

# one ambition

*"It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known..."* ROMANS 15:20

## GOD IS MOVING *in Japan*

### WHY JAPAN?

PAGE 4

### FROM THE FIELD

PAGE 5-7

### CHURCH PLANTING *in Okinawa*

PAGE 8-10

### *the power of Church* PARTNERSHIPS

PAGE 12-15



# God is moving IN JAPAN

By Mark Cassidy

Dear Friends,

Japan is a land of paradoxes—ancient traditions stand alongside cutting-edge technology, bustling megacities coexist with serene countryside, and deep spiritual longing meets a cultural wariness of religion. Despite its global influence in pop culture, innovation, and industry, Japan remains one of the least-reached nations in the world. With less than 1% of its people identifying as Christian, the people of Japan need missionaries to go and tell them about Jesus.

At Pioneers, we have seen God moving in powerful ways. Missionaries are following God's call to engage with the Japanese people, meeting them where they are—whether in bustling Tokyo, the rural towns of Miyazaki, or the least-churched prefectures like Saga. Our missionaries are sharing the gospel, discipling believers, and helping the church grow and mature.

We are witnessing a surge of interest in missions to Japan.

Young people, drawn by Japan's cultural influence—through anime, technology, and its fascinating history—are discovering a deeper call. They are realizing that despite Japan's modern success, spiritual darkness persists. Many Japanese feel isolated, overworked, and burdened by social expectations. Through relationships, hospitality, and intentional gospel conversations, we are seeing lives transformed.

This edition of *One Ambition* shares the stories of those faithfully serving in Japan. Read about the challenges and triumphs of church planting, the incredible ways God is breaking down barriers, and the growing movement of believers who are eager to share the hope of Christ. I encourage you to read these stories with an open heart, praying over the people of Japan and those who have dedicated their lives to reaching them.

Join us in praying, giving, or going. There is a place for you in this mission. We trust in God's power to bring revival to Japan.

For His Glory,



Mark Cassidy  
President, Pioneers Canada

*Japan is a nation of beauty, complexity, and spiritual hunger. God is at work, and He is calling His people to join in the harvest. Whether by going, praying, or giving—you can be part of what He is doing in Japan.*



# WHY JAPAN?

*Japan is a dynamic and evolving blend of tradition and modernity. As a culture, there is a strong emphasis on community, respect, and innovation. Their unique blend of old and new captivates people around the world.*

The nation has a deep cultural heritage, strong social structures, and a history that has shaped its people's worldview. While known for its technological advancements and efficiency, Japan also struggles with one of the highest suicide rates in the world. Extreme work pressure and a growing sense of isolation is prevalent among the people.

Our team senses a quiet hunger for truth, a curiosity about faith, and a growing openness among younger generations to explore Christianity. While there are churches and Christians in Japan, they are few and far between. The absence of Christian churches is obvious. In a population of more than 124 million people, less than 1% of the population claims to follow the Christian faith.

# FROM THE FIELD



## BRIAN & NOZOMI: THE CALL TO MIYAZAKI

For ten years, our team partnered with a faithful Japanese pastor to plant a church, while Nozomi served as a music teacher at a local Christian school. It was a fruitful season—but we sensed God was leading us into something new. It was time to plant again.

So we prayed. For a whole year, we asked: “Lord, what’s next?”

We walked the streets of other prefectures—regions in Japan similar to provinces—praying as we went, waiting for direction.

One day, a colleague asked me, “If you asked God for a sign, what would you ask for?”

Half-joking, I replied, “If three people told me to go to the same prefecture, I’d go.”

God heard me loud and clear.

Just a week later, I ran into an old neighbour at the tax office—someone I hadn’t seen in ten years. We grabbed lunch together, and out of nowhere, he said, “You should go to Miyazaki.”

I was stunned. A random encounter. A casual meal. A clear word.

