

Merry Christmas

2021



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.

Christmas
means

Celebration
of
Christ

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Please see the new webpage

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The Japanese webpage can be seen
via English webpage

Dear precious friends,

How are you spending this Christmas holiday season? I usually write a report of my Japan trip in the Christmas Newsletters. Still, sadly, I had to cancel my visit to schools, Universities, secular organisations and churches to give Agape World's Keynote presentations this autumn. So Instead, I would like to let you know about one of my previous trips to the Philippines.

A trip to the Philippines

I have visited many parts of the Philippines time after time for my ministry and met friendly people in Manila, Cebu and different islands. I became used to their lifestyle that might involve having cold showers, primitive sleeping arrangements, insect and mosquito repellent, driving on potholed roads and the like.

One such time, Lily, a young pastor, invited me to her church several miles from Manila City, where she and Sonya, her assistant pastor, lived. In addition to nurturing a small congregation, they regularly visited and ministered in another church about two hours drive away. Lily and Sonya aimed to take me there to minister to their senior members who experienced the War on a Sunday.

I flew to Manila from Tokyo for working with them and arrived at their church on Tuesday. The following day, we had a mid-week service at their home church for several people. Lily kindly gave me her tiny office to use as my room. The bedding was primitive. A towel was served as a mattress with a sheet to cover me.

I realised when I visited the bathroom in the middle of the night that Lily and Sonya were sleeping in the all-in-one meeting room, kitchen and church next to her office that I was occupying. They were sleeping between two sheets. There was not enough room for them to sleep separately. I appreciated Lily's thoughtfulness!

As I was getting ready the following morning and getting dressed, something came out under my skirt. Guess what! It was a gigantic centipede! The creepy creature, whose vile, dreadful, malicious look and chilling colour, charged at me, making me freeze by hypnotising; thus, I could not even scream for help.

The following night, I could not decide if I should sleep because of the imminent danger. However, it did not appear in the morning. So I decided that it was satisfied to have seen me horror-stricken and targeted my friends sleeping next room peacefully. Silly creature, Lily is wiry but extraordinary robust and used to such ugly creatures, so Lily must have smashed it up by her frying pan and ended it.

After three enjoyable and fruitful days with Lily and Sonya at their home church, we set off for another church in Lily's small old car. Unfortunately, the air-conditioner did not work very well. As a result, we were sweating profusely on the bumpy, dusty road.

The congregation of about fifty people were worshipping God enthusiastically when we arrived. The usher led us to the front row for us to be seated.

After the service, I was invited to the front and handed the microphone. By finishing my talk, I made an apology for my countrymen who had committed atrocities during the War. They applauded for a long while, indicating acceptance.

What a heart-warming welcome they had given me! I was overwhelmed by their affection.

Keiko's new address is: 60 Eastbury Way, Swindon, SN25 2EW
If anyone sent letters or cards to the old address, they will be forwarded to the new address.
If anyone visits me by car, there are no parking restrictions on the roads.

A number of people spoke to me amicably, and we hugged each other. How I wished I had taken some little gifts from Japan to give to each person there!
If we are allowed to travel in coming autumn, we will plan our pilgrimage of reconciliation.

Chairman's greetings

Dear Friends

Many of us will be approaching Christmas and the New Year with a mix of emotions. We are hopeful that at last we can celebrate properly with family and friends,

but also anxious that new restrictions may emerge. Some will look back at the last two years remembering those who are no

longer with us and regretting missed opportunities.

At Agape World, we are disappointed that the long awaited pilgrimage to Japan was cancelled and could not be rearranged, and our usual gatherings at the Embassy and in supporters' homes were curtailed. But beyond the frustration of limited activities, and the present noise and bustle of buying gifts and stocking up on food, surely there is a quieter but more insistent message? That message speaks of hope. At this time of year, we celebrate the coming of a baby who broke into time and space, fulfilling history and changing the future. His intervention makes a difference

for each of us, and gives encouragement, enthusiasm and expectation for what is to come.

