

## CAROLYN STYPKA'S JAPANESE ADVENTURES



### [Update 1](#)

### **Update 2:**

It's been another two weeks since my last email, setting me at the month mark of being here in Japan. And what a month it has been. Since I last wrote, I have officially become a registered alien resident (card is completed!), inherited a found bike, done some late night karaoke, learned how to successfully cook some traditional Japanese dishes, cried in anger and frustration at the Japanese language, attended a German Oktoberfest in Yokohama, happened upon a few small festivals - witnessing some Taiko Drumming!!!, attended a small underground concert, received my first official paycheck in Yen, viewed the statue of Liberty (really!!!), started the study of the 3rd (and most complicated) character set - Kanji, and voted in the 2008 election! Whew! (Shameless Plug: All you Illinois voters, vote YES for the calling of a Constitutional Convention!)

Amidst all the fun and excitement, there is also a lot of stress. Things in Japan continue to be busy. Four days a week I attend my language studies, and some days, that is all I am good for. It's hard to sometimes be able to really practice the language, at least to a more advanced degree (more than greetings, and some in-store chatter). I have the most pressure to do this each week at church. I don't dread going, but it feels like a test each week. I take my 25 minute walk there, and am always looking through my notebook reviewing some key words, as if this will help me pass "the exam." Will you be able to respond when the precious old lady who is about four feet tall asks you a question? You were able to list off your family members (different words for older sister and younger sister), but unable to understand when asked if you enjoyed having a large family!

At the same time that I am learning bits and pieces of the language, and then able to understand bits and pieces of questions asked, I am also finding more

members in the congregation that do know "a bit" of English. Between me hearing sometimes just one or two words I know, them throwing in an English word, me being apologetic, smiling and asking them to slow down, and a whole lotta gesturing, I am able to formulate some Japanese words that usually answers the question enough to get a smile. Sometimes, however, the English is used when it doesn't need to be for me, but some like like to practice their English with me. A lady asked today, in good, but slow, English if I liked Japanese food, and what kinds. "Aghh! A question I could have fully recognized in Japanese!!" I think to myself. I answered in Japanese.

Slowly, very slowly, putting together the pieces of this Japanese language puzzle is a small feat, and something I must remind myself of. Nobody said this was going to be easy! I am aware that in these two 2+ years, I will not become fluent. But it's still those small glimpses of victory that help keep me sane. Just last week I literally had to hold back tears in my own frustration, and convince myself that when that same precious old lady wanted to know "Why is it she doesn't speak more Japanese!?!", that she meant it with love and kindness (although it didn't feel like it at the time). Such shame I would feel as I made my walk back home across Sumida-ku. But then just this morning, I was able to give someone my address (that precious old lady wanted to know... she is not giving up on me!), as well as inform my pastor I would be absent two Sundays in November, and properly use the word for "take care" when leaving after our shared lunch. I proudly walked home with a sense of accomplishment.

I hope that each and every one of you is doing well. I've been experiencing a much more mild Fall season than I am used to... low 70s almost every day this past week! Not a typical Chicago fall, that's for certain!

Feel free to pass this email on to anyone that might be interested or that was overlooked in the mailing. Again, I am available via this email, Carolyn.Stypka@gmail.com as well as on Skype, with the user id of Carolyn.Stypka Feel free to contact at any time! :)

Sorry to say I don't have more pictures uploaded online for this mailing to share. I tried using picasaweb via gmail (instead of Facebook), but was rather unsuccessful as I can't get the page to work in anything but Japanese! I will get more out asap.

Keep me in your thoughts and prayers, I know I am keeping you in mine. :)

In Love, Carolyn

[Update 3](#)

[Update 4](#)

[Update 5](#)

[Update 6](#)

[Update 7](#)