

**PRAY** POSTED ON JUNE 13, 2018

**Pray for Gordon and Lee Ann Hwang encouraging church leaders and reaching out to the children and youth of Japan.**



BOB SANTILLI

Gordon and Lee Ann are serving in Yokohama, Japan. Gordon exercises gifts of service and hospitality. He hosts a weekly fellowship meeting in their home. Lee Ann works full-time as an English conversation teacher for junior and senior high students at Soshin Girls' School. She also has opportunities to influence students in two clubs, through the foreign exchange programs, speaking in chapel and with their home-fellowship meetings. Gordon and Lee Ann continue to visit and encourage pastors ministering to survivors of the 2011 earthquake disaster in Tohoku (Northeast Japan).

Gordon writes – Lee Ann and I boarded the 8:00 express train to Iwaki 13 minutes before departure. Though it is not the bullet train, *shinkansen*, the ride was smooth and fast. During almost two and half-hours on the train, I could quietly rehearse my 2-minute speech in Japanese lots of times!

I was given the honor to speak at the grand opening of Taira Childcare Center located in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture on April 30, 2018. American Baptist missionaries founded Taira kindergarten almost 100 years ago. It was rebuilt after the great Tohoku earthquake of March 2011.

At the station, we met others going to the opening ceremony and shared a cab. Upon arrival, Pastor Tanno greeted and escorted us into the courtyard. I was amazed and very happy that the facility was so beautiful! We were just a few minutes before the start of the ceremony when Pastor Tanno approached me and asked for a favor. One of the special guests is late! Can I help cut the ribbon to officially open the child center? Of course, I said, "Yes!" I was very honored to help with the ceremony, though I have never done this before. I was given special white gloves to hold the gold-plated scissors to cut the ribbon.

Then, we were escorted into the activity center, a six-sided, multi-purpose building next to the main classroom building. I was last to speak of the 5 guests, which included the Mayor of Iwaki! Although I stumbled over some words, one of the guests was kind enough to say, "I could understand what you were saying." I pray that God used my small words to encourage the audience to hope in God's bright future.

We enjoyed a short tour of the two-story facility after the ceremony. We met the nutritionist for the childcare center and she has a daughter in college near our home. So, we gave our business card and invited her daughter to come visit and practice her English! Please pray that the daughter may someday contact us.

In June, we will return with five American Baptist short-term missionary volunteers, led by Ben McCloy. Please pray for the volunteers as they serve the kids, ages 0-6 years, June 18-24. Please pray for their health and ministry as they follow Christ's leading.

See their full journal with photos at – <https://www.internationalministries.org/taira-childcare-center-rebirth/>