

Newsletter Aug 2021



AGAPE WORLD
Working for Reconciliation

Agape World is a charitable organisation that helps former POWs, internees held by the Japanese and victims of the Pacific War and their families. We aim to facilitate healing and reconciliation.

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The Japanese webpage can be seen via
The English webpage



What a luscious breakfast! I'm not stealing! Keiko is sharing the fruit with me, I believe...



From our chairman:

Sometimes people ask me how I came to be involved with Agape World. Like many of you, I had a relative who was a FEPOW. Uncle Frank, my mother's oldest brother, served in the RAF during the War. He had been captured by the Japanese invaders when Singapore fell, and incarcerated in the notorious Changi Jail. My mother spoke of how the family had waited a long time to hear whether Frank was alive or not. When he arrived home, she was shocked to see that he was just 'skin and bones' and could barely stand. Some terrible photographs confirmed that description. It took many months before his physical condition improved, but

eventually he married and became a teacher.

Uncle Frank was a kindly man, but as a young child I could sense his restlessness. He would sit and tap his fingers on the table, or his leg would bounce up and down, and he never seemed to be able to stay in one place for very long. He was always on the move and had to stay active. Uncle Frank never spoke about his experiences beyond a bare minimum, although he may have done so at the FEPOW gatherings he attended. My mother said that he had witnessed some appalling things as well as endured his

own terrible suffering. I remember his astonishment and irritation that people would buy Japanese goods such as cars. I was told that if he walked down a street, and saw someone of an oriental appearance coming towards him, he would turn down a side street as it made him so afraid. Although a deeply Christian man, I believe he had even played some sort of organ at services in Changi, he quite naturally found it very hard to forget and forgive.

Many years later after his Uncle Frank attended a teachers' conference. One of his friends, who knew a little of what he had been through, walked up behind him during a break between sessions. He told him that there were some people he wanted Frank to meet. Without warning, he turned to find himself facing a group of six visiting Japanese teachers. He told me months later that he froze completely. He could not move or speak. He was terrified and anxious. His friend said that he wanted Frank to meet them because they would be travelling to York two weeks' later and since he lived there, he could show them around. Unable to answer, Frank waited until they turned and left. Uncle Frank was unable to sleep for days, agonising over what his friend had suggested. How could he meet Japanese people and show them around his home city? He was determined to refuse, but every time he tried to pick up the telephone and ring his friend, something stopped him. By the end of the two weeks, he astonished himself by deciding

to meet the Japanese teachers, knowing that this was the last chance to settle his fears. When the day came, despite his initial terror, Uncle Frank thoroughly enjoyed taking the visitors around York. He later described the feeling that something had 'broken' inside. Certainly when I met him some months later, he seemed much more relaxed and at peace.

A few weeks after, he surprised and shocked my aunt. Uncle Frank walked into the kitchen and told her he had booked tickets to fly to Singapore later that year. He wanted her to see where he had been, to visit Changi, and after forty years, he would finally tell her what had happened there. She and the rest of the family were stunned. Nevertheless, he fulfilled that promise just a few years before he died. Finally he was able to put to rest the terrible memories he had carried for so long.

I read somewhere that Keiko needed a doctor to escort a group of FEPOWs to Japan. Wanting to remember and honour my uncle, I contacted her, although I was not able to travel that year. In 2005, I had the privilege of joining a Pilgrimage to Japan that had three FEPOWs and many more family members of FEPOWs. It was one of the best things I have ever done. It was an intensely powerful and moving experience. The group, and especially the FEPOWs, were treated with great respect. We enjoyed tremendous hospitality, friendly receptions, and fascinating sight-seeing. After our return, I kept in contact with Keiko and became gradually more involved with the work of Agape World, until being shocked and honoured to be asked to become Chairman!

VJ Day FEPOW Gallery

Approximately 500 photos of FEPOWs have been collected for the VJ Day FEPOW Gallery collage and we are aiming for 1000 photos by August 2021. Photos should ideally be head and shoulders with brief details about service. If you have a photo of a relative or friend who was a FEPOW please email it to Pam Gillespie at email address fepowgallery@outlook.com

2021 Japanese Embassy Reception

The Japanese Embassy regret that they are unable to organise the annual reception we always so enjoy, because of the situation we are in now. They would not plan anything ahead of time, and that they are closely keeping their attention to the British government's decision of regulations about current circumstances. As soon as we hear any news from them, we will let you know.

