

## Extending a Helping Hand

by Maruya Masato, pastor  
Ofunato Church, Iwate, Ou District

*“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me.”  
(Matt. 25:40, NRSV)*

Dear loving friends! I want to thank you from the depths of my heart for your prayers and support related to the Great East Japan Disaster. Ofunato Church is situated on high ground, so it was only slightly damaged, but the harm to church members has been enormous. The homes of five persons were washed away, and the tsunami caused the death of one family. One is brain-dead. In several other homes, family members were lost. In the midst of these tragedies, the church is wrestling with various matters.

Of utmost concern was the distribution of relief materials. In addition, we have distributed a total of 7,000 Bibles published by the Gideons. Some of the persons who received Bibles are attending worship services and prayer meetings. Meanwhile, we opened places for relief volunteers to stay. Several are attending church for the first time. Since coming in contact with Christianity, some are attending churches in their home areas. The fact that this has become an opportunity for them to connect with

churches is a source of great joy.

We are also going to the temporary housing area. While drinking tea with people living in temporary housing units, we talk with them about various things. As three years have passed since the disaster, almost all the volunteer groups have withdrawn. But for those of us who live here, I think the most important time is ahead. Especially since the number of volunteers has decreased, visitors will be happily welcomed to engage in ongoing conversations. What I often hear is the question, “Why do you visit the temporary housing area?” It is not because someone in authority has commanded us to visit. I feel it is something born of necessity, and honestly, I cannot answer the question well. I do not even have a particular desire to be supportive. I am not trying to take advantage of the situation, nor am I seeking to extend my influence.

Sometimes I am tired and have doubts. But even then, there are persons in need of help, so there is a place for the church to extend a helping hand, even though it may be modest. It will be a blessing if I can share their pain and give off the fragrance of Christ. (Tr. RT)

## Fukushima Shinmachi Church Restoration After the 2011 Disaster

by Takiyama Katsuko, pastor  
Fukushima Shinmachi Church, Tohoku District

Fukushima Shinmachi Church was badly damaged during the Great East Japan Disaster. Our church was planned and built in 1928 by the architect William Merrell Vories, who had come to Japan. At the time of the 2011 disaster, the structure was 84 years old. Roof tiles fell off the sanctuary; the cross on the third-floor steeple tilted; and cracks were visible in the two chimneys. Within the sanctuary, the four corners of the whitewashed walls collapsed; and here and there, cracks in the walls appeared like bolts of lightning. As might be expected, we were anxious about the safety of the sanctuary.

Following the earthquake, a nearby church soon had to be torn down. One month after the quake, an inspection carried out by the Fukushima City Disaster Relief Headquarters showed that the building was in immediate danger of collapse. Even so, we felt that an accurate assessment needed to be made. When the Shinkansen (high-speed train) was finally operating again, we had persons come from the Vories Architectural Office, and their assessment was completed by the end of April.

We spent many sleepless nights for about a month following the disaster, wondering whether or not the sanctuary could be repaired. Finally, having received the analysis that repair was possible, the congregation and the Building Committee met over 15 times, and the building was made earthquake-resistant by reinforcing the walls, the foundation, and the roof. The work was completed in 13 months, and a Service of Gratitude for Restoration of the

Sanctuary and a Thanksgiving Celebration were held on Nov. 25, 2012.

In December 2013, we were all finally able to have a relaxed Christmas Worship Service and held a potluck dinner to celebrate. The sanctuary built 86 years ago has been restored almost completely to its original state. However, the two chimneys were taken down, and the large red roofing tiles were removed and replaced with strong, earthquake-resistant, copper plates. Although at one time we had determined that demolition could not be avoided, our Lord has enabled us to restore the sanctuary built 86 years ago and to make it stronger than before!

