of purpose, hope, and love for God and for all of those who bear His image.



We are excited to be going to Tachikawa this Summer! The congregation there has invited us to come for a short-term mission to help with some outreach activities they have planned. We also look forward to re-kindling and renewing past relationships.

Tachikawa is a suburb on the Western side of the Tokyo metropolitan area. While not as densely populated as central Tokyo, most Americans would still consider it to be fairly crowded.

For over 60 years, the Tachikawa Church of Christ has faithfully stood in this area of Tokyo as witness to the Gospel. The congregation also serves as host for the Japan School of Evangelism which utilizes the classroom and library spaces on its second floor, and dormitory lodgings on its third floor. Nao Fukushima serves as minister and evangelist along with his wife Noriko.

Tachikawa is one of Japan's larger congregations, with a membership around 40 individuals. They eagerly seek our help in reaching their community and are excitedly preparing for our arrival this Summer.

The picture at the top right of this slide is of the Tachikawa church family in the late 70's. The Fukushimas are the couple in the front center, and the Albright family is to the right holding both of their kids. (Yes, that's Emily Rachel in pink!)

# Invitation from Tachikawa



- ❖ 6 Weeks with the Tachikawa Congregation
- ❖ Community Outreach: English Reading
- ❖ Community Outreach: Family Music Class
- ❖ Encouragement of Brothers / Sisters
- ❖ Fellowship with the Churches

With God's help, we hope to spend about six weeks with the Tachikawa congregation. They have asked us to conduct community outreach through two main activities - English Bible Reading and Family Music Classes.

Brother Fukushima tells us that Tachikawa has hosted short-term missions in the past which utilized one-to-one English Reading sessions using scripture as the text. He feels that it is still a viable method to generate interest among the Japanese public and has asked us to focus on offering sessions during the week to all who are interested.

Knowing that Emily Rachel is an experienced Kindermusik® educator, the Fukushimas have also requested that she utilize her expertise in music classes for families with young children to offer some Family Music Classes. We hope that these classes will expose young families to the church community and facilitate some connections between them and the Tachikawa members.

We also look forward to interacting with the Tachikawa church community and being an encouragement to their faith. Pictured above are Nao and Noriko Fukushima while they were in Memphis for a semester at HST. We enjoyed several times of fellowship with them while they were in our backyard and look forward to continuing our friendship this Summer.

# Invitation from Tachikawa

- ❖ Clay Preaches
- ❖ Other Opportunities for Teaching
- ❖ Mentoring with Fukushimas
- ❖ Networking with Area Ministers/Members



While we are in Tachikawa, Clay will have the opportunity to preach on at least one occasion Sunday morning. There will also be other opportunities for teaching in other formats such as Bible and children's classes and other smaller gatherings.

We are also eagerly anticipating more time with the Fukushimas. They are a dear couple who have mentored us as we start the process of considering Japan missions. We seek to deepen this relationship and learn from them in their home context.

While we are in Japan, we hope to also seek opportunities to connect with other ministers and Christians in the Tokyo area who we are acquainted with. Les and Sarah Taylor, in particular, are a missionary couple in Matsudo (another part of Tokyo) who we hope to develop a much closer relationship with in the near future. They have blazed a trail similar to the one we hope to travel, and their knowledge and experience will be invaluable.

# Invitation from Tachikawa



- ❖ Japanese Cultural Immersion
- ❖ Japanese Church Cultural Immersion
- ❖ Language Learning
- ❖ Interaction with Native Speakers

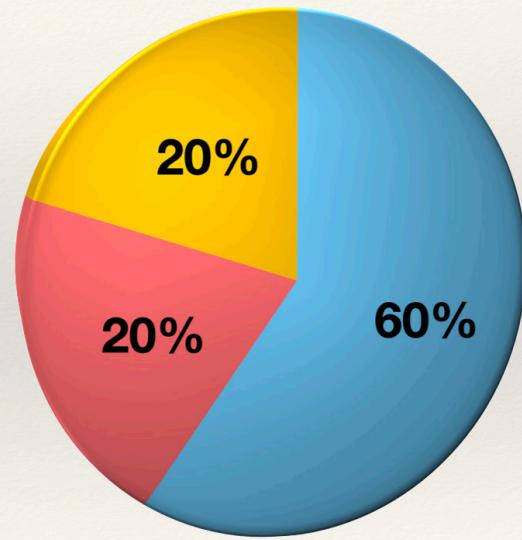
Another goal we have for our time at Tachikawa is simply taking advantage of the location. We look forward to spending some time immersed in Japanese culture and seeing our reactions, both individually and as a couple. We can study the language and culture of Japan from here in America with some success, but nothing beats actually being there.