A few days later, at a local Udon restaurant, I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was another old neighbour—from a completely different season of our lives. She was battling cancer and rarely left her home, but her daughter had insisted on taking her out to eat that day. Mid-conversation, she said, “You should go to Miyazaki.”

Then, just days after that, my current neighbour—someone unrelated to the other two—said the exact same thing.

Three people. One prefecture. No doubt in my mind—I knew that was God speaking.

Leaving Fukuoka was hard. Nozomi loved her role as a music teacher. I loved our church. Our kids had close friends. After a decade, we had finally built deep, lasting relationships. But God’s unmistakable call to Miyazaki gave us courage for the hard goodbyes.

Starting from scratch in a new city wasn’t easy. We spent our days simply being present, playing with our kids at the local park, meeting neighbours, listening, and praying. Almost every day, we saw the same elderly man. One day, we struck up a conversation. As trust grew, he shared something unexpected—he had attended a Christian preschool as a child. He remembered the Christmas songs, the story of Noah, even John 1:1. But he admitted, “I never really understood what it meant.”

We invited him to study the Bible with us. To our surprise, he said yes.

Week after week, we opened Scripture together. At the end of our time, we asked him what he thought.

“Jesus is an amazing gift,” he said. “How could I not receive it?”

God’s hand is at work in Miyazaki—and we’re humbled to witness His grace in action. It started with a prayer: “God, what’s next?”

Now, we see the answer unfolding every day.



*Miyazaki Peace Park on Japan's Kyushu Island*



### STEPHANIE: THE REALITY OF DISCIPLESHIP

During my second term, our church community had the amazing opportunity to see people come to faith quickly, within months. That doesn't usually happen in Japan.

It was an exciting time! We thanked God for the incredible ways we could witness His answers to our prayers.

But as time passed, the troubles and worries of life crept in. Once close relationships drifted apart. That hurt. I thought, 'God, what happened?'

I wrestled with disappointment. The Lord led me to reflect on Paul and his spiritual children. Some stayed faithful, but others abandoned the faith. As Jesus forewarned us in the parable of the sower, not all seeds will grow deep roots. That truth helped make sense of the situation.

Even in the discouragement, God continues to work. The church I helped plant is still growing. A new pastor has taken leadership. They are even considering planting another church. It reminds me that ministry isn't about my expectations—it's about being faithful and trusting God to do the rest.



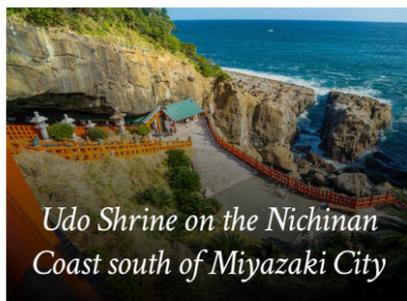
### ADRIAN TAM: PREPARING MISSIONARIES FOR LONGEVITY

I am the leader of the Japan Launch Team. I help missionaries prepare for long-term service, walking alongside new missionaries, helping them adjust to the new culture and learn the complex language.

I know the challenges new missionaries face in Japan. Language learning is brutal. No matter how smart or capable you are, you feel like a child. Some people come in confident. They believe they will pick it up quickly. Then, a few months later, they're in tears, struggling with language. It's humbling.

One of the biggest struggles is leaving the comfort of our larger teams and going to a specific mission assignment. We started a Satellite Launcher program—placing missionaries in unreached areas while they continue their training. This helps in the process of adjustment.

Let me tell you the story of Simon, a young missionary still learning Japanese. One Sunday, he saw a man in a wheelchair passing by the church. In his broken Japanese, Simon invited him inside. The man didn't respond and rolled away. But minutes later, he came back. He listened. He stayed. Weeks later, he was baptized. That story is a reminder—it's not about having perfect language skills or knowing every cultural nuance. It's about being available, willing to be used by God.