All the believers in the church give heartfelt thanks for the Lord's help, for the assistance of the Kyodan and the district, and for the prayers and aid offered by persons throughout the country that have brought about this restoration. “Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” (Psalm 146:1-2)

We give praise to God for the restoration of the sanctuary, which continues to fulfill its purpose as a place for hymns and prayer. We hope it will be used for the spreading of the gospel and for the salvation of many people. In addition, please remember to pray for the evangelization of those who remain in Fukushima, despite their worries about the radiation levels. Please pray for them now and in the future. (Tr. RT)

# International Conference on the East Japan Disaster Held in Sendai

From March 11 to 14, I had the privilege of attending the International Conference on the East Japan Disaster hosted by the Kyodan at Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai. My role was primarily to translate various documents into English prior to the conference and then to help with the simultaneous translation during the conference.

Being the first such international conference the Kyodan has ever sponsored, the staff had to deal with many issues that were “out of their comfort zone,” so to speak. While there were a few minor glitches here and there, overall the conference went very well, and the participants expressed their heartfelt thanks for being able to be a part of it.

The main conference itself focused on presentations related to nuclear power and radiation issues. If the Richter scale 9.0-level (level 7 on the Japanese scale, with level 7 being the most severe) earthquake had been the only disaster, the remaining scars would probably not be very evident three years later, and indeed, I did not see anything in the part of Sendai where we were that gave any indication of such an occurrence. But the tsunami generated by the earthquake devastated the coastline, which not only killed thousands of people and destroyed the homes and businesses of many more but also set off the chain of events that led to the meltdown of three nuclear reactors, polluting the neighboring areas and beyond with radioactive contamination. There is still significant danger of further catastrophic contamination as workers struggle to secure the stored fuel rods and contain the ongoing contamination from the destroyed reactors. People even relatively far from the immediate disaster zones are being severely affected by the radiation that has already been released and are living in fear of what might still happen if another strong earthquake or procedural mistake happens.

The conference began at 2 p.m. on March 11 with a memorial service in the chapel of Tohoku Gakuin University. This was open to the public and attended by about 500 people. The service consisted of a sermon by Takahashi Kazuto, pastor of Sendai Higashi Rokubancho Church, and a prayer litany by the moderators of the three heavily affected districts, along with special music. I wondered if there would be a pause for a moment of silence at the 2:46 mark, when people all over the region would be observing a minute of silent prayer for the victims, but that would have entailed pausing in the middle of the sermon and so was not done. Nevertheless, it was a moving experience and an appropriate beginning to this conference.



Conference participants during a lecture using projected images



Participants at the Kyodan-sponsored International Conference

Following the worship service, there was a “commemorative lecture” by Dr. Kang, Sang-Jung, a professor at Seigakuin University, entitled “Beyond the ‘System’ of Sacrifice—Minamata, Hiroshima, and Fukushima.” As the title suggests, Dr. Kang focused on the common thread of industrial and nationalistic greed by the powerful that results in the sacrifice of the wellbeing of the common people.

Of the 234 registered participants and staff, 44 were from overseas, with the largest contingents being from Taiwan and Korea. Other countries represented were Germany, Switzerland, the U.K., Canada, the U.S., New Zealand, Tahiti, and India. In addition to English, simultaneous translation was also provided in Chinese and Korean. Presentations by foreign guests were done in English, with translations into Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

The two-and-a-half days of the actual conference were filled with lectures and discussions surrounding the effects of radioactive contamination resulting from the reactor meltdowns and the inherent dangers of continuing to operate nuclear power generation facilities. Needless to say, there were no nuclear power advocates downplaying the dangers and extolling the benefits of “cheap” nuclear power. I used to count myself as more or less in that camp, but if Chernobyl gave me initial pause, the Fukushima Daiichi disaster finished the job of changing my mind, along with the minds of a large number of other people.

I was also part of the team working on the resolution statement to be released by the Kyodan as the consensus of the conference. We worked late into the night to incorporate the input from various members of the committee, which was representative of the Japanese and international participants, and then at the final session on Friday morning, after a bit more fine-tuning, the resolution was unanimously adopted. Some minor adjustments to wording remain to be done before the final Japanese and English versions are released in April.

