

“Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” And he laid his hands on them and went away.”

Matthew 19:13-15

Diversity and Dignity

I joined a “Kid’s Camp” in Fukushima, Japan for children who come from multi-cultural families. The mothers of these children, who are married to Japanese men, come from countries like the Philippines, Korea, China, Ukraine, Thailand, Pakistan, and Brazil. Their children go to public schools, where they often have a hard time making friends and keeping up with their studies. The camp was organized by several voluntary grassroots groups that provide academic support for these children. There were fifty children and mothers who attended the camp.



JEFFREY
MENSENDIEK

The mothers had an opportunity to share their common struggles and ask questions about how to navigate the Japanese educational system. The children had the chance to meet others in similar situations and be a part of a community of people who appreciated them for who they were. We celebrated the diversity of cultures and languages, and the children were able to affirm their mother’s culture.

I joined the camp because Global Ministries has been supporting migrant women in Fukushima ever since the great disaster of 2011. In the end, as we were saying our farewells, I asked a Pakistani boy, “How was the camp for you?” I saw the joy in his eyes as he answered, “Oh, it was wonderful.” Everybody knows what it feels like to have your dignity honored. The Japanese women who organized this camp do a great service to lift up these families and to honor them for who they are.

Jeffrey Mensendiek serves with J.F. Oberlin University in Tokyo, Japan. His appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church’s Wider Mission, WOC, OGHS, and your special gifts.

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