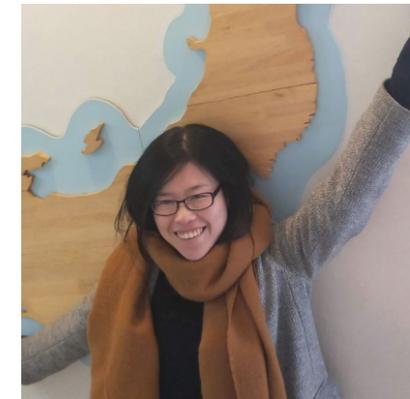


*Udo Shrine on the Nichinan Coast south of Miyazaki City*

### HAILEY FUNG: HOPE IN THE HARD GROUND

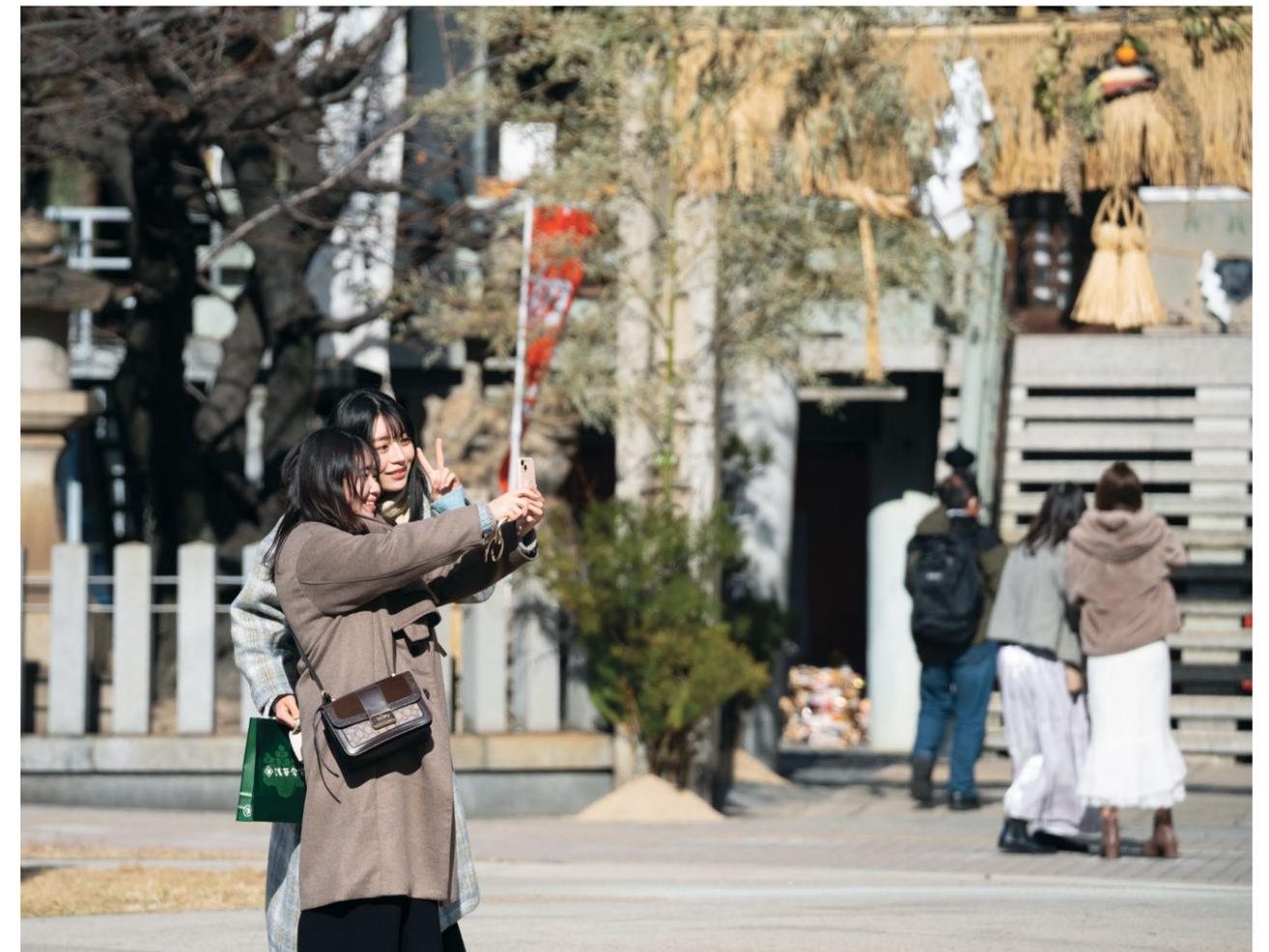
Much of the ministry in Japan focuses on children, students, and English outreach. But who will take the gospel to everyone else?

