

Matt and Emma Hegler

With Next in Nagoya, Japan

Who are we?

Matt was born and raised in South Carolina. Emma was raised in Indiana and later moved to South Carolina where she and Matt first met and became involved in youth ministry with Greenwood Presbyterian Church. Matt and Emma developed a heart for youth ministry through various leadership roles in the church which helped them to recognize the need for gospel-centered discipleship among teens. They were married in December of 2021 and were approved to join the Next Asia Pacific team in January of 2023.

Through an internship in 2018 with the Next team in Nagoya, Japan, Emma was drawn to the Japanese people. In her time there, she developed a vivid picture of how Japanese culture groans for the gospel. Thankfully, God is calling new youthful disciples up out of Japan and Next is uniquely equipped to receive them. With a passion for the next generation, Matt and Emma hope to come alongside the fading Japanese church and reach out to the youth with the gospel.

Why Japan?

Christianity is widely regarded across Japan as a western religion. It is upon this stigma alone that most Japanese reject the gospel. Despite this, the gospel has gained footing in Japan. About 0.7 percent of Japanese are professing believers and faithful churchgoers. Unfortunately, the church is increasingly elderly and is in danger of fading away. However, God is only beginning His work in the hearts of the Japanese. Japanese culture paints a vivid picture of arms open and hearts groaning for the gospel. A few examples of this are rising divorce and abortion rates. A large group of people that the Japanese refer to as the *Hikikomori* (*turning inward*) are named accordingly because of their chosen social isolation. There are 1.1 million people in Japan who have chosen years of total isolation for reasons like failure to fit in at work or relationship issues. It is for these same reasons that 30,000 people per year commit suicide in Japan. Japan is a country of incredible anxiety, and widespread despair and hopelessness. While the missionaries there are striving to combat this with the gospel, their kids are struggling as well. Missionary kids often harbor feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and transience. These family stressors make up 50 percent of the reasons why missionary families leave the field.



WHY YOUTH MINISTRY?

HALF OF THE WORLD

52% of the world's population is between 10-30 years old. This makes them the largest unreached people group.

POPULATION TRENDS

70% of Christians come to the faith in their adolescent years. Among youth today, these adolescent years are beginning earlier and lasting longer.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Young people have increasingly more in common with each other than they do with adults. Even one young believer could start a massive movement toward Christ!

JAPAN FACTS

LARGELY UNREACHED

98% of Japan has either rejected or never heard the Gospel. That's about 120 million people.

EMPTY CHURCH PEWS

70% of churches have an average attendance of less than 30, the majority of which, are women. Most faithful churchgoers, including pastors, are over the age of 65.

URGENT LEADERSHIP NEED

Declining birth rates and the rising average age of church leaders creates a formula for extinction. The church needs new youthful leaders to carry it into the next generation!

What can Next do?

There are about 25 genealogies throughout the Bible. It is easy to say that God is trying to make a point when the lineage of Jesus is explicitly stated in the Bible throughout 76 generations beginning with Adam. The point is that God cares deeply for His families and does mighty works through their children. Therefore, we should care too! It is our responsibility to reach, train, and sustain the next generation of believers. This is what Next aims to do.

“Serving the Asian church in reaching the next generation.”

The vision of our team is to see a worldwide movement of young people who know God’s love, grow in relationship with Christ and His people, and go as agents of His grace in kingdom living. The means to achieve this vision is by serving locally, equipping leaders, and caring for missionary families. Next’s goals are reaching, training, and sustaining. In partnership with the local church, Next is focused on the outreach and discipleship of young people in local communities. Next also seeks to train national leaders and indigenous churches as they seek to reach the young people in their communities. Lastly, next aims to sustain missionary kids and their families as they grow up across cultures on the front lines of the mission field. Our hope is that Next’s strategy will enable both missionary and local kids to be catalysts for gospel transformation.



How can you help?

Scan the QR codes below to participate. Or ask us to sign you up!

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER

We send out monthly ministry updates that include prayer requests, stories from the field, and encouragement about what God is doing!



BECOME AN ADVOCATE

Share our vision, values, and mission to reach the Japanese youth through social media and word of mouth.



“One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” Psalm 145:4

CONTACT US

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Would you consider financial partnership?

If any part of our mission excites you, please consider financially supporting us. While prayer and advocacy are important to us, unfortunately, we cannot go anywhere without the funds to do so. If you partner with us, this ministry is just as much yours as it is ours. Let’s work together to bring the gospel to the Japanese youth!



Scan the QR code, type in desired amount, and click “Give” or call the MTW office at 1-678-823-0004 and provide our name and account number (400784).

Make checks payable to: MTW with *Matt and Emma Hegler #400784* in the memo line. Specify whether this will be a monthly or one time gift on the check. Then mail to *Mission to the World PO Box 744165 Atlanta, GA 30374*.