

Kenji & Amy FUKUNAGA

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN. Between COVID-19, Mika’s health issues, and transition here in Okinawa, it has been a crazy year and a half.

The biggest thing in our lives has been Mika’s health journey. She was three weeks old when we realized something was wrong. We were in limbo for a few more weeks until we discovered she had a gallstone. At that point, we began an emotional roller coaster of doctor’s appointments, blood tests, CT scans, and lots and lots of tears. It all culminated in Mika and me (Kenji) staying in the hospital at the beginning of March to have her gallbladder removed. She was a champ and quickly charmed all the nurses and staff. Once we got home, you would never have known she had surgery. She was running around, wrestling her older brother, and talking up a storm. Praise Jesus!

While we would not have chosen to go through this, God’s goodness and blessings have come hand-in-hand with the hardships. We are thankful for how God revealed who He is and chose to bless us in powerful ways amid the heartache.

We are realizing how big of a toll the journey took on us as a family. We are tired. There were a lot of unknowns. Is surgery necessary? Can it be done in Okinawa? Is the medicine continuing to work in the meantime? These unknowns were piled on top of the transition to being a family of four, Akira stepping into the toddler phase, and the craziness of the pandemic. God was faithful and remained close to us through the whole journey, but it was still taxing. We are planning on spending a couple of weeks at home over the summer to rest and recharge for the next year.



HARDSHIPS	BLESSINGS
Initially, we were told she would need gallbladder surgery ASAP. Because of COVID-19 and the flight restrictions, we were unable to fly back to the States.	This allowed us to be seen by a Japanese pediatric surgeon who took a more conservative approach. We were grateful to take it slower, which allowed Mika to grow bigger. The surgery was much easier at 14 months than it would have been at three months!
It was hard to navigate the Japanese medical system. Doctor visits are very different here than in the U.S. The language barrier was a constant challenge in figuring out what was going on and in communicating the questions we had.	We spent a lot of time with Yukie, a fellow Cadence missionary, who spent hours and hours at the hospital translating for us. She sat with us through some of the hardest moments of our lives. We have loved getting to know her better, and Mika and Akira both love her and are so excited every time they get to see “Auntie Yukie”!
Not being able to have our parents, or anyone for that matter, come be with us was hard. We would have loved to have someone with us to take care of Aki during the numerous appointments we had.	We have never felt so loved and blessed by the body of Christ. The chapel family God has given us this year has been a HUGE blessing and we may not have leaned into them as much as we would have if our parents had been able to come out. So many others stepped up to watch Aki, provide meals, pray for us, and encourage us.
This has been one of the most emotionally taxing years of our lives.	God has been so close and present throughout the whole process in ways we would not have known apart from the hardships of the year.

QUICK MINISTRY UPDATE

As I reflect on the year, I did not have the time and energy to give to students and ministry that I would have liked. Looking back, it feels like I was just able to keep the bare minimum of ministry going while most of my mental and emotional capacity went to caring for Mika. We are thankful for God's promise that He will be faithful to complete the work He has started in our lives and the lives of the students.

Over half of our teens will be leaving this summer. We are sad to say goodbye and are soaking up every last opportunity

to pour into them. At the same time, we are excited to see where God will lead in the future. COVID-19 has given us a blank slate to dream and experiment with different ministry models, and God has given us and our team some fresh ideas. We are excited to continue to pursue those dreams so we can better serve and equip military families in Okinawa as they strive to follow Jesus together!

Gratefully,
Kenji and Amy



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