

My First Time at a Missionary Conference

by Kawakami Yoshiko, pastor
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The Missionary Conference, organized by Kyodan once every two years, was held from Monday, March 22 to Thursday, March 26, 2015 at Kansai Seminar House in Kyoto. Including overseas guests, 62 persons attended the conference, of which 34 were active or retired missionaries in Japan. What was particularly notable about this conference was that the Kyodan invited representatives from the sending churches, and two came from the United Methodist Church, two from the Presbyterian Church in the USA, and three from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The Kyodan also sent invitations to its districts within Japan, and representatives from six Kyodan districts participated. Presently, missionaries serving within the Kyodan are not only from Europe and America but also from Asia and Africa. English was the native language of less than 20 of the participants. As the common language of many participants was Japanese, this was the main language used during the first half of the schedule, with English, Chinese, and Korean translation provided.

The opening worship service, which began at 5 p.m., was led by the Reverend Bernard Timothy Appau from Ghana, who is sent to Asian Rural Institute from the All Africa Baptist Fellowship. His sermon was translated into Japanese, and we sang the hymns in both English and Japanese. The evening program began with “a cooperative game” in which an eight-person team formed a circle and took ropes that were tied together in the middle like the spokes of a wheel. While not being allowed to speak, each person had to manipulate his/her own rope to lift a common bar hanging down from the center and pick up blocks that had a slot for the bar to fit in. The object of the game was to lift one block onto another in the least amount of time in order to form a tower of blocks that did not fall over. The game was designed to have team members feel each other’s pulling actions and come together as one. After that, we separated into small groups to share our mission experiences, and I was thankful to have an opportunity in my group to get feedback concerning our KNL newsletters.

On the morning of the following day, Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo introduced something he had used in his own ministry: *kyogen* laughter. [Kyogen literally means “crazy talk” and is a theatrical form associated with Japanese Noh plays.] It involves an exaggerated laughter from the gut using one’s entire body. During his devotion, he had us all practice doing it, so it became a morning devotion that included lots of laughter.



Participants at the March 2015 Missionary Conference in Kyoto

At the first panel discussion in the morning, we listened to presentations on the theme of “expectations of each partner” from the perspectives of both the receiving and sending organizations. Representing the Kyodan was Ou District Moderator Ohara Muneo, while Swiss Baptist missionary Ruth Ester Waehrer and UMC Associate General Secretary for Missionary Services Judy Chung represented the perspectives of the missionaries and sending bodies respectively. Waehrer came to Japan as a missionary 40 years ago from Switzerland and became a Kyodan pastor. She is presently serving at Uozu Church in Toyama Prefecture. She said, “It is obvious that we need to work alongside the church in Japan.” In addition, she pointed out the work of a missionary needs to be within the context of a “rubber framework,” meaning that while it is important for a missionary to work within a framework connected to the local churches in the area, it is important that there also be considerable flexibility to work within when various issues arise.

In his presentation, Ohara gave the example of a missionary who had been called to serve as the pastor of a Japanese local church but was then recalled by his sending mission board rather suddenly. The local church had worked together with him to develop some new ministries but was left in the lurch when he had to return to his country. So naturally, Ohara said that he wondered what

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Nuclear Power & Discrimination

At a symposium on discrimination sponsored by the Kyodan Buraku Liberation Center that was held in June 2014 at Wakamatsu Sakaemachi Church, Ms. A, a full-time rice farmer from Aizu, spoke as a mother. In the aftermath of the March 11 disaster, Ms. A began to study the issue of radiation on her own, as she was filled with concern about safety issues. Three months later in June 2011, she was introduced to the Aizu Radioactivity Information Center. At the time, Ms. A was very concerned about whether it was appropriate or not to begin spring planting. Although she was inclined not to plant, both the prefectural and local government officials instructed her to go ahead with planting because "if she did not plant, then she would not be able to receive reparation for lost income due to crop losses resulting from nuclear contamination."

Feeling extremely conflicted over who would actually be able to purchase the rice, given the safety concerns, and over the reality that without planting there were be no possibility of compensation for losses due to contamination, she went ahead with planting. However, after conversing with her husband and family she realized, "I would never feed my children food that would endanger their health, nor could I do that to anyone else's child." As she had no means by which to determine its safety, she decided not to ship her produce.