Following the conference, most of the overseas participants joined in a bus tour to the devastated coastal cities of Onagawa and Ishinomaki on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. We visited an elementary school where almost all the children and teachers perished in the tsunami, in spite of being right next to a hillside that could have saved them if they had only known that such a huge tsunami was coming. We also took a tour of the Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant, which unlike Fukushima Daiichi, was able to

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# Life as a Businessperson: The Struggle Itself is a Christian's Witness

by Tomita Koyo, advertisement agency employee  
Reinanzaka Church member, Tokyo District

The beginning of a week for company employees is on Mondays! At Sunday worship everyone, including myself, very naturally offers a prayer indicating that "Today is the start of a new week." But is Sunday really the start of a new week? Without exception, the new week for businesspersons begins on Monday.

I work for an advertising agency. Although most people seem to have images of persons at work in banks and factories, few have images of what is done in advertisement agencies. As a result, I am often asked what an advertising agency does. In other words, it is an area of employment that very few people understand.

Actually, much of our work is difficult to describe, and since there is a need for content security as well, there are some things that we are not allowed to explain. However, our company helps in all areas of our clients' needs, including marketing, sales management, and communication of related information. In the midst of that, our job is to be on the front line, consulting with our clients.

In the world of mass communication and advertisement, there are unique relationships, social/entertainment commitments, and overtime work, where consideration of the client comes first. To be honest, I feel that a distinct line can be drawn between this world and the world that I know at church among our calm and kind members. Even if it were known at my workplace that I am a Christian, I get the feeling that the other employees do not believe it. Even more so, the fact that I am a Sunday School teacher would be considered a joke.

## *Advise from a Former Pastor*

Although I went to a neighborhood church as a child, it was more for play than anything else. It was at a time when I thought the offering at church was little more than the change that people offered at shrines and temples. However, I continued to attend church and was eventually baptized.

As I continued attending church, a former pastor of my church, Kobashi Koichi, said something to me that was especially meaningful. Just before I was baptized, he said, "Even if there's something you don't like, or something that seems bothersome, continue to come to church because God has chosen you."

To be honest, difficulty continues to be a part of my everyday work. There are days when lack of sleep is a real drain on my energy level, and I often feel considerable stress. In my position, I must lead those under me, and as a project team leader, I must manage

our work. In other words, I am in mid-management. At entertainment and social engagements, I must also play out the role of a businessperson of former times (when Japanese businessmen were entirely devoted to their companies).

Conversation with God takes place on the train as I commute to and from work. Even so, I continue to attend church. I am a poor Christian. I do not adequately read the Bible. Although there have been times when I have continued to read it for a few weeks, I have never continued longer than that. Rather, I simply offer daily prayers. The wonderful thing is that I have realized there is no need for a special place or time for dialogue with God in prayer.

The location for my morning prayers is inside the subway. On Monday mornings, I give thanks for the passing days and for new business opportunities. The truth of the matter is that as I pray during my commute, I am able to bring calm and order to my mind and soul through this dialogue with God.

## *Continued Personal Reflection in Daily Life*

Whatever else is said, I am a mere businessperson—an ordinary person. I get angry when someone takes a superior attitude toward me and complain when I struggle. When I remember my faith at times like these, I ask myself, "Is this all right?" But then I answer, "It's okay. This is who I am and how I live. Indeed, this is the life God has given me."

My week of such varied concerns continues from Monday, and then I head to church on Sunday. At church, I interact with the Sunday school children and offer prayer at worship. It is here that I receive the nourishment I need for the following week as a businessperson. Daily there are difficulties, distress, and disappointment, and I certainly cannot say that I have not deceived myself. However, I feel this is true for most Christian businesspersons.

As I sing hymns and offer prayers during worship, I am given renewed courage, while at the same time, I struggle with my weakness. I am convinced that my struggles and my continued worship at church are the realities and the witness of a Christian. The question of whether I am fully responding to the grace and hope of God's guidance is one I continue to ask myself, but I believe that this struggle itself is my witness as a Christian. (Tr. JS)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend) January 2014 Issue

# Nurturing People in India's Rural Areas

*Love must be completely sincere. Hate what is evil, hold on to what is good. Love one another warmly as Christian brothers, and be eager to show respect for one another. Work hard and do not be lazy. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion. (Romans: 12: 9-11)*

by Dr. Miura Teruo, Dean and Kyodan missionary  
Makino School of Continuing and Non-Formal Education (MSCNE)  
Sam Higgingbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences  
Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh State, India