Since coming to Japan, I've served in rural areas where many have never met a Christian and have no reason to step into a church. That's why, instead of creating my own events, I meet people where they are—through sign language circles, picture book reading club, Chinese class, and even the local parkrun. It's a ministry of presence.



In these everyday community spaces, trust grows naturally. Genuine relationships form as we huddle in the cold, share snacks over tea and talk about family. I make myself available — to be God's ears, to love deeply, and to share the hope of Jesus as opportunities arise. Whether it's a Bible verse in a Christmas card or a conversation about unconditional love, I've seen God use small, unexpected moments to reveal himself. You'd be surprised at how many people are curious!

This is long-term, relational work. People here are searching. They won't hear unless we go. I believe God is moving—planting seeds, softening hearts, and drawing people to Himself. Japan may be hard ground, but there is hope. I've seen it.





# Church planting IN OKINAWA

*A pastor in Okinawa shares his experience of planting a church.*

**Q. What is church planting like in Okinawa? Are you aware of the differences compared to North America?**

In Okinawa, church planting tends to be community-based, family-oriented, and a long-term endeavor. While in North America individual decisions are highly valued, in Okinawa, the influence of family and extended relatives is very strong. When someone starts attending church, they often have to overcome the pressure of conformity from the “Uchina (Okinawan) community.”

Many churches in Okinawa historically developed under the influence of U.S. military bases, and some congregations consist largely of military personnel. Because of that, there is a certain openness to North American-style churches. However, building a bridge with the local Okinawan population requires cultural sensitivity.

In Okinawa’s unique historical and cultural context, many people find themselves searching for identity amid American, Japanese, and Ryukyuan influences.

**Q. What joys have you experienced while sharing the gospel and engaging in church planting in Okinawa? Are there specific areas in Okinawan culture where the door to the gospel seems especially open?**

In Okinawa, deep connections between people are more easily formed, and the joy that comes with building trust is very special. Once someone opens their heart, they often relate to you like extended family—praying, weeping, and laughing together.

Partnership and encouragement from American Christians connected to the military is also a unique joy. In this multicultural setting, I’m convinced that we can experience firsthand that “the gospel transcends borders.”

Above all, seeing new families in Christ being born—while sharing in the traditions, history, and wounds of Okinawa—is a tremendous blessing.

Some areas where doors to the gospel may be particularly open include:

- **Mixed Families:** Okinawa has a significant population of families formed between U.S. military personnel and Japanese women. These families tend to be more open to multicultural environments and may be less resistant to church. This is especially common in the central region of the island. In contrast, this may be less apparent in the southern and northern regions.
- **Music and Arts-Based Ministry:** Okinawan people have a deep love for music. Though a small prefecture, Okinawa has produced many well-known performers and artists in Japan. Worship and art-related events often serve as effective entry points for connection.
- **Young Mothers:** Many are interested in parenting support and English education, with a desire to pass on good values to their children. Despite being a rural prefecture, Okinawa has a surprisingly high number of international schools. At the same time, it’s also known for having the highest rate of single mothers and families in poverty in Japan—this presents a significant opportunity to share the gospel.
- **Community-Oriented Spaces:** Local associations, community events, preschools, schools, and businesses all serve as potential platforms for relationship-building that can open doors to the gospel.