However, following this, various conflicting opinions began to arise in the region. After her husband suggested that "the crops need to be thoroughly inspected," they received numerous phone calls from other farmers in the region, complaining that he had voiced such an opinion. Meanwhile, farmers from other regions with concerns about how they might be impacted by public concerns over safety accused farmers from Fukushima of being "murderers." Despite hundreds of thousands of yen spent to comply with stricter inspections by both the national and prefectural governments, both the consumers and the farmers remain dissatisfied with the current situation.

Ms. A ultimately decided to take on the challenge of combatting the problem of radiation on her own. The soil on her farm is made up of clay of such a quality that produces particularly delicious rice and also prevents radioactive isotopes from entering into the crops because it absorbs the cesium. Further, the mineral zeolite can be used in soil management to neutralize the acidity of the soil. Also, having been advised by the prefectural government that when soil is low in potassium, crops absorb higher amounts of cesium, Ms. A added potassium to the soil both during planting and during the hot days of summer.

As a result of these efforts, when the harvested crops were inspected in the fall, the levels were under one Becquerel per kilogram. In fact, almost all of the fields tested well within acceptable levels. Although her fields had indeed been contaminated by the radioactive fallout, the results gave her reason to push ahead with her efforts. In 2011, the government had set the levels for brown rice at 500 Bq/Kg. However, in farms with sandy soil rather than clay, a few fields did unexpectedly go over the limit for various reasons, but for most fields the levels were below 10 Bq/Kg.

Since the accident in March 2011, farms have been subjected to strict testing standards. In 2012, official government guidelines permitted foodstuffs at levels up to 100 Bq/Kg. Given that prior to the disaster, the level of radiation in rice was less than 0.03 Bq/Kg, there was much concern about allowing these levels in food for general consumption. Would there be a market for this rice, and who would actually purchase rice that had levels of 80 Bq/Kg? It was said that rice with these high levels of radiation would be purchased for scientific research. Ms. A states that no rice with these high levels of radiation is making its way into the market for general consumption at present. "I want to assure you that the farmers of Fukushima are taking the issue of radiation very seriously."

However, it should also be noted that the problem of radiation also extends beyond Fukushima to the surrounding areas. "I am not able to say that there is no reason for concern." Ms. A added, "I do believe the limits that the government set are too high; as for our own farm, we have set the acceptable level to be at 1.00 Bq/Kg." She strongly believes that youngsters should not be in areas where there are high levels of radiation, so they need to be patient in their everyday lives. It is important to understand the science of radiation rather than to live in the fear that is created by ignorance. Agriculture in Fukushima stands on the forefront of the battle against the dangers of radioactivity. I hope that by sharing this information with the people of the Aizu Radioactivity Information Center, you will have a deeper understanding of our struggle, as together we combat the difficulties that have been thrust on all of us by this nuclear disaster. (Tr. AKO)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believer's Friend),
February 2015 issue
(Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko)

Planning Meeting Held for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation

The Project Preparation Committee for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation held its second planning meeting on March 17 at the Kyodan headquarters. Moderator Ishibashi Hideo was away on official business in the Kansai area, but four committee members were in attendance as well as General Secretary Nagasaki Tetsuo, General Affairs Secretary Doke Norikazu, Executive Secretary for Mission Omishima Yoshitaka, and Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Ministries Kato Makoto. After approving the minutes of the previous meeting, Chair Okamura Hisashi introduced the new book, *Arasoi kara Majiwari e* (Kyobunkan, 2015), a translation of *From Conflict to Communion*, a joint publication of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Members reflected on the history of the Reformation and reaffirmed the facts that Christianity was proclaimed in Japan through the Counter Reformation, that the Reformation sent the Puritans to a new continent, and moreover that the Reformation played a significant role in the spread of Protestant Christianity to Japan. In addition to commemorating the 500th anniversary as an opportunity for the Kyodan to praise God as a church founded on the tradition of the evangelicalism resulting from the Reformation, the committee reconfirmed its intention to put into place various activities that will mobilize people to dedicate themselves to and pray for Japan's contribution to evangelism both at home and abroad.

The contents of the talks were as follows.