I have been working at the Makino School of Continuing and Non-Formal Education (MSCNE) of the Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences in Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh State, India since April 2004. The institute was established 104 years ago by the Reverend Dr. Sam Higginbottom, a Presbyterian Church in USA missionary. In 1997, the Makino School was set up on the institute campus by Dr. Makino Kazuho, a Japanese missionary from the Kyodan, as a part of the institute's Faculty of Agriculture. The school is designed to focus on practical education and training according to real-life situations and training for rural workers at a grass-roots level. Hence, admission to the school is not limited by one's educational level but only by one's passion and dedication to work with people.

The school aims to provide non-formal education and training on the basis of God's love and the Christian spirit to rural people and also to assist in development efforts for improvement of the quality of rural life. For the past decade, MSCNE has focused on nurturing both men and women in rural areas and on implementing rural development activities towards self-reliance.

The following are concrete activities that have been implemented in the past year:

## 1. Special Course in Sustainable Agriculture for Rural Leaders

Every year, the course begins in early July and finishes in early April of the following year. Students are mostly sent by churches and NGOs and, after the completion, they are supposed to return to their places of work or their own communities to work among them at a grass-roots level. The course stresses organic farming, providing skills and basic concepts of farming and food production, food processing, and marketing. At present, more than 300 graduates are scattered all over India, Myanmar, and Japan. Almost all the students had sending bodies that are NGOs or Christian church organizations, but some come on their own. This school year, students studied a series of lessons on sustainable agriculture, which includes organic ways of agricultural production, food processing, and alternative marketing. Since three years ago, the course has achieved a more international atmosphere as more students from Myanmar and Japan have entered. It seems to generate more cross-cultural understanding among students and staff members, broadening their views of culture, religions, justice, and peace.



The author (far right) and his wife (far left) with Indian colleagues in the mother-and-child health program in rural areas



Mobilizing local residents to promote healthy nutrition

## 2. Assistance to Allahabad Agriculture Cooperative

MSCNE assisted in improving production of Japanese rice and Japanese seasonings (e.g., miso and soy sauce), aiming to facilitate financial self-management of cooperatives and to improve income-generation for individual farmers. Those products have sold very well at a much higher price, compared to other rice; 53 cooperative farmers took part in the Japanese rice-growing project. The rice has been sold all over India, especially to Japanese restaurants and Japanese residents in India, even extending to Korean and American communities. While the cooperative society has gotten a much stronger capacity to manage its own operation, it is still necessary for them to get more advice and technical assistance, such as on improving customer care, quality control, efficiency in food processing, development of markets.

## 3. Assistance to the Asha School

MSCNE provided assistance and guidance to three private schools, called the "Asha School," which were initially established by MSCNE. At present, 650 children from kindergarten to grade 10 are enrolled in the three schools. Almost all the students are from marginalized families whose social status has been kept low because they are seasonal farm laborers, simple laborers, or deprived, low-caste people facing persistent caste discrimination. Until two years ago, the schools were led by MSCNE, but nowadays, representatives chosen from among the teachers are able to operate the schools with much confidence, having organized their own educational society, called the Asha Smile Shiksha Society." (Shiksha means "education" in Hindi.) Now, MSCNE provides special training programs for new teachers, educational camps for female students, and partial scholarship for school children. Moreover, the schools, teachers, and students were strongly encouraged by the schools to obtain financial assistance from Presbyterian Church U.S.A. churches, Japanese volunteers, NGOs, and individuals. Their donations were used for improvement of school buildings and facilities (e.g., toilets, hand pumps, and roof repairing, et cetera).

