

Executive Council Deliberates Internal Church

The 4th Executive Council meeting of the current biennium, held Feb. 18-19, was attended by all 30 members. Discussions began with the secretary's report, focusing on the section concerning the Board of Publications. Ojima Seishi, chair of the board of directors, reported the resignation of Director Akiyama Toru and the need to select a replacement. Following approval of the report, discussion centered on naming a replacement. Kyodan Moderator Yamakita Nobuhisa recommended Arisawa Tsugutoshi, pastor of Yao Higashi Church, stating that Arisawa has a good understanding of the operations of this board as well as the ability to see the overall picture of all three church boards. When the issue of Arisawa serving both a local church and taking leadership of the Board of Publications was raised, it was noted that he will resign his position as senior church pastor. So the original proposal was adopted, and Arisawa will be the new director, serving out the remainder of the present term until October 2008.

At the 3rd Executive Council meeting last October, a motion was passed to recommend the resignation of Kitamura Jiro (a Kyodan pastor), and Moderator Yamakita sent an official document to Kitamura on Oct. 26. Expectations that the 4th council meeting would focus on this recommendation were quickly fulfilled, as a heated debate erupted. There were sharp differences over the proper interpretation of the term *kyoshi tainin kankoku* (recommendation for a minister to resign). Yamakita commented on the meaning of the recommendation and reported on what had transpired since the previous council meeting. Concerning the demand that Kitamura respond to the recommendation by Dec. 31, 2007, Yamakita said the only response he got was that Kitamura "could not respond." To this, Yamakita sent a notice dated Feb. 4, 2008, stating that unless there was a response, further steps would be taken, beginning with a second official recommendation, which would include details on the process followed as well as a statement on the issues involved in administering holy communion to unbaptized persons. Lastly, the notice stated: "If you continue the practice of distributing the communion elements to unbaptized persons without the sanction of the Kyodan as a whole, it will be necessary to proceed with admonitions. Please respond by June 20, 2008." [Ed. note:

The term *kaiki* is translated "admonitions" in the English version of the Kyodan Bylaws, but it is more than just a warning. Included is a procedure for rescinding ministerial credentials.]

Upon receipt of that message, Kitamura replied with three points of challenge and two statements of opinion. He challenged as questionable the following three points. "1) At the 2nd Executive Council meeting, Moderator Yamakita challenged my credentials as a member of the Executive Council, but then at the next meeting, this was escalated to a recommendation to resign. 2) Yamakita emphasizes "proper sacraments," but I am not cognizant of anything stating 'this is the proper sacrament.'" The sacraments are a response from the human side, and as such can include mistaken aspects. Can these really be absolutized? 3) While it has been said that the style I use in the sacraments is in violation of the Kyodan Bylaws and Regulations, Yamakita has a narrow view. There is also an issue with the Confession of Faith. It is not that I fail to take these seriously, but the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus are above the Bylaws and Regulations and supersede them."

Kitamura's two statements of opinion were as follows. "1) Concerning this recommendation, there has been a great deal of reaction from churches and laypeople. In comparison to the discussion on the reassessment of the union (between the Okinawa Kyodan and the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan), which has been insufficient, the reaction in my case has been much more pronounced. Why is this so? You say that 'The Sacrament of Communion is the lifeline of the Church,' but I believe that dealing with the Okinawa issue and such issues as gender discrimination is even more a 'lifeline' of the church. Thus I feel that this reaction toward me is strange indeed. 2) In the magazine *The Gospel and the World*, I stated that it is important to take new steps in reaching out to the world (referring to an article he had written explaining his theology of the sacraments). My understanding may be different from others, but in working within a federation, such as the Kyodan, we should take a broad approach."

(Cont' d. on p.2)

In response to these points, Moderator Yamakita wrote the following. "1) Even though Kitamura stated, 'The 34th General Assembly is invalid (because Okinawa boycotted it),' he became a member of the Executive Council and then (at the 35th General Assembly) stated that he 'would not participate in the communion service because the Okinawa delegation was not present.' Thus, simply having him resign from the Executive Council, while he was continuing his illegitimate style of administering communion, would be meaningless. 2) With respect to the term 'proper,' that means being in accordance with the Kyodan's Confession of Faith and its Bylaws and Regulations. We all stand in the same faith as we receive from the heavenly banquet."

There was a heated discussion on the administration of communion, the recommendation for Kitamura to resign, approval of the recommendation, the meaning of its reissue, and acceptance of the report. In the end, however, it was voted simply to accept the moderator's report as a report. Ongoing discussion about this complicated and difficult situation is expected to continue during the various annual

district assemblies this spring and into the 36th General Assembly this coming fall.