1. Nakajima Akihiko was chosen to be treasurer of the committee.
2. The contents of the "Memorial Project Plan" were deliberated. In addition to confirming the reason that the Kyodan is commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and the purpose of associated projects, this first meeting of the committee deliberated two further items:
 - (1) To testify about the reformation Gospel to all of Japanese society and to take advantage of this chance to show to a wide audience that the Christian church is not divided but is trying to come together, aiming for unity; and
 - (2) To reaffirm the important role that the Reformation played in the propagation of Christianity in Japan.
3. Details and plans for the memorial worship service were discussed.
4. Various opinions were exchanged concerning the future organization, procedures, and schedule for the Executive Committee. Commemorative events will also be held at the Kyodan General Assembly as well as in the district assemblies, in the hope that this will serve as a chance to be thankful for evangelism to Japan. (Tr. DB)

—Sugimori Yoko, Preparation Committee member
Member, Odawara Jujimachi Church

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it meant to be "partners in mission" in such a situation. Nevertheless, he stressed his hope to truly be able to work together as partners.

In her presentation, Chung expressed her desire for the receiving body to state clearly what its needs are. She said that the role of the sending body is to meet those needs and to give a new perspective. She added that both sides need to work on building bridges between the receiving and sending bodies. All three presenters joined together to emphasize the following two points: namely, that (1) prior to a new missionary coming to Japan, he or she needs to do as much language study as possible and that (2) the sending side will be greatly helped in providing the best match when both sides clearly understand the mission activities that are acceptable to the receiving body. There was also some discussion about how best to hold and publicize events for Japanese missionaries going overseas to tell about their work.

During the afternoon, missionary Timothy Boyle led a group outing to visit various historical sites in Kyoto that testified to previous Christian influence in Japan, first from the "Assyrian Church of the East," often called the "Nestorians," who had come to Japan as early as the 7th century, and then later from the Jesuit mission of the 16th century. We saw several artifacts showing that Christian influence, particularly from the turbulent period of the early 17th century, when Christianity was banned and Christians

severely persecuted. We paused at the monument to the "Kirishitan" (Christian) martyrs on the banks of the Kamo River, where we heard of their courage and offered prayers for peace and reconciliation in today's world.

On the final morning, PCT Evangelism Committee Chair Dr. Chuang Hau Sheng led the devotion, which was held in the Noh Theater adjacent to Kansai Seminar House. The unusual setting was enhanced by an early morning snow that covered the garden. This was followed by a panel discussion that included Commission on Ecumenical Ministries Chair Akiyama Toru, the Reverend Divan Suqluman, a missionary sent by the PCT to Hokkai District, and PCUSA World Mission's Regional Liaison for East Asia Lim Choonsik. We discussed "the prospects of partnership" by deepening our solidarity through mutual mission agreements. Suqluman, a member of an indigenous tribe in Taiwan, explained how she took time to develop a sense of fellowship and trust among the Ainu people in Hokkaido. That afternoon, participants were able to join either a tea ceremony held in the traditional tea house on the grounds or listen to a lecture by Christian artist Watanabe Soichi on the various Christian art items on display at Kansai Seminar House.

Through these various programs, people of different backgrounds and languages were able to gather in the name of the Lord and use the language skills they had through either English or Japanese to open up to each other and encourage each other in their work. (Tr.KY)

Ministerial Qualifications within the Kyodan

There are two levels in the Kyodan's ministerial qualification process: "licensed preacher" and "ordained minister" (literally, "minister-in-full-standing"). Generally speaking, an "ordained minister" is called a "pastor," and the administration of the sacraments of communion and baptism is limited to this level. So the process begins with a lay person first becoming a "licensed preacher" and then later becoming an "ordained minister." The Kyodan's Commission on Ministerial Qualifications is the entity that implements the examinations for both licensed preachers and ordained ministers.

One necessary qualification of eligibility to take the licensed preachers' exam is to have been a Kyodan lay person for at least three years. Likewise, the applicant must be recommended by the pastor of his or her church or by the district (and to apply for ordained status, the person must also be recommended by her or his district). The specific exam that a candidate will take depends on which seminary that person has graduated from and whether all requirements have been met.

The details are listed in Article 3 of the ministerial examination regulations, but simply stated, those who have fulfilled all the requirements of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Graduate School, Doshisha University Graduate School, or Kwansei Gakuin University Graduate School and have received a master of theology degree generally take the A-course exam. As they have been deemed to have completed all of the necessary course work the Kyodan requires, the exam consists of a sermon and testing on the Kyodan's Constitution and Bylaws as well as on the legal status known as "Religious Juridical Person."

