

**Dear Family, Friends and all who pray and support us in a myriad of ways.**

**Finally an update for those of you who have perhaps wondered ‘what on earth happened to those Puruckers, anyway?’**

**No, we have not fallen of the face of the earth. We are alive and kicking and very excited to share that we are pursuing a new season of ministry in the Fall of our lives. Here’s a quick catch up and details on what God has done and is directing us toward.**

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**Recap on 2020:**

In June 2020, after a three-month lockdown in Okinawa, Japan, we returned to California where we were blessed to be able to stay with some Family by Choice in the Bay area for a short time. Then, by necessity of needing to be closer and available to serve in the Covenant Players office, we headed to the Oxnard, CA area where the Lord blessed us to be able to domicile during this covid season with our long-term hosts (read family again). It has been a gift and blessing beyond measure, where we have seemingly been able to meet some needs both for them and in the community. It has felt truly like the Lord’s divine appointment. Our labors have been in offering a ministry of helps and this has in turn provided our “manna” (living allowance) during this time. Additionally, since Covenant Players was not able to do live performances, Kurt and I were working on a special project at our office a couple of times a week throughout the fall of 2020 and on into the spring of 2021.

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**2021: Back to School**

**January** - Still in lockdown, and not being able to be actively serving ‘on the road’, we felt strongly that the Lord was leading Kurt back to school to finish up a degree, since online education was more affordable and available than ever. The Lord did not waste any time and almost immediately the doors opened at Grand Canyon University for Kurt’s previous credits to transfer in, and some scholarship and grants to help with the cost. It was more than evident that this was the Lord’s provision. So, in January Kurt embarked on his journey as a student in the school of Theology at GCU, doing a degree in Christian studies with a Global Missions emphasis. This was chosen with a view to be able to use this should the Lord call us into other ministry sometime in the future.

Kurt has thrown himself into his studies, really desiring it to be a mission field as well as of educational benefit. He has excelled and the Lord has indeed been using him to speak into the lives of some other students who are there for a degree the school offers and not necessarily from a faith background. He knocked out some basic courses very quickly and is already about a third of the way through his studies, maintaining a 4.0 average. Thank you, Lord.

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**Transitions**

April - Travelling with Covenant Players and living out of a suitcase for the past 37 years has taken its toll on our bodies. Recognizing that, along with some other things, Kurt and I have felt for some time that perhaps a change in ministry was on the horizon for us. There are numerous things that indicated to us that the Lord has used this covid time as a transition and preparation period for us and in June, after placing it before the Lord, we felt that it was indeed time to retire from CP. It still managed to take us by surprise and seemed sudden, but the Lord was clear. A part of our hearts will always be with our Covenant Player family, and we pray and believe for the best as they endeavor to continue to serve.

No immediate plan was revealed for our future, except that Kurt would take this time to continue his studies and I would support him in that. Thinking that to be true, we continued to serve our hosts and community with the ministry of H.E.L.P.S. - what Kurt and I have come to call Hands Extended in Loving Personal Support, and what we believe has come to be the foundation of our future calling. We also knew that our hearts were still very much drawn to Japan, where we have spent so much time in the past years.

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## NEW CALLING

June - Shortly after our retirement was official the Lord re-opened a door to us that we had previously not been able to pursue, as it had not been the right time. It is a wonderful opportunity with some missionaries and friends that we have known in Japan for over 25 years and our paths have crossed many times. They run a British Tea shop located slightly North-West of Tokyo, with other outreach related opportunities that we believe we are uniquely qualified for. The years we've spent in ministry and travel to this point has equipped and prepared us for this and our gifts and abilities will be used in so many ways. We hope to take some pressure off them as they negotiate a new season in their lives, though we are not sure how it will all play out yet. Our plan is to go to Japan on visitor visas once Covid and lockdowns settle down there. This will serve as a trial period to see if it is a good fit. Please pray with us, for us, we are very excited and believe this to be where we are to serve for this season. Our position for the first 90 days will provide accommodation and a small stipend, but we will be looking to raise some support to help with Kurt's immediate ongoing education expenses, as well as in county transportation, setting up phones and other necessities while there, not to mention some continuing bills Stateside. To help facilitate that process we are currently in the process of getting set up as a project under the non-profit status of our home church in Kansas, through whom funds can be processed, and tax receipts issued for gifts given in our support. Details on that to follow. Once we know we are going to be in Japan full time, we will apply for long term visas and then need to raise the support that will be necessary to provide for our own living space. The Lord is fulfilling so many of our dreams through this and we hope you will partner with us as we embark on this new adventure.

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We are so grateful for our relationships with each one of you. The Lord has placed you in our lives as Friends, on and through our past journey in ministry, and now. Thank you in advance for your prayers as we seek to walk through all the details to get us to Japan. Please let us know if you have questions or need further details, although much has still to be revealed even to us!

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Our website is being built as we speak, [HELPSJapan.com](https://HELPSJapan.com)! The ministry efforts will be highlighted on HELPS Japan Facebook page as well as more regular updates.

December 2021 has been filled with much activity. Cathy has continued to serve as a caregiver to an elderly gentleman who has a central tremor. Largely her tasks involve keeping him safe, occasional help with meals, making sure he is exercising, and driving him to and from appointments. This gives his wife more time to continue with business ventures they have, and even a little free time for herself. Kurt has continued taking odd jobs like house painting and yard work, in addition to his studies. Both are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to return to Japan, and in the meantime are studying Japanese a bit more regularly.

As we look toward the New Year, there is much that is unsettled for all of us. However, there are many things that have been settled long ago. The promise of the Lord's presence with us, Immanuel, is seen in fulfillment by the many moments of God's favor to us. We proclaim this, despite the losses we have suffered, because God's faithfulness is not defined by our pain. Instead, we choose to let our frailties and losses be confronted by God's mercy and grace.

Pray with us, as we enter this New Year, not to lose heart, but to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. (Heb 12:2) To that end, we are putting together an unusual prayer list. We would like people to give us the address to a verse that is important to them, not the content just the address. That will go on a list to be used for deeper absorption of the word, while also serving as a reminder to pray for that individual. If you care to participate, please write to us. All we need is your name and the scripture address. We'd love to get at least one per day for the coming year.

Two bits of news: Our website is not active yet, but we're hopeful that it will within a couple of weeks. We will be using MailChimp for our newsletters, coming from the address [helpsjapan@gmail.com](mailto:helpsjapan@gmail.com), so if you could please add that address to your contacts list, the newsletters shouldn't go to your spam. Thank you.

May your New Year be prosperous in the ways of the Lord.

Kurt and Cathy Purucker