One of the topics of consideration by the Executive Council that has attracted attention was the lengthy report submitted by Sasaki Michio, chair of the Task Force on Restructuring the Kyodan. (See "The General Secretary's Diary," on page 8.)

Lastly, on the issue of the ordination of ministers working overseas that was discussed during the last two Executive Council meetings, it was decided to affirm the sending of fully ordained ministers overseas as missionaries, as recommended in the report of the Commission on Faith and Order. Other topics tabled for further discussion include "Reconsideration of the Union (of the Okinawa Kyodan and the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan)" and the "150th Anniversary of Protestant Mission in Japan." (Tr. TB)

Katsuyama Ken'ichiro
Executive Secretary

Kyodan Representatives to Visit Retired Missionaries

The Executive Council held its third meeting of the 35th General Assembly biennium Oct. 22-23, 2007, and decided to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Protestant mission to Japan in 2009. As a result of this decision, a plan surfaced for Kyodan representatives to visit retired missionaries in the United States who had served in mission to Japan for many years. It was thought that visits by Kyodan representatives to express gratitude to these missionaries for their dedication would well serve the purpose of the celebration. The plan seems especially appropriate at this point in mission history, as the church is in the midst of restructuring after assuming all the tasks related to missionary activities following the dissolution of the JNAC (Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission) in 2005 and the CoC (Council on Cooperative Mission) in May 2007.

When considering the 60-year history of the post-war recovery and development of Kyodan churches and Kyodan-related schools and social work institutions, the contributions and dedication of missionaries can never be forgotten. Most of these missionaries were from North America, so it is natural that the first visit should be made to those living in the United States.

The Commission on Ecumenical Ministries was entrusted with carrying out this plan, and commission members reasoned that considering the ages of the retired missionaries, the visit should not be made soon, so the tour date was set for the latter half of April 2008.

To enlist 20 participants, an invitation to join the "2008 Thank-you Tour to Visit Retired Missionaries" was posted in the Jan. 26 issue of the *Kyodan Shinpo* and the February issue of *Shinto no Tomo (Believers' Friend)*. Kyodan Moderator Yamakita Nobuhisa will serve as leader of the tour, which is scheduled to occur April 14-23. The entire group will first visit about 30 missionaries living at Pilgrim Place, a beautiful retirement community located in Claremont, California. Then, participants will divide into two groups, one going north to Holland, Michigan, and the other traveling south to Pleasant Hills, Tennessee and Asheville, North Carolina. About 20 missionaries live in and around Holland, Michigan and regularly get together for meetings in Japanese, calling themselves "the Japan Mafia." The group going south will visit 5 missionaries living at Uplands Retirement Village in Pleasant Hills, Tennessee and then will visit with about 10 missionaries living in the Asheville-Montreat area of North Carolina.

All the retired missionaries who have been contacted are looking forward to the visit, so the members of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries in charge of this program are earnestly praying that the plan will be supported by many people and that the target number of 20 tour members will be reached.

Ito Mizuo, member
Commission on Ecumenical Ministries

Izu Island Churches Experience Support Amidst Natural Disasters

by Tada Shin'ichi, member
Committee on Evangelism of the Izu Islands
Tokyo District's East Subdistrict

There are five churches on the Izu Islands, which are located south of Tokyo Bay and Sagami Bay: Oshima Motomura and Habu Church on the island of Oshima and Niijima Church, Miyakejima Church, and Hachijojima Church on the other islands. Tokyo District's East Subdistrict works in solidarity with these churches. For example, beginning about 40 years ago, the various church education committees have sponsored a camp for junior and senior high school students. Students from the island churches and from the metropolitan churches gather together for a three-night, four-day camp experience. The Committee on Evangelism of the Izu Islands sponsors an annual joint study camp, with each church taking responsibility in turn. Tokyo District also holds an annual Consultation Conference on the subject of evangelism on the Izu Islands. This provides an occasion for understanding and cooperation regarding island churches' evangelistic activities. [Ed. note: See map of Izu Islands on page 8]

The Committee on Evangelism of the Izu Islands consists of five pastors of Izu Island churches and three laypersons from churches outside of the islands. At the committee meetings, which are held five times each year, issues faced by the individual churches, or the actual details of personal concerns of the pastors themselves, are discussed openly. Some problems are common ones and some are individual, but each are dealt with in a spirit of solidarity and encouragement. On each island, residents have developed unique customs and morals over a period of many years, and within this culture the committee members, both lay and clergy, sense the importance and difficulty of proclaiming the gospel and conducting evangelism.

The prayer of each pastor on the islands is that the young people nurtured in the island churches will be further nurtured in their faith as members of metropolitan churches when they go on to advanced educational institutions or find employment. Some time ago, a pastor retired after having served Hachijojima Church. He often said, "The island churches are nurseries or seed beds. We are relying on you in the metropolitan churches. Do not let us down."