The B-course exam is generally taken by candidates with undergraduate degrees from the theological departments of the three schools mentioned above or from other theological schools recognized by the Kyodan, including Japan Biblical Theological Seminary, Tokyo Bible Seminary, and The Theological Seminary for Rural Mission. Besides the items included in the A-course exam, exams on Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, Old Testament exegesis, and New Testament exegesis are added. Persons from other schools are considered on a case-by-case basis, with additional exams included, depending on the contents of the candidate's studies.

There has been an increase recently in the number of people seeking ordination who have not attended a seminary or theological school; they are referred to as C-course candidates. Exams are given each year on specific aspects, and C-course candidates are required to pass all of these exams within a certain number of years after beginning the program.

Recently there has been an increase in the number of people seeking to be qualified as licensed preachers or ordained pastors who have not attended a seminary or theological school; they are referred to as C-course candidates. Exams are given each year on specific aspects, and C-course candidates are required to pass all of these exams within a certain number of years after beginning the program. The number of candidates for ordination as licensed preachers following graduation this spring (2015) is:

- 22 from Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Graduate School,
- 5 from Japan Biblical Theological Seminary,
- 5 from Tokyo Bible Seminary,
- 4 from Kwansei Gakuin University Graduate School,
- 2 from The Theological Seminary for Rural Mission
- 1 from Doshisha University Graduate School, and
- 3 from other schools.

A candidate in any of the three courses who has passed all the exams is then licensed at the district assembly where he or she is located and becomes a licensed preacher. After completion of at least two years of ministry, she or he can then take the exams for becoming an ordained minister. There are no separate courses for these exams, so with only a very few exceptions, all candidates take the same exams. The requirements consist of a sermon, tests on the Kyodan's Constitution and Bylaws and on the legal status known as "Religious Juridical Person," a theological dissertation, and another dissertation on systematic theology as well as tests on Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, and church history.

Everyone hopes to pass all the exams on the first try, but of course, some are unable to do that. Passing grades on each section of the exams, however, are valid for three years, and since these exams are offered in both spring and fall every year, a candidate who does not pass the exam for a particular subject is able to try again when the tests are offered six months later.

An interview is also conducted at both levels of the ministerial qualification process, and this is an important opportunity for the candidates to reconfirm their calling. When a candidate has passed all exams for ordained status and been approved by the Kyodan, she or he is voted on at the district assembly and, through the laying on of hands, formally becomes an ordained minister—in other words, a new pastor.

When an ordained person from another denomination applies to transfer his/her credentials to the Kyodan, the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications considers factors such as whether or not the Kyodan has a mission agreement with the denomination the candidate is transferring from and the candidate's particular training to determine her or his admission as a licensed preacher or as an ordained minister and whether exams in any particular area are necessary. A candidate deemed for some reason to lack proper qualifications at the time of application is recommended to pursue the licensed preacher ordination level by taking the necessary exams.

These, then, are the various ways that a person can become a pastor in the Kyodan. There are likely differences in the process for becoming a pastor in the various overseas churches, but hopefully this gives KNL readers a general idea of the Kyodan's procedures. (Tr. TB)

—Hattori Osamu, secretary
Commission on Ministerial Qualifications
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The Resurrection of a Dying Church

by Shibata Fujito, pastor
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Narashino Church had its beginning as Hirai Church in Tokyo's Edogawa District. The building was destroyed during World War II, and the name of the church was changed with the move to Narashino in 1947.

Before WWII my parents were pastoring Iida Chiku Machi Church in Nagano Prefecture, where I was born. Afterwards my parents moved to Yokohama; they had just moved to Hirai to start a church the year the war began. During the Tokyo air raids on March 10, 1945, Hirai Church was completely destroyed, and with almost nothing but the clothes we were wearing, we moved to our current location in Chiba. That was April 8, 1945.

Narashino Church is about a 20-minute walk from Mimomi Station on the Keisei (railroad) Line. The entire area is now residential, but when we moved here, we were surrounded by pine trees. It was a quiet area where squirrels, rabbits, and weasels ran about freely, and egrets even nested in the trees.