A Letter from Keiko

Dear Precious Friends

I hope you are keeping well and enjoyed the several weeks of gorgeous weather that we have had blessed.

I promised to continue talking about our mission activities in this issue because we had no extra space in the last newsletter. So I will mention a few episodes here.

Keiko Kosuge has been to the Messianic Jews' service in Tokyo and took me to attend one of their services last October. It was a long and inspiring service.

The senior pastor and his wife are Japanese but had lived in the States for decades. Their son, Isaac, had spent three years in a Bible college in Israel and spoke Hebrew, Japanese and English fluently. His wife, Melissa, is an American Jew who greeted us cordially. After the service, she encouraged us to visit their home and speak about our reconciliation work.

After attending the 20th National Prayer Breakfast in Shinjuku Plaza Hotel, we rushed to visit the Messianic Jewish family who lived a few stations away from Shinjuku station. Isaac and Melissa have three lovely children with one another on the way.

Their modern home had almost finished refurbishing into American style living rearranging the rooms, enlarging the kitchen with large windows, easier to prepare western-style meals and entertaining guests from various countries.

Melissa spread her colourful lunch on the large table. The senior pastor and his wife who live downstairs joined us. After lunch, Keiko Kosuge had to leave as she had another work to attend.

After seeing my presentation, Melissa and her mother-in-law were ardent for me to write the story. Melissa encouraged me that she wanted to help in any way she could - she could proofread it if I wrote. Her mother-in-law said that she always ask God what she should know about the visitors beforehand. This time God's answer was, 'Unique'.

They would please to offer accommodation for the next pilgrimage. The whole second floor is for guests.

They gave ¥50,000, approximately £363. In total, we received nearly £3000 for my talks during my stay in Japan in 2020. The Japanese Agape World will keep it for our next pilgrimage of reconciliation. Keiko Kosuge and I had appointments each day that it was a time full of excitement and joy.

On 18th November, Keiko was to drop me off at Haneda airport two hours before my departure that she usually does. We were to leave at 10.00 pm for the 12.50-midnight plane.

Out of the blue, we had a phone call from Megumi shortly before leaving Keiko's home. Now Megumi and I were in the same church for a few years in London decades ago. After she had returned to Yokohama, she had joined Agape World. However, we had lost touch for many

years. It was such an unanticipated surprise to hear from Megumi.

Megumi wanted to see me off at Haneda airport that Keiko arranged to meet us all to have dinner in a restaurant there. Three of us arrived there many hours before my departure to have dinner together at the airport and make up for the lost time.

When we arrived at Haneda at 7.30 pm, the airport was unbelievably almost empty! I had a Lufthansa e-ticket but had to go to the All Nippon Airways as ANA took us to Frankfurt Airport then I had to change to Lufthansa to London.

They checked my e-ticket and passport in a friendly manner, but they seemed to take an unusually long time to issue me the boarding passes. After a long time passed, they told me to join my friends on the bench and wait there because there was an issue with my tickets. I did just that.

I never doubted that I would miss the plane because we were in the airport hours before the departure. There was nothing fishy about my tickets either. I knew something was wrong with their side.

Keiko and I were rather excited to see Megumi in such a miraculous way. While we were lost in conversation, a lady from the counter came to talk to me with my suitcases. She said I had to contact Lufthansa about my ticket because they have not contacted ANA that I was joining them.

It was an inexplicable experience, having bought a genuine ticket in London, why such trouble could happen.

The Lufthansa counter was closed: the Airport was nearly empty: only a few

Airlines were in operation. I tried the Lufthansa Tokyo office but in vain. I rang Danny, my son, and quickly explained the complication. He rang the Lufthansa office in London: it was busy. We were desperately praying in Haneda for Danny to be able to speak to someone in their office.

The phone was busy all the time, so Danny made frantic phoning. After more than thirty minutes, finally, Danny was able to speak. They speedily rectified it.

Can you believe it? The issue was that the Lufthansa people in London had forgotten to contact ANA about my ticket!

After seemingly hours to finish check-in, three of us went to the first floor and second, for a quest for a restaurant in a rather eerie Airport but in vain. Every single restaurant was closed - the whole building was a ghost-town. We sat in a corner and talked much although everywhere was quite scary.

Guess how many people were on board when I got on the aircraft? 20 people in total!

If Megumi had not contacted us earlier, what would have happened to me? I am sure I would still be roaming about with my heavy suitcases in that ghost-infested Haneda Airport!



Megumi in the front, Keiko and Keiko Kosuge at Haneda