

Should You Hold Church in a Bar?

When you think of church, what comes to mind? Well-dressed men and women worshipping in a large building with a cross on the top?

That's not always the case. Sometimes, you have to make do with what you have. That's what Taka Hiroami, the pastor of Praise Community Church in Sendai, Japan who's working with Asian Access' leadership development partnership, is dealing with. They don't have their own building, but that's not stopping believers from worshipping together.

"It's kind of stinky there because every night, 8 o'clock to 3 o'clock in the morning, they open as a bar so many smokers and drinkers ... use that space every night," Hiroami says. "But every Sunday, we have a service there, so it's very, I think, interesting giving impact to people that [ask], 'Is this church?' So I think we impact that church is not a building, but church is a community. church is a relationship."

Praise Community Church was founded in 1995 by an American and an Australian missionary couple. Today, Hiroami says the congregation consists of about 30 people, around 40 percent of whom are local Japanese people and 60 percent of whom are from overseas. For the last 10 years, the church has met in the bar.

"We put a cross in front of the stage, and we set up the sound system, and we worship God with music, guitar, keyboard—and bass," Hiroami says. "And we worship as people worship God inside of a traditional church."

Unlike a traditional church building, however, meeting in a bar has its problems. Hiroami says one of his greatest challenges is finding a clean new building big enough for his

congregation to meet in.

“We also have a young couple with little children ... so we need the building clean for children,” Hiroami says. “We have a 3-month-old baby. I’m sure this is not good for babies, but we still have a congregation having service there, but one of the challenges is finding a new building. So I want to, as a pastor, find a new building, nicer and cleaner and wider.”

It might not be ideal, but Hiroami believes God has them there for a purpose. He asks that you would pray for a new building, but in the meantime, that he would focus on discipling his congregation.

“I really appreciate people who, if you can pray for us, especially for finding a building,” Hiroami says. “As I said, church is not a building, so pray for our people. We are willing to build up our people as a disciple of Jesus, that they can follow Jesus, or so they can [reflect] Jesus’ light in their lives.” {eo}

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