Likewise, we are also looking forward to spending some time immersed in Japanese Church culture. It is important for us to be communicating the Gospel in ways that are culturally relevant to the Japanese people, and one way to learn that is to take a meaningful look at the church as it is in Japan today. There is much in common with our American churches, but they naturally do many things differently (as they should!), and we look forward to learning some of those differences.

Finally, some time on the ground in Japan will help us as we seek to acquire the Japanese language. So much of communication goes beyond the words that are spoken, and language learning programs such as Duolingo, Babel, and others are only able to partially teach Japanese as a result. Taking some time to be out and about among native Japanese speakers should prove to be quite beneficial.

# Invitation from Tachikawa

- ❖ Overall Fundraising Goal = \$6,500
  - ❖ 60% Airline & Travel Insurance
  - ❖ 20% Food, Lodging, Trainfare
  - ❖ 20% Contribution, Language, Contingency
- ❖ Lodging at the Tachikawa Church Dorm
- ❖ 2-3 Immersion Excursions per Week



For this Summer's trip, our overall fundraising goal is \$6,500. This amount covers both Emily Rachel and I. This total will fund the basic needs of the trip. In the event we exceed this amount, we could increase the quality of class materials, provide financial assistance to Tachikawa's efforts to put on events for the community while we are there, and other add-ons which would further the purpose of the mission.

A breakdown of the expenses can be seen above. More detail is available if you should require more specific amounts.

We will be saving a great deal of money by utilizing the dormitory lodging at the Tachikawa Church building. It has a full kitchen, which will allow us to purchase groceries and make many of our own meals, reducing our dependence on eating out.

The trainfare portion of the budget will be spent on two to three excursions per week, if our schedule allows, so that we can spend some time interacting with Japanese culture and language opportunities.

# Our Request

## ❖ Prayer

- ❖ Prayers for the Work
- ❖ Prayers for the Tachikawa Church
- ❖ Prayers for the Japanese

## ❖ Financial

- ❖ Financial Support



We are looking for partners who can walk alongside us. Prayer is such a vital part of ministry, and our first and most important request is for individuals who will spend time with the Father. We are greatly appreciative for those who are willing to pray for our preparation leading up to Summer 2024 as well as pray for the work that we will be doing once we arrive.

Pray for those whom we will come into contact with that their hearts may be touched by the Spirit. Pray for us as we seek to be the means by which God's blessing makes its way to those in Japan. Pray for the Christians who are part of the Tachikawa family that they can establish some connections with those who come. Pray for the Japanese people as a whole who have not yet heard the Gospel. Most of all, pray that God's will be done in us and through us.

We know that choosing to financially support a mission work is a big decision. It involves trust between both you and the one working in the field. By giving to this work, you aren't just supporting us but are actually partnering with us. We have full confidence that God will supply our every need to be fruitful for his kingdom, and we are humbled and thankful that you are considering being one of the ways He does so.

# Our Request



## ❖ Fund Oversight

- ❖ Church of Christ at White Station
- ❖ Involved Global Missions Team
- ❖ Active Support & Encouragement

## ❖ Online Giving

- ❖ Give through [www.fowlersinjapan.org](http://www.fowlersinjapan.org)
- ❖ Secure & Convenient
- ❖ Debit/Credit or ACH

We have partnered with The Church of Christ as White Station, in Memphis, Tennessee, for this Summer's trip. The Global Missions Team at White Station is happy to provide oversight for our Japan Fund. They have a long-standing tradition of actively walking alongside each of their mission partners with a wealth of experience in missiology as well as resources for mission support such as Missions Resource Network.