I believe we have reason to be hopeful whatever the next few months will bring. It will be cold and miserable at times, and the new Covid variant may affect our plans. But Christmas proves that God is with us, and with his help and strength we can face the New Year knowing that eventually things will improve and we will all meet again. I hope you have an enjoyable Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Paul Dakin

We are pleased to introduce you the new book by Paul Murray published this year:

"From the Gaeltacht to Galicia: a Son's Tale" is a newly published book in which I link the experiences of my father, a Belfast medical officer and officer commanding 350 British POWs on the Japanese island of Hokkaido, with my three long-distance walking pilgrimages to the shrine of St James at Santiago de Compostela in NW Spain. In it, I explore, among other themes, one of reconciliation with the Japanese. My parents, Frank and Eileen, met as 16-year-old school pupils learning Irish in a small Irish speaking Gaeltacht community in the west of Ireland in 1929. They became engaged while Dad was stationed in India in 1941. Beginning in Singapore in February 1942, he wrote every day, apart from a month, to Mum for 42 months. I have used extracts from his secret diary to illustrate how his love for Mum and his Catholic faith enabled him to survive his incarceration.



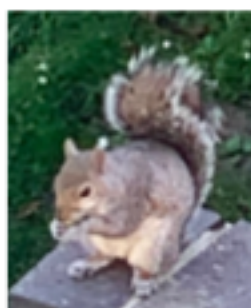
The book is available for purchase from thegreatbritishbookshop.co.uk All profit made from the sale of the book will go to the arthritis charity NASS.

Paul Murray

Squirrels - from Keiko's diary:

We have tamed the squirrels around here, I usually watch them visit my garden from my first-floor window, and when I call them, sometimes, they come very close to me and try to jump to reach my stretched out hands.

Do you remember the squirrel was helping himself with figs from the tree in



my garden - it was in June? The fig tree has been producing its fruit richly. The squirrel was enjoying each day whether I kept watching it or not.

Now summer is at its height; the fruit is getting ripened and looking good. But of course, the squirrel knows what is good. The other day, he brought his fiancé with him into my garden. They glanced at the fruit, then, in a flash, jumped onto the tree acrobatically, plucked the most ripen ones, pushed them into their mouths, came down to the grass ground and enjoyed the figs putting their hearts and souls to devour. It won't be long when they bring their whole family and ravage the fruit, not leaving any for my family or neighbours!

'You are allowed to eat picking corns or other food in someone else's field if you are hungry as long as you do not take the food out of the area.' Having read such passage in the Bible, I have no objection to the little friends visit my garden any time of the day without my invitation and help the fruit. However, I saw two squirrels run from my garden to their home, wherever that was, with figs on their mouths!

Some people have expressed queries about Christmas and Christianity so that I will put down my thoughts about the above:

No one can prove God exists. If you can, there is no need for FAITH. At the same time, nobody can disprove God. The true Christians know, by faith, that God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit not only exist but live in us. Christmas, for us, is the time to acknowledge that God gave Jesus to us and extraordinary acts of Jesus - he exchanged His everlasting, sinless, glorious life to our decaying life physically and spiritually. Christmas time is the time to express our appreciation and praise God. We cherish His goodness and love for us. We give a gift(s) to others, for God gave us Jesus, the source of eternal life. Jesus told us to love each other. We need His help to love our neighbour (people). The more we love God, the more we love ourselves; the more we love ourselves, the more we love our neighbour.

Everybody has faith in something. Sadly, in these troublesome days, many have faith in fear. God does not have angst, so He is not the source who bring us fear.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV

Even though Jesus was not born in December, I value Christmas as a powerful reminder of God's love for humanity and His Resurrection Power.

Yesterday, I saw one nearly ripened fig and needed another day to be perfect for eating. I looked forward to coming down to the garden.

To my astonishment, when I went down the next day with great expectation, it had gone! One of my little friends must have been at it a few minutes before me!

Additionally, to my dismay, they messed up my garden by scattering around several green and injuring ripen figs. They must have had a banquet!

'This is a criminal offence!' I cried, and just about to dash to the criminal court nearby, the squirrels came and looked at me with their sweetest countenances. Oh, they melted away my stone-cold heart instantly. So I adopted them as my babies.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2022!

