

Kizuna October 2021  
Pastor Sarah Wilson

The English congregation will work on a special outreach project during the coming year. We hope you'll support it, and maybe even join in and help us out!

It is a well-known fact that the Japanese people are basically friendly and positive toward Christianity, and the Bible sells extremely well. However, few Japanese are willing to come to church or have conversations about the Christian faith.

Even for us who have been Christians a long time, it is sometimes hard to know how to start such conversations with our friends. It can feel very uncomfortable and awkward. We might feel like we are pushing too hard, or that our friends will think there is something wrong with us for having strong faith.

So our project is a way to share more about our faith without creating emotionally difficult situations with our friends.

The idea came from my experience of preaching a few sermons in which I pretended to be the main character in a Bible story. For example, in 2020 I preached an Easter sermon in which I spoke as if I were Mary Magdalene. I've also preached sermons in which I pretended to be Thomas, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and Barabbas (whose life was traded for Jesus').

As a preacher, I was surprised at how strongly people in the congregation reacted to these sermons. It spoke directly to their hearts. And yet, because it was the Bible character and not me personally, it didn't feel like emotional pressure. It felt very natural. I think this could be a good way to help non-Christians understand both the content of the Bible (as education) and the spiritual meaning of the Bible (as emotion).

So, here is our plan. Over the next year I'll write more such stories as if they were coming directly from a person in the Bible. Then we'll get volunteers to take on the following tasks:

- 1) recording the audio of these stories in English
- 2) translating the stories into Japanese
- 3) recording the audio of these stories in Japanese
- 4) creating mp4 files with artwork to accompany the audio
- 5) uploading the files to YouTube
- 6) creating a podcast for the stories
- 7) asking members to share news about the project and links to it with their friends.

We hope this will give a way for all our members to talk about an interesting project that their church is doing, and invite non-Christian friends to learn more about it. That gives your friends a chance to explore Bible stories when they feel safe and comfortable, without any emotional pressure. Then, if your friends want to talk about what they've heard, you can share what these same stories mean to you.

The more people involved, the better this will work! So, if you're interested in helping translate, record, or share these stories online, please let us know. We'd love to have your help!