Q. What are some of the challenges in sharing the gospel and nurturing church growth in Okinawa?

There are unique spiritual elements in Okinawa such as ancestor worship and belief in yuta (Okinawan spiritual mediums). These lead to misunderstandings like, “If I become a Christian, does that mean I can’t visit my ancestors’ graves?” or “Christians don’t care about their ancestors, right?”

There is also a strong influence of shamanism, and these beliefs can sometimes creep into church communities. The deep interpersonal bonds in Okinawa can lead to a kind of exclusiveness or conservatism. Some people may hesitate to share their opinions for fear of damaging relationships.

Surprisingly, many churches are isolated. One reason is the high number of independent churches. As is the case across Japan, many churches are also made up of a majority of elderly members, making it challenging to reach younger generations.

Q. Interest in Japan is growing among missionary candidates in Canada. Why do you think foreigners are becoming more drawn to Japan recently?

I believe the global popularity of Japanese culture—especially anime and manga—plays a role in increasing interest. Japan’s natural beauty is also attracting attention. Okinawa in particular boasts rich subtropical forests and some of the most beautiful oceans in the world. These are certainly factors that make Okinawa appealing to foreigners.

At the same time, Japan is also known as the least reached country among developed nations when it comes to the Christian faith. While Japan is blessed with economic stability, infrastructure, public safety, and strong moral values, it has yet to embrace the truth of the Bible.

# PARTNER with us...

## GO - JOIN THE WORK

Perhaps God is nudging you towards missions. There are many opportunities in Japan and worldwide. Whether you’re called to serve for a few weeks or a lifetime, there is a place for you.

Pioneers Canada offers three paths to get involved:

- + **Edge (8-12 Weeks):** Experience a short-term trip that could change your life and the lives of those you serve.
- + **Venture (1 Year):** Spend up to a year with a team, being mentored by experienced missionaries while seeing firsthand what God is doing.
- + **Long-Term Missions:** Commit to living and serving, planting churches, discipling believers, and building lasting relationships.

Every person who goes makes an impact—whether through sharing the gospel in a café, teaching English, or simply walking alongside someone seeking hope.

## PRAY - STAND IN THE GAP

Japan is a spiritually dry land, but we believe in the power of prayer. We invite you to pray for the people of Japan and those serving them.

- + Pray for new believers, that they remain steadfast in their faith despite cultural pressures.
- + Pray for missionaries, that God would encourage them and that they remain faithful in their work.
- + Pray for more labourers, that God would call and send workers to the harvest field.

To sign up for Impact, our monthly prayer calendar, go to [pioneers.ca/impact](http://pioneers.ca/impact).

Equip yourself to pray more effectively for Japan—visit [japanprayerguide.com](http://japanprayerguide.com) for tools and insights.

## GIVE - FUEL THE MISSION

Your support directly impacts the lives of those hearing the gospel for the first time. By giving, you help:

- + Equip and send missionaries to Japan.
- + Provide resources like Bibles, discipleship materials, and language training.
- + Support indigenous leaders and local church growth.



A single donation or monthly partnership enables God’s work to continue in Japan.

Will you give today?



*Sanshin, an Okinawan musical instrument. This cultural, 3-stringed instrument is traditionally covered in snakeskin.*





*Partner with us as your congregation makes the journey of commitment to the mission the Lord has given.*

*Pioneers has years of experience helping churches send members of their congregation to follow their call to go into missions.*

*We have had a number of missionaries go into some of the most challenging places and live amongst the most unreached people groups in the world. I have witnessed the care and support that Pioneers provides to our people and trust that Pioneers and their teams will do a great job of sharing the Gospel wherever they reach out to.*

*Your Teammate in Christ,*

*Rod Adrian*

*Executive Pastor, Central Heights Church, Abbotsford, BC*

## *The power of Church* **PARTNERSHIPS**

*The church is on a mission, the greatest mission that has ever been given.*

According to the word of God, the church has the potential to be a vibrant bastion of hope with the powerful potency of the One that is both its foundation and its head. Yet it often struggles to live up to this possibility. Paul talks about the Church's potential and its Leader in Ephesians:

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Ephesians 3:20-21

The mystery of the Church is not so much about who it is about or what we are to be doing, but how is it possible that this simple gospel message can transform those who are utterly lost.