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## Executive Council Approves Resolutions & Temporary Move of Kyodan Offices

The fourth Executive Council meeting of the present two-year general assembly period took place Feb. 17-18 at the Kyodan headquarters, with 29 of the 30 members in attendance. Following an opening worship service led by council member Fukaya Haruo, General Secretary Nagasaki Tetsuo gave a report on fundraising for the East Japan Disaster relief and reconstruction. Funds collected from within the country for the Kyodan effort have reached 667, 650,000 yen, and with the addition of the US\$ 1,122,344 grant from the United Methodist Committee on Overseas Relief (UMCOR), the total received from overseas has now reached 370 million yen. He also reported that after the dissolution of the Japan North American Commission on Cooperative Mission (JNAC) in 2003, dialog with the North American churches had declined, but there an effort is now being made to revive such conferencing.

Following this, the chairperson of the International Conference on the East Japan Disaster, Ito Mizuo, reported on the upcoming conference, which is to be held March 11–15 at Tohoku Gakuin University in Sendai, with a budget of 24,250,000 yen. Approximately 150 participants from inside Japan are to be joined by about 60 international participants from Asia, Europe, and North America.

The Board of Publications reported that the sale of hymnals is now about evenly split between the older 1954 hymnal and the new “Hymnal 21” but that the church-related schools around the country are now overwhelmingly using the newer hymnal.

In the ongoing task of revising the church’s Basic Theory of Mission, the draft document had been sent to all of the

districts for review and comment, and after each district gave their reports, the Executive Council discussed it further. Most of the comments were supportive of the draft, and so Moderator Ishibashi proposed that a committee be formed to make the formal proposal for ratification at the next Executive Council meeting, and that was adopted.

Next, the proposal that had been previously tabled, the “Resolution calling on the Japanese government to revoke the plan to build the Kaminoseki Nuclear Power Plant and to immediately begin decommissioning existing nuclear power plants” was reintroduced. Previously, a committee had been set up to rewrite the proposal, and those revisions were discussed and then approved by a majority vote. Then, a related proposal entitled “Recognition of the participation of the Kyodan in the movement to abolish nuclear power production” was introduced. After discussion, an amendment was introduced to rename the proposal as “Calling on Kyodan churches to participate in the movement to abolish nuclear power production,” and that was approved.

After receiving the report from the Task Force on Issues Surrounding the Japan Christian Center Building concerning the results of the earthquake-resistance analysis of the Japan Christian Center Building, Moderator Ishibashi proposed a temporary move of the Kyodan offices for the safety of the office staff. A temporary relocation was approved, although details such as the temporary site, timing, and budget have yet to be decided. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

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### 4. Implementation of Tailoring Classes at Asha Rural School

This is the third year for MSCNE to implement tailoring classes for rural women. We believe that an effective way to improve rural women’s status is to provide vocational skill training. Three Asha Rural Schools, which were established by MSCNE, implemented six-month tailoring classes, where all of the teachers were rural residents who had been nurtured and trained by MSCNE over a five-year period. In 2013, 60 rural women completed the course. In the near future, MSCNE is planning to provide an advanced course for those who have gained good skills and personal spiritual growth. After completion of the course, they have a chance to make school uniforms so as to obtain wages or to be provided with pedal-type sewing machines. The tailoring class has become very popular among young rural women. There are, in fact, many on the waiting list to join the next class.

### 5. Implementation of Mother and Child Health Project

MSCNE implemented healthy nutrition and mother and child health projects to train rural health volunteers in two counties in Allahabad, with a population of 380,000. Such health projects by NGOs are very necessary because

of the extremely high rates of infant mortality, maternity mortality, and malnourishment among children compared with other states in India. Hence, it is necessary for us to mobilize rural residents for the improvement. As of now, 35 volunteers have been trained by MSCNE staff and Japanese experts. The volunteers made a great effort to collaborate with government-appointed health workers to establish more sustainable and efficient health-promotion activities. Nurturing and training rural women as health volunteer workers is not only for the promotion of rural health but also for the enhancement of women’s social status, capacity building, and self-reliance.

This is the tenth year since I began to work here in Allahabad. I am thankful for the prayers and support of so many people, which has allowed me to work with people in India, nurturing rural people at the grass-roots level. It is my prayer that God will work with us to let people grow in His love so that they will love one another.

Lastly, I would like to express my deep gratitude for your continuing prayers and concern for our mission in India.