There is a Bible on my desk. Engraved in gold on the front cover are the words, "In Commemoration of the Dedication of Oshima Motomura Church, Oct. 3, 1983." On the inside cover are these words that I had written: "On the evening when I attended the dedication ceremony of Oshima Motomura Church, a volcano on Miyake Island erupted and the church building was destroyed by fire. After attending the dedication that day, I went to Oshima Motomura Community



Participants at the worship service at Miyakejima inn

Center, where Miura Ayako gave a commemorative lecture. Then I returned to my hotel room and relaxed, watching the news on television. I had a clear vision of my visit several weeks earlier to Miyakejima Church on Miyake Island."

On Nov. 21, 1986, Mt. Mihara on Oshima Island erupted. At that time, all the residents took refuge, fleeing from Oshima Island to other areas. At the time of the eruptions on Oshima and Mt. Mihara, the period of time when all the residents had to flee their homes was short. Most of all, neither of the churches in Motomura or Habu were destroyed by fire, and so immediately after the lifting of the advisory to leave the island, it was possible to resume worship.

Then, from June to August 2000, Mt. Oyama on Miyake Island erupted intermittently. In addition, sulfuric acid was released, and consequently, on Sept. 1, an advisory to leave the island was promulgated, and all the residents of Miyake Island fled. They were unable to return to their homes for several years. Now, even 25 years after the eruptions on Miyake Island, the team of pastors and laypersons that constitute the East Subdistrict's Committee on Evangelism of the Izu Islands holds meetings approximately once every three months in the home of one of the Miyakejima Church parishioners.

Although at the time of the eruption of Mt. Oyama on Miyake Island, those who had earlier fled to Tokyo were able to participate in the Sunday worship services in churches near each shelter, the East Subdistrict formed a Miyake Island Relief Committee for Victims of the Oyama Eruption, and the Misaki-cho Church in Chiyoda Ward in Tokyo established the Miyake Island Evangelistic Fellowship, centered around worship, which has continued to meet. Eventually, after it became possible to return to the islands, once every two or three months, pastors and laypeople form a team and, carrying along gas masks, continue to hold meetings at Miyake Island Guest Houses. (Tr. WK)

The Day that Sado Became Iona

The 7th session of the Pastors' Training Program sponsored by Tomisaka Christian Center (TCC) was held at Sado Church on Sado Island, Jan. 7-11, 2008, with eleven participants. The five-day program was culminated by the celebration of an original liturgy with a new song created by the participants. The main theme of the program was the same as for the previous sessions held in Aomori (2003, 2004, 2005), Kagoshima (2005), Matsuyama (2006), Shizuoka (2006): "Fear the Lord and Serve the Lord." On Sado Island, the main theme was further developed by the sub-theme: "God does not want our power and speed." (Psalm 147)

TCC's Pastors' Training Program has stressed from its beginning the balance of silence and words and of work and prayer through community life, cooking together, and cleaning together. The methodology of the program on Sado Island was mainly the same as for former sessions. What was unique to the program at Sado was that we tried to create a new song and a new liturgy after sharing some time of communal life. Eleven pastors and one young German seminarian attended the program. Five of the participants were women. Every night we had a time of listening to each other, sharing the hardships and hopes of each person's local context. Each of the participants was making an indispensable contribution to the community through the sharing of such vitalizing talents as musician, dancer, and cook.

"This session was filled with beautiful songs," said astonished Suzuki Shozo, who established the Pastors' Training Program almost a decade ago. As Sado is a remote island of Niigata Prefecture and Protestant mission was first initiated by a Scottish missionary, the preparation committee decided to organize the program as inspired by the spirit and practice of the Iona Community. During the program, the morning and evening prayers taken from Iona liturgy introduced a distinctive rhythm to our communal life. Songs from the Taize Community as well were sung before every meal. The framework of our life was enriched and enhanced by the heritage of the experience of these ecumenical communities.

The program started with Monday's dinner preparation by the participants who had arrived earlier. A wide range of topics was dealt with during the session, thanks to the preparations of the participants. On the second day, we discussed the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and pastoral counseling based on TCC's recent research as well as the United Church of Canada's commitment of solidarity with minorities. A workshop on liturgical dance was also held.

On the third day, we went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of martyrs. Being touched by the natural beauty of the island and blown by the strong winter wind from the sea, the pilgrims meditated on events in the history of the island, such as the



Pastors at the training program on Sado Island

martyrdom of over 100 Christians in the 17th century; the ministry of the first woman pastor in the early period of Japanese Protestant history; the life of Korean laborers at Sado Gold Mine before and during World War II.