The Church is to be on a mission, the greatest mission that has ever been given. Yet one might think that at times there is not enough energy within the church to move beyond the walls of their building or beyond the borders of their country. The call of the Lord to take His gospel to all nations is not dependent on the capability of a local church or a complicit environment surrounding it.

This primary responsibility and a church's obedient response to this calling is the key that will ultimately govern its vitality. It is not simply that the church loses strength and thus the ability to go and preach. It is precisely because we stop going and preaching that we wain in our spiritual vigor. This is a relationship that we see illustrated biblically and historically both corporately in the church and in the life of individual believers. When we are struggling to be obedient in doing the first thing, fulfilling our fundamental purposes, we cannot expect a favourable result in our development.

We are living in difficult days in North America. Our society makes many people resistant to even the simplest of gospel conversations. We are socially conditioned to live as if our beliefs are not to be shared. They are to be kept to oneself unless we are sharing with someone who agrees with us. It's challenging to talk with others about the Lord and His gospel.

This can be discouraging. However, when we do find an open door, our sense of true partnership in Christ's work is much greater. If the conversation bears fruit, the joy of participating in the Gospel mystery is often much more profound because it wasn't easy. In the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16 "we do not lose heart" as we are involved in this challenging process "so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Yes, we know this eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (v.17) Let's continue to lean into the life that makes it possible.

At Pioneers we have had the joy of being involved in helping the church worldwide and local churches on their journey of this joy-filled, challenging process. When a congregation is in the process of really supporting gospel ministry among unreached in other countries they become more aware of the unreached in their own community.

*This past year, we had a home-grown emerging leader in our young adult community at Century Meadows who was feeling called to the mission field. After affirming this calling, Pioneers went above and beyond in their accommodation of her into efficient training, fundraising, and team placement.*

*I have discovered that Pioneers is exceptional at communicating with local churches and ensuring that the missional candidate never feels alone in the process of preparing to launch into international missions. Pioneers provided excellent training and worked specifically with our church to ensure that the potential missionary could sharpen her skills through ministry experience.*

*Diving into a career in international missions is a daunting task but I have been thoroughly impressed with Pioneers ability to walk alongside potential missionaries providing sufficient resources, training, and all the tools necessary to begin this journey into career missions. I would highly recommend Pioneers to anyone who is considering a call to missions.*