# Remembering Annie May McLachlan, Educational Missionary to Shizuoka Eiwa Girl's School

This year (2014) marks the 127th year since the founding of Shizuoka Eiwa Girl's School. In this long history, the days during World War II were particularly difficult. The following is written to introduce the life of Annie May McLachlan, who contributed greatly to our school before, during, and after WWII.

## 1. From her first entry into Japan to her deportation

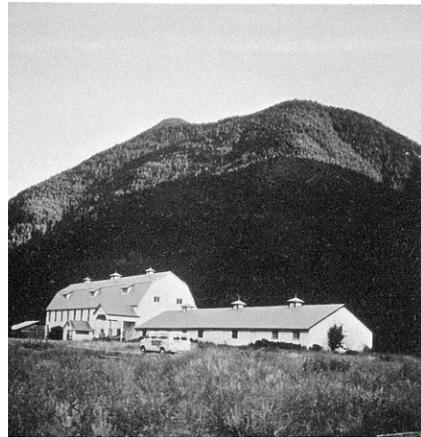
Annie May McLachlan was born in 1895 in Pipestone, Manitoba, Canada. While continuing her career as a teacher, she joined the Woman's Missionary Society and went to seminary in Toronto. In 1924 she came to Japan, taught for two years at Yamanashi Eiwa Girl's School, then moved to Shizuoka Eiwa, where she spent the rest of her career in Japan. The love she showed everyone, which was based on her Christian faith, led many people to trust and love her. In 1941, pressure from the military increased considerably, and the name Eiwa [whose characters mean "English and Japanese"] had to be changed to Seiryō ("Quiet Hill"). Due to the Japanese government's increasing harassment of foreigners, McLachlan's classes were cancelled; she was no longer permitted to attend Board of Trustees meetings; and finally she was put under house arrest. Eventually, she was deported from Japan as part of the exchange of foreigners in Japan for Japanese nationals held in the U.S., and from there she returned to her native Canada.

## 2. Wartime life in Canada

Because Japan was the enemy of the U.S. and Canada, many Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians were persecuted as enemy aliens. Many Japanese-Canadians were interned in the famous Tashme Camp, which was the largest such internment camp in Canada. In the camp, schooling through the eighth grade was provided, but there was no schooling beyond that. The United Church of Canada protested this lack, and the church was then allowed to provide high school teachers for the camp. To provide instruction to these young Japanese-Canadians, McLachlan travelled 200 kilometers every day between Vancouver and the camp. After the war, the Canadian government apologized to the internees and provided compensation. The government also praised McLachlan for expressing the conscience of Canada.

## 3. Return to Japan

Returning in 1947, McLachlan was one of the first missionaries to come back to Japan. She found that the buildings of Shizuoka Eiwa had nearly all been burned in the air raids. With great financial help from the United Church of Canada, the buildings were rebuilt. McLachlan not only taught at Eiwa but also conducted Bible classes in her home. Her coeducational Bible classes attracted some of the brightest young people in Shizuoka. In these Bible classes, Harasaki Kiyoshi,



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View today of the WW II site of the Tashme internment camp for Japanese-Canadians during WW II and Annie May McLachlan

Nagasawa Iwao, Sugiyama Kenji, and many other future pastors were nurtured.

## 4. Haibara Church

Following her time at Shizuoka Eiwa, and after coming back from her next furlough, McLachlan was assigned to Haibara Church to do rural evangelism. Her work with Nagasawa Iwao, pastor of Haibara Church, had a great impact on the congregation. From this came the beginning of the social welfare institution Yamabato Gakuen, a home for persons with severe physical and mental disabilities. Since then, Yamabato Gakuin has established a retirement home and many other social welfare projects. It is most impressive that in order to establish this institution in rural Haibara, the elders of Haibara Church quit their jobs to devote themselves full-time to this project.