Of course, there was no electricity, gas, or water service. For water we would go to the rice fields below us and bring water back in buckets balanced on a pole across our shoulders. At night we would use kerosene lamps for light. What we called our house was really a one-room shed that had been repaired. For our roof we used pine branches, and my father built a kitchen.

Temporarily, my father made a living by cutting down pine trees and selling stove wood. After cutting down the trees, that area was cleared and cultivated for growing sweet potatoes and upland rice for our food. In due time, my father was able to buy a dairy cow from a farmer in Narita, taking an entire night to walk it home. The milk was to provide protein for the children, but before long, mothers in the neighborhood were coming to buy milk. We added cows one at a time and eventually had a farm with over 50 cows.

After Hirai Church was destroyed, my father quickly registered the move and the name change with the Kyodan, and with Kyodan approval, Narashino Church was born in 1947. Having said that, the reality was that worship was held in the pastor's home, and our family was the worshipping congregation. Christianity enjoyed a "boom" for a short time following the war, and during that time young people would come to worship occasionally, but we were really a church without a congregation.

The turning point came in 1980, the year my mother died. My uncle, Pastor Kimura Hachiro, began coming periodically and started the "Joseph Meeting," which met once a month in our home. My father died two years later, and his dying wish was that Narashino Church would continue. Even though there was practically no church activity, I am sure that my father never lost hope in the resurgence of our church because he continued to pay church apportionments.

The opportunity for this hope to be realized came in 1988, when the prayer request of Narashino Church appeared



Rev. Shibata (1st row, ctr.), with members of Narashino Church

in the May issue of "*Shinto no Tomo*" (The Believers' Friend). It stated that the church was without a pastor and that the people hoped to be able to reestablish their church. We received mail from readers across the country, responding to our prayer request. With the encouragement of this response, the laity began anew to pray together for the resurgence of our church.

Fortunately, Chiba District Moderator Ando Hajime became the pastor of our church, while continuing his other responsibilities. As a result, our church not only had a name, we had become active again. Following Pastor Ando, we were able to continue weekly worship through the cooperation of pastors Katagiri Chiyo, Machida Hisako, and Machida Shizuo.

Soon we began preparations to call a full-time pastor. Although there were only four or five lay members, we built a new church by raising ¥10,000,000 (\$100,000) through fundraising, the sale of church bonds, and our offering. Again in 1999, we built a parsonage with about the same amount of money. We did all this without borrowing anything from the bank. The lay members who know of the situation at the time continue to talk about it. "I thought it was a miracle that we could do something like that." "There were so few of us that we could do nothing. Entrusting everything to God was all we could do." However, we were still not able to call a full-time pastor. Through God's guidance, I entered Tokyo Theological Seminary, was called to be the pastor here when I graduated in 1999, and have continued since then.

Our membership has grown from the 4 or 5 members at that time to 46 today. We were also able to establish a cemetery and get our legal status as a "religious juridical person." We continue our ministry now with a strong awareness of our need to entrust everything to God in the midst of our weakness. "God will protect our church," is a common expression of our congregation. As we continue to pass through troubling times, we welcome the encouragement from churches across the country, and feel nothing but thanksgiving for their help in bringing resurrection to our church. The Shintsudanuma Church and other neighboring churches have continued to be of help to us. "God has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecclesiastes 3:11a). (Tr. JS)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (The Believers' Friend), April 2015

Christian Student Dormitories Today: Mutual Prayers and Support at Tokyo “Yuai Gakusha” (Friendship Love Learning Center)

by Yamane Ibuki, junior
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Student dormitories at Christian schools throughout the country have a behind-the-scenes but leading evangelistic role in Japanese society. Yuai Gakusha, one of these Christian student dormitories, is located in an urban setting among a student population that is predominantly non-Christian but conducts Bible studies every morning.

Yuai Gakusha is located within the property of the public welfare corporation Waseda Hoshien, which is quite near Waseda University in Tokyo. The name “friendship love” is taken from John 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends,” and because “Yuai” sounds like the English words “you” and “I,” Yuai Gakusha is referred to in English as the “You-I Dormitory.”

This institution has a history of over 100 years and includes the founder of Sony, Ibuka Masaru, as one of its former residents. The residents of the dormitory at the You-I Dormitory are called Shasei (Dormitory Students). These students enter the dormitory on the provision that they will live there for four years until their graduation, and currently 12 students (6 men and 6 women) from such schools as Waseda University, Rikkyo University, Sophia University, Tokyo University, Aoyama Gakuin University are living there.