*Brett McCarroll*

*Associate Pastor*

*Century Meadows Baptist Church, Camrose, Alberta*



## WAYS FOR YOUR CHURCH TO CONNECT WITH PIONEERS CANADA:

### A. Inviting our team to encourage your church in actively following God's call and mission, by

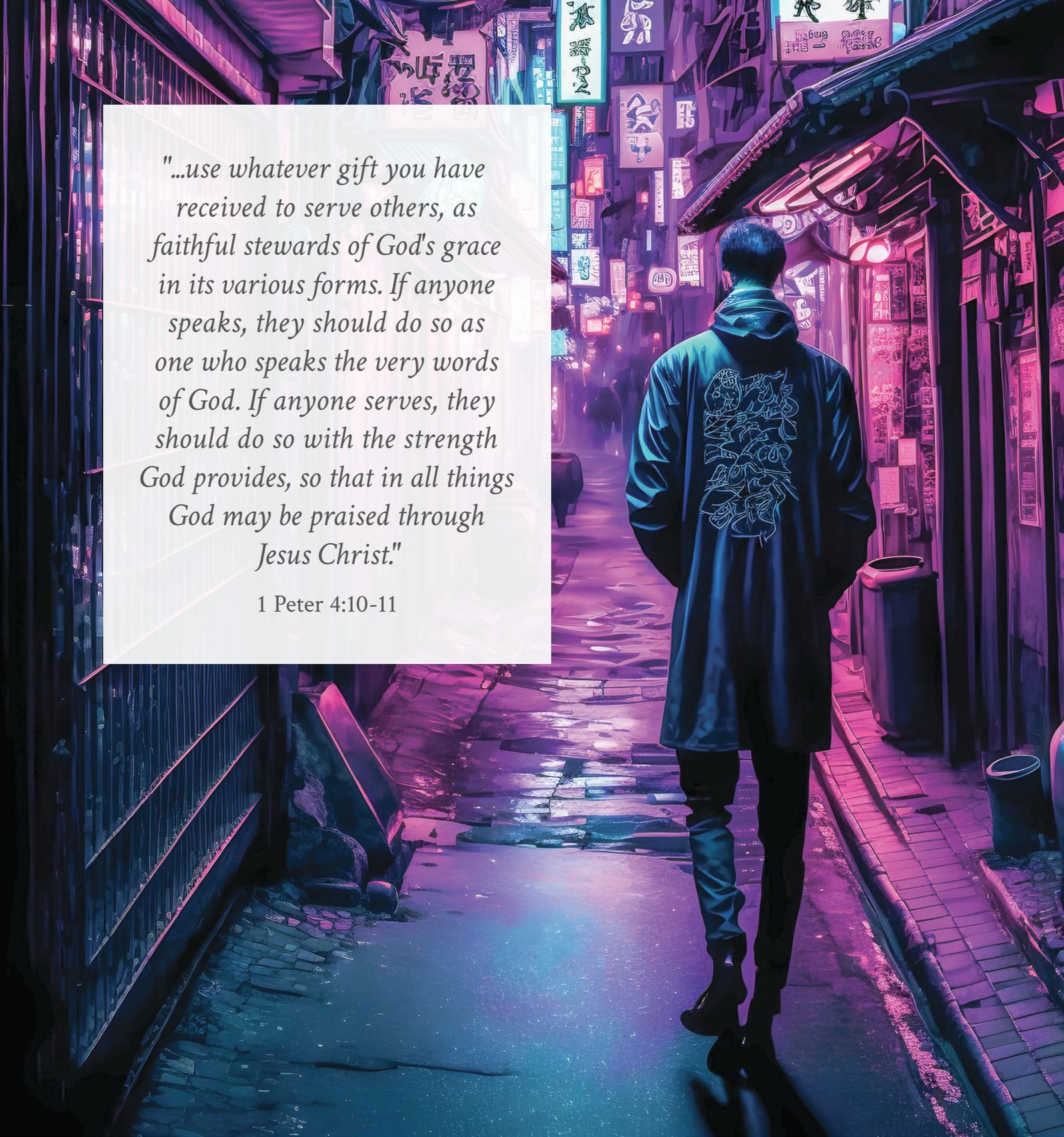
- + Speaking to your congregation
- + Coaching your team and mission-minded members on how to reach some of the cultures that you find in your own community
- + Encouraging your congregation with what God is doing internationally with updates by social media, email and One Ambition

### B. Partnering to prepare a mission candidate by

- + Assessing the readiness of a missionary candidate
- + Preparing a candidate for the field
- + Finding and connecting them to a team overseas
- + Providing ongoing support to ensure longevity

### C. Learning to reach new Canadians in your community

- + Our team can help you understand, relate to and reach specific groups within your community



*"...use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."*

1 Peter 4:10-11

 **PIONEERS**

51 Byron Avenue, Dorchester ON, N0L 1G2  
519.268.8778 | 1.866.268.8778 | [info@pioneers.ca](mailto:info@pioneers.ca)

[pioneers.ca](http://pioneers.ca)