## 5. Return to Canada

McLachlan returned to Canada and lived in a retirement home with her sister. In her last days, she began each day by looking at a picture of Christ entitled "Christ of Saint John of the Cross" by Salvador Dali, which is now in Shizuoka Eiwa's Prayer Room, as well as by reading the scriptures and praying. She died on Oct. 13, 1991. Trevor C. Bamford, an English conversation teacher at Shizuoka Eiwa, attended her funeral as the school's representative. As a remembrance of her, Bamford brought this picture back to Shizuoka Eiwa and brought her Bible back to Haibara Church. When we look at this picture, let us all to keep in mind McLachlan's words, "Don't look at me, but look to the one who sent me."

(Tr. JT)

—Kondo Yasuo, principal  
Shizuoka Eiwa Girl's Junior/Senior High School

# The Hope Received from “Questions about Life” — The Foundations of Christian Education at Tohoku Gakuin University

by Akai Satoshi, 2010 graduate  
Christian Division, Department of Literature

What is the meaning of my life? Am I a person of worth? These are questions about life that everyone considers at some point in life.

I grew up in a non-Christian family and went to public schools up through high school. Throughout my studies, I lived my life with these questions stored away in the corner of my mind. That was because the education I received was based on the premise that one would not have any doubts about life. So, it was in that context that I dove right into the competition for entrance into university. As I could not do well in that competition, I began to question the value of my existence. Accordingly, my interest in philosophy and religion increased in response to my continued questioning, and I decided to enter the Christian Department of Tohoku Gakuin University.

“Respect for personal dignity and perfection of character.” This has been the educational policy of Tohoku Gakuin University since its founding some 120 years ago. “Respect for personal dignity”; this means that you are really valued as a person. Education at Tohoku Gakuin University is based on the Bible, which says, “You are precious and honored in my sight.” (Isa. 43:4) The “you” that is a human being is of value in the sight of God, who reveals himself as the “I.” For me, as a person able to find my value only in comparison with other people, learning about this at Tohoku Gakuin University was like a Copernican transformation in my life.

In my third year at the university, I became friends with a Christian several years older than I was. He had also encountered the Bible for the first time at Tohoku Gakuin University in the same way as I had, and this had led him into the faith. I was very attracted by his kind and gentle personality and became interested in why this person had become a Christian. However, I never got a chance to ask him about that, as he suffered from a serious illness and

passed away in the winter of 2010 after a year-long fight against it.

It was a great shock to me, and I could not help but ask why he had to suffer and die. Then afterwards, I had an opportunity to read some things he had written during his battle with illness. Even though he had questions about his suffering, he still spoke of his trust and his hope in God, even in his trials. As I read what he had written, the words of the Bible I had encountered in university finally began to connect directly to my life.

The Great East Japan Disaster happened soon after that, so while being involved in support work in the disaster zone, I have been wondering about the meaning of such a catastrophic event. At the same time, I have wondered how I would handle such an event in my life that was so far beyond what I could anticipate. Indeed, in such an unprecedented situation as that, even the meaning of life seemed to be washed away, calling into question the true meaning of education. I think, however, that Christian education is laid on a foundation that cannot be washed away, even in such unexpected circumstances.

Tohoku Gakuin University is characterized by the spirit of the “3L’s” (Life, Light, Love). This is not a mere slogan but a witness that this school has been making to the hope we have in the life, light, and love we have even in the face of death. This is not just an empty debate. We want to make our school one that continues to witness to the hope that is shown in those three concepts of life, light, and love, so that we can face death without ignoring the darkness that surrounds it. This is something that we encourage our students to consider.

I graduated from Tohoku Gakuin University and became a teacher in a Christian-related school. Standing on this solid foundation, I want to continue to work hard for education in response to the “calling” shown in these three aspects of hope.

## Cultivating the Person on the Foundation of Christianity

by Sasaki Tetsuo, Religion Department head  
Tohoku Gakuin University, Sendai

Oshikawa Masayoshi, who had been baptized by missionary James Ballagh, worked together with missionaries W. E. Hoy and D. B. Schneder from the Reformed Church in the United States to establish Sendai Theological Seminary in 1886, 127 years ago.

The seminary was renamed Tohoku Gakuin University five years later, but the Christian faith that these three held has continued to be the foundation upon which this school has been based. One concrete symbol of that commitment is that worship services are held every day on each campus.