Every year an executive committee is elected for a one-year term at the self-governing You-I Dormitory. Besides focusing on those activities, Shasei gather once a month to talk together about such matters as dormitory life issues and scheduled events.

It is the daily interaction of the Shasei that makes the work of You-I Dormitory possible. There is always support for those who have come to Tokyo from rural areas and are having trouble adjusting as they are greeted warmly each morning and receive advice from their companions about university life. In the Japanese-style room that provides space for interaction among Shasei members, the scene of students involved in long conversations is not unusual. In addition, events are planned to promote the interaction of Shasei members. For the one You-I Dormitory trip of the year, members themselves do the planning, leave for a distant place, and deepen their friendships.

They also have frequent interaction with Waseda University’s dormitory for international students, which is run by Waseda Hoshien. There, on “Japanese Night,” students from overseas who are entering college in September are welcomed, with Shasei members bearing the responsibility for meal preparation and program planning. Furthermore, at the December Waseda Hoshien Christmas celebration, the students themselves prepare the party, script, lighting, costumes, etc., and present a drama. Last time, the presentation was a modern-day version of the Christmas story, which was well received by the students

from overseas as well as by men and women who were former You-I Dormitory members.

The greatest feature of life of this kind of You-I Dormitory is the morning meeting. For 30 minutes every weekday morning during the school term, from 7:30 a.m., all the members participate in a morning meeting. On one of the five days, there is a “student presentation”; on the other four days, there is a “Bible presentation.”

For the student presentation, the person in charge speaks about a topic of interest or study. The world of the students is broadened through hearing the speeches of students studying in different departments, and in turn, it is also good training in communication as the speaker explains in simple terms his or her own academic specialty.

The Bible presentations are often quite ingenious. That is to say, although many students who went to mission schools while they were in middle school or high school are familiar with Christianity, almost none of the students themselves are lay members in a congregation somewhere. This creates the situation in which Shasei members who are currently college students but not yet lay members of a local church discuss together as a cooperative group the meaning and methods of Bible study.

As a result, we are presently studying the Bible in the following way. Every year we take up one “book” of the Bible and, for a year, carefully read it in weekly units. Each week, two Shasei members give a “Bible presentation” on the assigned verses they have prepared beforehand, one each on the first and second days. The presenter gives his or her own opinion and points of question, and then for five minutes after the presentation the other members write down their reactions to the presentation.

On the third day, after the students have given their presentations, pastors from the nearby Kyodan Waseda Church and Japan Baptist Union Tokyo Heiwa Church sit together with the students and hold a discussion with all of them. The two student presenters, who have read the reaction papers and discussed them together in advance, act as coordinators of the meeting.

There we discuss things we usually give little thought to, with the Bible providing the opportunity. For example, from Paul’s stance as he sets out for Jerusalem, prepared for death, we discuss questions like: “Is there something that we could bet our lives on that we should be seeking?” and “Paul believed in resurrection after death, what is our understanding of death?” Sometimes, while having breakfast after the meeting, we continue to share.

On the fourth day of the week, we hear a pastor’s talk, which is a response to our opinions and doubts, and

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International Conference on Nuclear Energy Convened in Germany

by Akiyama Toru, chair
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“The Energy Shift from Nuclear Power to Sustainable Forms of Energy: What Can Religious Groups Contribute to Climate Protection?” was the theme of an international conference held in Arnoldshain near Frankfurt, Germany, March 3 to 6. This conference further developed the discussions held at the international conference organized in Sendai (Miyagi Prefecture) by the Kyodan last year, and the Reverend Okamoto Tomoyuki and myself were invited to attend as Kyodan representatives. This time the conference was organized by the Center for Ecumenical Work of the Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau, Frankfurt, with input from International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), for the purpose of creating an international network to work for an “energy shift.”

