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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
[@cedarvilleneews](https://twitter.com/cedarvilleneews)

Japanese Earthquake Motivated Soon-to-be Cedarville Grad

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Jeremiah Pennington, probably wouldn't be graduating from Cedarville University this coming May if an earthquake hadn't rocked his world.

Pennington, a senior special education major from Jackson Center, Ohio, joined the U.S. Navy in 2007 after graduating high school. He spent four-and-a-half years in Japan where he served as a responder to the 2011 earthquake.

Pennington devoted his life to Christ as a child, but strayed from his faith as he reached high school. His military years continued the downward spiral. Seeing the wreckage that an earthquake left behind completely changed his world. He was forced to think through serious questions about life and death. Pennington decided to enroll at a school committed to excellent biblical training and turn his life back to Christ. Because of its proximity to family and reputation for biblical accuracy, Pennington chose Cedarville.

While Pennington found the transition back to Ohio easy; going back to school after six years was more challenging. Not only did Pennington have to keep up with a full workload of classes, he also maintained a full-time job and caring for his family during his college career. He and his wife, Hannah, live in Springfield with their four sons, Samuel, Isaac, Malachi and Caleb.

Pennington worked with Cedarville's grounds crew for three years before starting a job with Adults with Disabilities this past year.

"A lesson that carried over from my time in the military was 'trust but verify,'" said Pennington. "I learned that it is okay to trust what I'm learning, but to verify it to prove its truth."

Pennington added, "The biggest lesson I've learned at Cedarville is 'be who God's called you to be despite what the world wants you to be.' I've had too many experiences of other people saying what you need to be, but I've learned that everything will fall into place if you follow God. The journey may be rough, but God will get you through."

"Over the past four years, Jeremiah has grown into a skilled and caring special education teacher," said Margaret Grigorenko, assistant professor of education. "Though he arrived with work experience from the Navy, Cedarville taught him to navigate the world of higher education as well as US public education. He saw the Lord mature him through working on the CU grounds crew, going through a demanding educational preparation and leading his family. He and his wife learned to manage a relentless and intensive home, school and work schedule, always maintaining their family as a strong priority."

After graduation, Pennington will serve as an intervention specialist at Fairmont High School in Kettering, Ohio.

"I want to impact kids for Christ who may have rough family lives at home," said Pennington. "I feel I have a bigger calling than just teaching – I want to make an impact."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs,

strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.