

Paul Sunde

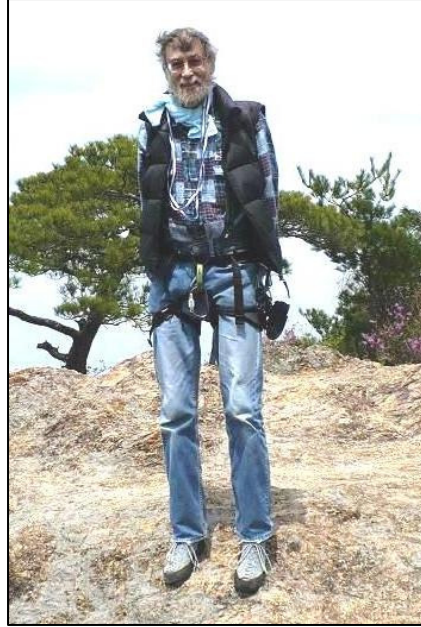
October 7, 1951 – November 29, 2009



Paul Sunde was born October 7, 1951 to Ken and Doris Sunde. He got an early start in Japan as a 2½ year old when his parents moved there to serve as missionaries. Most of the next 55 years of Paul's life were spent in Japan, during which he served more than 35 years in ministry.

Paul graduated from Bethany College of Missions (BCOM) in 1973 and worked with YWAM. A few years later he approached Bethany International Ministries (BIM) with the desire to launch a church planting ministry in Japan. Paul and Reiko were married April 8, 1978. In September 1979 they moved to Bethany while Reiko attended BCOM. Returning to Japan in August 1980, the Sundes held their first church service in Osaka with just 6 people in attendance. Over the next 25 years, Paul saw four churches established by Bethany missionaries. Today, on a given Sunday, these churches have a combined attendance of about 100 people. Over the past 20 years more than 60 people have been baptized at Bethany Christian Church, the church which was pastored by Paul. Just two days before Paul died the organization of Bethany churches in Japan received official recognition in culmination of a four year process.





As a young man, Paul survived a serious bout with cancer and by his testimony, it transformed him. He realized, "I was too busy. Work was my life. Work controlled me rather than me controlling my work. I was too busy to pray." While undergoing cancer treatment he realized, "I was given plenty of time to read the Bible and pray. No thoughts of work anymore. Just God. In spite of the pain etc. my time in the hospital soon turned into a retreat time. A time away from people and work. A time to get to know God in a deeper way." God ministered in a deep way in Paul's life during this season and he experienced tremendous peace. The things he learned through this continued to impact his life and ministry as he gave time to prayer and studying the Word.

When cancer recurred two years ago, Paul declared that God's call was still upon him "to make disciples and baptize and preach the gospel." As a result, he had the privilege of baptizing two more people, and a third person made a decision for baptism. During this time, church members took on more responsibility to free up Paul to use his energy for preaching and teaching. This provided many evangelistic opportunities for Paul to engage with people outside of the church. He practiced 1 Peter 3:15, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." Paul spent much of his last few months in the hospital with Reiko by his side. During this time he wrote, "My doctor knows that a pastor only feels comfortable in church and when he is preaching and so on Sundays he lets me leave the hospital and go to church." Paul continued to preach weekly until a short time before his death.

Over the past year, Paul testified that he was sustained daily by the prayers of God's people. He greatly valued God's love and His plans. Paul's faith remained strong as his body weakened; he was at peace with God, entrusting his future into God's hands. His life was lived in dependence on God; filled with faith and submission to Him. In daily living, in times of sickness and health, Paul exhibited a deep trust in Jesus through worship and reading the Word while praying and testifying of His goodness and mercy.

Paul's funeral was held in Osaka, Japan on December 1. The evening before the funeral, 280 people attended the wake. At the funeral, 200 people were present as Jon Dugan preached on Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." More than half of those attending these services were not believers. We trust that everyone who knew Paul will continually be challenged to follow God as his life and witness are remembered. Paul has left a lasting legacy in Japan which will continue to bear fruit of eternal impact.