Students major in the specialized fields of one of six departments but also study liberal arts broadly to cultivate

their character. These studies develop the skills that will be necessary in their chosen careers and widen the possibilities they will have in life.

Studying at Tohoku Gakuin University is not only designed to develop personal skills but also aims to cultivate the kind of character that can build faithful relationships with one’s neighbors. This means that the students become able to view themselves in an objective manner. This is why there is so much emphasis on the chapel services at the university; they add to the overall educational experience that develops our students into persons who love their neighbors and can contribute to the welfare and culture of the world. (Tr. KY)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), January 2014 issue

## Message from the General Secretary: Executive Council Approves Move of Kyodan Offices

On Feb. 18, the proposal on the temporary move of the Kyodan General Office and other offices, Agenda Item 29, was approved at the fourth Executive Council meeting of the 38th General Assembly period (2013-14). The action relates to the current condition of the Japan Christian Center, in which the three offices of the Kyodan and other related organizations are located. As a result of the massive earthquake that struck East Japan at 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, which registered 5.5 in Tokyo on the Japanese scale for quakes (with level 7 being the most severe), it has been recognized that the structure has no steel frame above the center's fourth floor, as per the building codes at the time it was built in 1970.

Furthermore, careful inspection of the building has shown that there are no outside stairways, and due to the shape of the property, a fire truck with ladders able to reach above the sixth floor could not enter the grounds. The 10-ton pump on the roof that heats and air conditions the various floors is not anchored, so the possible danger of it falling over during a strong earthquake has been suggested.

After the 2011 earthquake, the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service (JOCS), the IBS Shadan, and

the Japan Christian Federation on Early Childhood Care and Education promptly left and moved to other locations, and this spring the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) will withdraw and Waseda Hoshien will close its meeting rooms. Now with the Kyodan's decision on the issue, even though at the eleventh hour, a total of about 80 staff persons' lives will be protected: 20 in the Kyodan General Office; 35 in the Board of Publications office; 6 in the Board of Pensions office, which includes the Promotion Committee for the Movement to Support Retired Ministers; 1 in the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies office; 6 in the Kyodan Mutual-Aid Society for Church Facilities office; 1 in the Christian Schools Council on Cooperative Mission office; 3 in the Tokyo District Office; and 4 in the Korean Christian Church in Japan office.

Due to the urgent nature of this issue, the Task Force on the Japan Christian Center Building Issue has recently been formed, with the Kyodan moderator as chairperson. So the Kyodan is earnestly trying to cope with this pressing matter that hereafter will receive much attention. (Tr. RT)

—Nagasaki Tetsuo, general secretary

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survive the tsunami by having just enough power to shut down safely and avoid a meltdown. It was quite interesting to listen to the "other side" and see the impressive displays on how electricity is generated. It all looked attractively "safe," but we knew better.

The last stop prior to lunch and our return to Sendai was in the Kadowaki district of Ishinomaki, which had been completely devastated. One lone steel frame of a building remained one street beyond where the bus was stopped, and within it stood a small prefab building. The owner greeted me as I walked by and invited me in when he discovered that I speak Japanese. As the bus was almost ready to leave, I did not have time to hear much of his story, but he gave me a copy of a newspaper article relating that all the residents thought no tsunami could reach that far inland and had no warning until the giant wall of water came crashing in. He somehow managed to climb up on a floating roof, but his wife was gone, along with everything he owned. He had restarted his restaurant in a van, and I was deeply impressed by his resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

It was a sobering experience indeed to see the devastation and hear the testimonies of those who lived through it and continue to face ongoing challenges. Yet, we came away inspired not only to help those who remain rebuild their lives but also to protect the lives of future generations from the unacceptable risks of the continued use of nuclear energy.

—Timothy Boyle, United Methodist Missionary  
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### KNL Corner

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

### Correction, with apologies:

On p. 8 of KNL No. 376, the Reformed Church in the United States (originally, the German Reformed Church) was mistakenly referred to as the Reformed Church in America (originally, the North American branch of the Dutch Reformed Church). It was the RCUS that sent to Japan the women missionaries who played leading roles in establishing Miyagi Gakuin.