

Los Angeles CARP visits CARP in Kyoto, Japan

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Students gathered at the CARP center by Kyoto University.

We hopped onto the *shinkansen* (Japan's famous bullet train) and travelled three hours to get to Kyoto. Our first stop was Kyoto University, one of the top universities in Japan, to meet the local CARP students. The students are very busy but they took the time to come see us.

We began with listening to the CARP Kyoto students about their activities. They showed us a video filled with photos of smiling faces, hardworking CARP students, and the assortment of activities they've done including clean-up campaigns, mentoring, and outreach.

We also heard a testimony from one of the new CARP Kyoto members, Kenji. *"In Japan, people are not very religious. It was the same for me. When I first heard about CARP, I told them that I was not interested in religion. However, I joined because of the amazing seniors in CARP, my older brothers and sisters who really took care of me. Even though in the beginning I was very negative, complained, and argued a lot, they still invested in me, loved me, and forgave me. I was moved by that and that is why I decided to stay in CARP."*



The CARP students in Kyoto are very talented and musical!

Then CARP America was able to share the many developments from CARP America Headquarters, CARP Los Angeles, and CARP Las Vegas. We were pleasantly surprised to see that so many of our

activities were similar to those organized in Kyoto, like discussion nights and service projects. We ended our presentations by extending a warm invitation to Japanese CARP students in the hope of doing more exchange programs in the future.

We then visited the local Kyoto CARP center, not too far away. We did some icebreakers with the students that greeted us with love and care. It was a fun way to go around and get to know each other better. The Kyoto members then serenaded us with an instrumental rendition of a song from the Ghibli movie *Kiki's Delivery Service*. The talented students impressed us by playing the piano, guitar, trombone, and flute. They then invited us to join in singing "Country Roads" together.

The Power of Music and Stories

Now that we had connected with music, we had the chance to share our hearts with the Kyoto members. One of the goals of this trip to Japan was to connect to the local CARP chapters and encourage them to not give up, despite the difficulties and challenges.

Pedro from CARP Los Angeles shared his testimony of how he came to join this movement in the past year. He expressed his heart with tears in his eyes.

"I wanted to feel happy inside. I saw the CARP members talking to each other and being so happy and I wanted that. I wanted to open up to God again but I struggled so much. But one day, after attending a 7-Day Divine Principle Workshop, I realized that even though I've done so many bad things, God still loved me. I was crying and laughing when I realized that. From then on, I wanted to convey God's love and heart to everyone around me. Being around CARP, it felt like family.

Seeing the flame in the Japanese CARP students and how they went out everyday to do witnessing, it really inspired me. I was shy in the past but now I have gained new courage to go out and reach out to people. CARP means a lot to me. It is a means to spread God's love to others."

Then T. Hiraki, also a CARP student in Los Angeles, shared her experience doing outreach with her mother.

"At first, I began witnessing because my mother asked me to do it. Soon enough, I realized that witnessing is not easy, but I saw how much my mother and the other Japanese mothers invested and poured out their hearts into doing outreach. And I also heard how much people like Jermaine have changed because of the Divine Principle. I directly saw the Divine Principle changing people's lives and through hearing testimonies from these people, I realized that outreach and the Divine Principle are very important.

So no matter how difficult it gets, I will do my best. Also through coming to Japan this time, I could see that Japan is working hard. Even though we are far apart in distance, I feel that we are close in heart centering on God's will."

Finally, J. Bishop shared a testimony about being called to a leadership position in CARP.

"When I was approached to become a leader in CARP, I didn't want to do it. I thought it would mean that I would have to be like Mrs. Hiraki. I did not think that I had the heart to care for the members from a leader position like her, so I thought I would just be in a supporting role. But Mrs. Hiraki does not take no for an answer when she has her mind set on something. At first, I did not know how to unite with the other board members and I struggled. I didn't want to become just another missionary that pushed their beliefs on other people. But eventually I began to take ownership. I saw people coming in who were just like me. I realized that this is a great thing to be a part of.

CARP wasn't about pushing your beliefs onto someone. I received so much love from the Hiraki family and I felt that it was my responsibility to share that love with everyone. After taking responsibility, I realized it helped me to grow as an individual. Just studying alone and reading alone was not enough. I would have to teach someone and touch someone else's life. I am grateful to you for accepting me to stand in this position. It's not who you are or what you believe, but your ability to love and share the love of God that is important. That is the most important thing."

We ended by singing a song and taking a group photo. There was a beautiful space for sharing our deepest hearts, reminding all of us that we are really all the same – we are all brothers and sisters.