A special feature of this international conference was the diversity of the participants. In addition to people dealing with environmental issues from churches in all the regions of Germany, there were Protestant and Roman Catholic representatives and activists from Japan and Korea. Participants included activists and priests from Japanese Buddhist organizations and new religions, such as Seicho-No-Ie, as well as Islamic representatives dealing with environmental issues and WCC environmental issue experts. International journalists were also present. Other participants included victims of the serious radioactive pollution in the town of Iidate due to the Fukushima disaster as well as people involved in daily sit-ins who are planning a gathering of 10,000 people in Fukuoka to demonstrate against the return to operation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima. This meant that people, who until now had not had the chance to meet in Japan, were able to communicate with each other, thus showing that it is possible to build a network for dealing with these issues that truly goes beyond religious and sectarian divisions. The conference schedule was tightly packed, with reports from participants involved in a wide variety of



Rev. Okamoto, addressing the International Conference on Nuclear Energy in Germany

activities aimed at the abolition of nuclear power. We gained an awareness of the extent to which information concerning the maintenance of nuclear power plants and the handling of accidents is currently being manipulated and falsified. We saw that based on the theological considerations in all religions and denominations, there is a warning in their various doctrines about a lifestyle based on dependence on nuclear energy. The use of nuclear energy infringes on the natural environment and the lives of future generations, but it is not enough just to oppose nuclear energy. So there was also a lot of practical advice and examples of measures to take to change both the way we use energy in our churches and temples and in the way we live.

For the Kyodan, there are both issues to face and opportunities to be grasped as we seek to deepen discussion and put our ideas into practice more effectively as believers, making use of the network that was built up through this conference, and furthermore work to train young people who can grapple with these issues and provide opportunities for them to speak out. (Tr. SN)

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the Bible presentation is completed. This process is an opportunity for a deepening of the Shasei members' relationships. I am studying in the religion department of Sophia University, and at these morning meetings I am challenged to consider the degree to which I am personally able to experience and talk about my own vague faith. Before the keenness of the Shasei members, even if you can only give a shallow answer that may melt away, that very experience becomes the foundation for college learning.

If I had commuted to the university from a lodging house, I would probably never have considered such matters, and it is for me a rich life-experience to live in deep fellowship with You-I Dormitory students whose colleges, subjects of study, as well as interests are different from mine. (Tr. RT)

—From *The Believers' Friend*, April 2015 issue

Message from the General Secretary:

The 150th Anniversary of Christian Mission in Taiwan

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan selected 2015 as the year to remember 150 years of mission in southern Taiwan by the Presbyterian Church of England (begun by James Laidlaw Maxwell in 1865) and 144 years of mission in northern Taiwan by the Presbyterian Church in Canada (begun by George Leslie Mackay in 1871). The celebration will continue from April through November.

The PCT began this celebration on April 5, the season of our Lord's Resurrection, with an event held at the Taipei National Athletics University Gymnasium entitled, "150 Years on: Hoping for a New Taiwan." A 150-member orchestra and a 300-member choir performed at a Great Thanksgiving Worship service before a crowd of 15,000 clergy and lay people.

World Council of Churches General Secretary Olav Fyske Tveit preached a sermon based on Matt. 28:5: "As the fearful anxieties of the world raged on, the disciples of our Lord did not avoid them, but rather faced them head on to work toward resolving them."

On the morning of the previous day, April 4, the funeral of Tsài Yù Róng, husband of International Japanese Church in Taipei missionary Usuki Midori, was taking place in Taipei, presided by pastors of seven churches of the Taipei Presbytery to which he belonged. The funeral venue was large, the Reverend Usuki's parents from Kyushu and over 300 people attended the funeral in sorrow, but thankful for the broadness and richness of Usuki's work.

On April 6, the 60th PCT General Assembly convened at Mackay Memorial Hospital Chapel, with more delegates than those who attend the Kyodan General Assembly. At the beginning, representatives of the Presbyterian Church of England, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the Kyodan gave greetings; the two Presbyterian churches declared, "Our children greatly surpassed their parents, making the church mature significantly."

Kyodan General Secretary Nagasaki expressed his gratitude: "The PCT has come with open hands to offer disaster relief in response to the East Japan Disaster, and



The celebration of PCT's 150th Anniversary on April 5, 2015

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being nearest in proximity to us, they offered us help as really true friends." Afterwards, the assembly voted to adopt a long-term Third New Strategy, and especially among the younger members, a heated debate took place concerning sexual minorities, a theme brought over from the previous General Assembly. What stood out this time was the failure to conclude deliberation. (Tr. WJ)

—Nagasaki Tetsuo, general secretary

KNL Corner

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Note: The names of Japanese persons are listed in traditional order, with last names first.