If you feel called to partner with us financially, White Station's secure online giving portal makes it quick and convenient. The QR code above is a handy way to reach the portal, or you can find a link to it through the Support page on our website - [www.fowlersinjapan.org](http://www.fowlersinjapan.org). The online portal accepts debit and credit cards as well as ACH bank payments. Naturally, a paper check (made out to White Station with "Fowler Japan" in the memo) may also be mailed directly to White Station at the address below:

attn: Kay Walker  
Church of Christ at White Station  
1106 Colonial Road  
Memphis, TN 38117

**Clay & Emily Rachel Fowler**  
Find more at [www.fowlersinjapan.org](http://www.fowlersinjapan.org)



# An Eye on the Future



- ❖ Stepping Stone to Long-Term Work
- ❖ Consulting with Evertt & Ileene Huffard
- ❖ Potential to be Full-Time in Fall 2026
- ❖ Cultural Immersion Assessment
- ❖ Test-Run for Potential Apprenticeship with Tachikawa

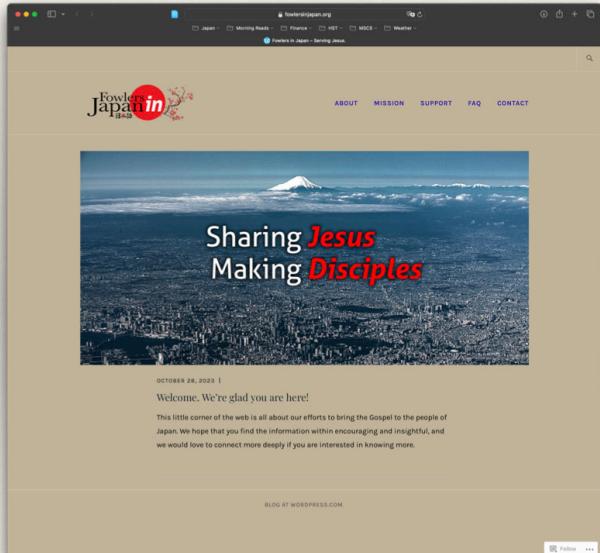
Our request right now is solely regarding the short-term mission effort planned for Summer 2024. However, we feel that some greater context is helpful as we seek to partner in this work.

Emily Rachel and I are exploring the prospect of full-time mission work in Japan as early as Fall of 2026. We have been working with Drs. Evertt & Ileene Huffard in this regard and seek to actively engage with others both in the U.S. and Japan in the future as things progress.

With that in mind, we are viewing this Summer's trip as a potential stepping stone to that long-term goal. It affords us the opportunity to get some time on the field under our belts and catch at least a partial glimpse of how we might see ourselves there in the future. Although six weeks is a little too short to fully experience culture shock, being immersed in Japanese culture during this trip can offer some clues to how we might react personally and as a couple.

If a move to Japan is in our future, it would likely start with an apprenticeship with an existing Japanese congregation and minister. Tachikawa seems like a natural candidate, so we will also be working this Summer with some sensitivity to whether or not that might be a possibility.

# An Eye on the Future



- ❖ [www.fowlersinjapan.org](http://www.fowlersinjapan.org)
- ❖ Monthly Email Newsletter
- ❖ [clayfowler75@gmail.com](mailto:clayfowler75@gmail.com)  
[emilyrachel74@gmail.com](mailto:emilyrachel74@gmail.com)
- ❖ Text & Call: 901-484-4107 (Clay)  
Text & Call: 901-484-4106 (Emily)

We look forward to partnering with you in this work! To that end, we will be looking to stay in touch. We welcome your personal emails, calls, and texts at the info above, but we will also be using some other means of communication in the near future.

As mentioned before, our website at [www.fowlersinjapan.org](http://www.fowlersinjapan.org) has information regarding missions in Japan, a convenient spot to sign up for our newsletter and give online, and a contact form to send us a message. It's an easy place to send others who might share your interest in our work. In addition, the website will also feature regular blog postings that will highlight news, cultural information, and other messages.

Be sure to also sign up for our monthly email newsletter which will launch later this Spring. In it, we will be highlighting some of the same information shared via the blog posts online, but a message directly to the inboxes of our partners allows for some more specific information such as prayer requests and personal news.



Thank you for taking the time to work through this document. We pray that this version of our presentation has been informative and fruitful.

Most of all, we praise God for the opportunity to serve His kingdom. It is our hope that anything we do gives God all of the Glory and serves to make His name honored everywhere!

I will extol the Lord at all times;  
his praise will always be on my lips.

I will glory in the Lord;  
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Glorify the Lord with me;  
let us exalt his name together.

~ Psalm 34:1-3