



## Member Highlight | Stephen and Kristal in Nagoya, Japan

*Stephen, Kristal and their daughters, Aspen and Juniper, have recently moved to Japan. Stephen continues to work as a cartoonist while Kristal is teaching at the Nagoya Christian School. Here they share with us what it has been like to adapt to their new life in Nagoya.*

“Japan is exactly what we thought it would be, except for all the ways it is not what we thought it would be. Even for Stephen, who has lived in Japan twice before, many expectations have been upset by one particular factor: **kids!**”

### **To the Kids Belong the Kingdom**

Japan is a hierarchical society marked by respect for elders and a deep consideration for other people's needs. Based on Confucian values which emphasize social harmony and submission to authority, life in Japan, though stable and comfortable, can often be rigid, obligatory, and transactional. It can be hard to work through all the layers of politeness to reach a real human connection, and friendships are often slow to blossom.....except if you have kids!

Since arriving in Japan, we have seen our kids tread all over Japanese cultural norms, and in a strange twist of fate, the Japanese people welcome it. Our kids wave at strangers, and to our surprise, the strangers wave back. Sometimes, they even invite us over to their house for tea.

This is Mihoko-san, our downstairs neighbor. She had us over for tea and we met her husband Tsutome-san, and her son Kousekun. When we arrived, she sat the kids down at a small kotastu (Japanese sitting table), and served them snacks which she had bought especially for them. We were very impressed by her kindness, her generosity and her beautiful, well-ordered apartment. Please pray that we would be able to love this family with Jesus' love, and that someday we might have the opportunity to share the gospel with them.



### **Aspen's fourth Birthday Party**



On the right you can see a woman named Pooh and her daughter, Emma. When we first arrived, we were lonely. One night we asked God for more friends. The next day Pooh came up to us on the playground. We said "こんにちは!" and she said in English, "I'm not Japanese, I'm Thai." She explained that she had seen us playing on the playground from her balcony and came down to meet us. "My husband is Japanese. We have lived here for 5 years but I still don't have any friends." "We'll be your friend!" we told her.

Pray for Pooh, that the Lord would bring many meaningful friendships into her life, not just our friendship. Pray also against loneliness in general. We have witnessed a lot of loneliness since we got here, and we know that it is not God's heart for people to be alone.

We are thankful to be in Japan and we are adapting well - thanks to our kids!"

**If you would like to know more about Stephen and Kristal's ministry, here is a short video:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xWEiil3HTQ&ab\\_channel=StephenMcCranie](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xWEiil3HTQ&ab_channel=StephenMcCranie)



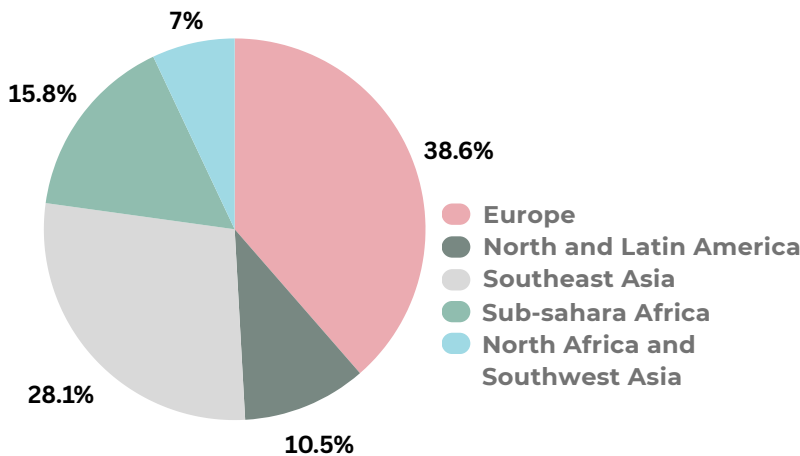
## An update on communication | *Annelise de Carvalho*

After a few years of working and serving in Belgium and following the 18.26 Network since its beginning, my husband, Pieter, and I joined as members about a year ago. As of last November, I was invited to help develop the 18.26 Network communication. I gladly took the challenge to work alongside the leadership team as we strive to grow in our goals: *connecting, coaching, and caring*. Starting with **connecting**, have you heard of the '18.26 Network social media', **Basecamp?** If not, I would like to encourage you to give it a try! There we share and discuss various things with each other through thematic forums while there is also a chat tool available. It is a great way to be in touch, encourage each other, and stay in the loop. If you, a Network member, supporter, or prayer partner would like to be part of this platform, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will send you an invitation link.



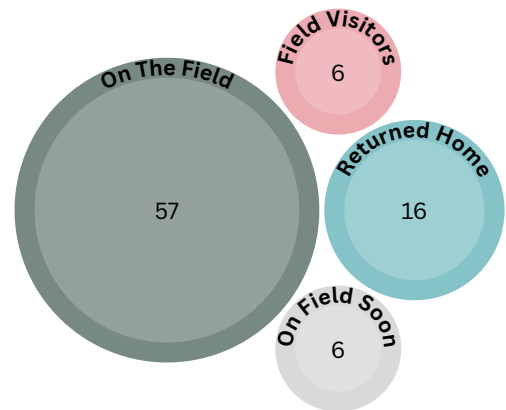
## The 18.26 Network in numbers

18.26 Network missionaries per region (Nov 2024)



The majority of our vocational missionaries are in Europe, followed by Southeast Asia (mostly in Japan).

Current status of the 18.26 Network missionaries



While most of our missionaries are on the field, there are also those who often visit local teams, those soon to be on the field, and those who have returned home.

## Resource Hub | Mandy - our Onboarding Director - on coaching

The 18.26 Network recognizes the value of coaching for our members. In 2025, it is our desire to provide more coaching resources to our members as they transition into their new jobs, homes, and communities as vocational missionaries.

### What is Coaching?

A few decades ago, coaching could often be used interchangeably with **"Mentoring"**. As the coaching profession has developed, there is a clear distinction between the two. Coaching is much more **coachee-led, curiosity-driven, and a partnership**.

*"Coaching is partnering with coachees in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. The process of coaching often unlocks previously untapped sources of imagination, productivity and leadership."* – **International Coaching Federation (ICF)**

Coaching is about growing in confidence, courage, making good decisions, and faith. Coaching helps coachees identify their priorities, shape their goals, work through internal and external barriers, and take action on the next step to make progress.

*Mandy is a Certified Professional Coach. She is credentialed with the ICF and has her own coaching practice. For more information on coaching or the 18.26 Network, email [mandy@1826network.com](mailto:mandy@1826network.com)*