On the fourth day, participants each wrote a short poem, reflecting on their experiences on the island. These lines were given to Tsukamoto Junichi, a composer. With only three hours of preparation, he composed a new song with these words, alone, while the rest of us created an original liturgy in another room.

The absolute highlight of the program was the liturgy celebrated during the afternoon of the fourth day. Led by a rhythmic beat and a liturgical dancer, we added hand and body motions as we processed to the beach just behind the church. We returned while listening to scripture passages, remembering the pilgrimage of the previous day. After we arrived at the church, our composer shared the new song. He said, "The tune is what I heard in the sound of the waves of the sea." We sang the new song together, the words of which were our own, and felt the passion of God, which comes to us like the swelling of the sea. Looking back, Kamijima Kazutaka, head of the preparation committee, said, "This was the day when Sado became Iona."

The breath of God changes me.
 Though all knowledge and power are taken from me,
 It leads me to a new passage,
 Turns me into rich soil.
 God, I accept you as you are.
 I offer myself to you as I am and pray you
 Let my dreams become prayers,
 Let my prayers become actions,
 And my action hope.

Mimura Osamu, Sado Church pastor
 Director, Pastors' Training Program
 Tomisaka Christian Center

Japanese Pastor in Ministry with Korean Congregation

My interview with Nakae Yoichi, pastor of the Korean Christian Church in Japan's Hiroshima Church, started abruptly with an apology. "This is just like the time you greeted our district assembly by saying that if someone in Korea had made the pastors wait this long, they would have become angry and left a long time ago." His response to my apology was: "That's right. And since Korea is a Confucian country, they would not have made anyone stand while waiting." But before I could make any further apology for my tardiness, he smiled and said, "Just joking"

Hiroshima Church's five-story building sits on a 50 tsubo (1,777 sq. ft.) plot of land. Only the first four floors are actually used: the entrance and parking lot are on the first floor; the sanctuary is on the second; meeting rooms and a fellowship hall are on the third; and the parsonage is on the fourth. Most of the churches in Korea, as well as in the KCCJ, start their worship services at 11:00 a.m. The reason seems to be that when the service is over, it is time for the noon meal. Nakae explained it this way. "Our churches take the mealtime fellowship time seriously. Unless there is some pressing reason, no one leave directly after the worship service." Incidentally, the menu for the important meal on Thanksgiving Sunday was the traditional Korean dish called *bibimbap*.

Before Nakae came about five years ago, the burden of the noon meal had fallen on the women's group. With the aging of the members, the number who could serve had decreased to the point that they could prepare only one meal a month. And of course, the funds raised were being used for the activities of the women's group. That was when Nakae made his appeal: "Can't we do something to enable our Korean people to meet face to face every week? And let's make it free." The pastor then joined in the rotation of preparing the noon meals, and so for the past five years, the church has been serving 40 to 50 meals each week. To this observer, it seems that this noon meal fellowship has become the driving force behind the energy evident at KCCJ Hiroshima Church. When



Pastor Nakae Yoichi in front of the church

the pastor told me about the upcoming 60th Anniversary Celebration, I asked him if the church is planning to publish a commemorative booklet and hold some special events. "Yes, we are envisioning something we can all take part in, such as an overnight retreat with the church members." Again, I was impressed by the spirit of their vision.

Nakae hails from Nagasaki, but the first church he attended was a KCCJ church in Osaka. That is where he met his lifetime companion. That is also where he came to know the reality of the people from Korea who live in Japan. It was a reality he had never known and had never been taught. His encounter with the youth of that church greatly changed in his life as a young man. It was at a time when the fingerprinting issue was at its peak, and the Korean residents in Japan made a deep impact on him. He wanted to believe in what they believed in, and out of his desire to work with the Korean society in Japan, he went to study in Korea. And now, his weekly 20-minute Japanese sermons are followed by 15-minute sermons in Korean.

I was brazen enough to ask him if he had suffered any hardships as a Japanese pastor in the Korean Christian Church in Japan. He replied, "No, no. The ones who suffer are the church members. The vocation of being a pastor who stands in the sacred pulpit and handles spiritual things has been entrusted to me, a person who happens to be Japanese." (KCCJ use the term "sacred pulpit" rather than "lectern.") Until recently, even deacons of the church never stood there, only the elders and pastors.) "This was not causing any hardship to me, but to them." I thought, "What a spirit!" I feel we have lost this in Kyodan churches. Nakae issued an open invitation. "We really welcome all of you from the Kyodan to attend our worship service and stay for a delicious noon meal."

There were still lots of things I wanted to ask about, such as the church's involvement in issues related to the Alien Registration Law and the *changu* traditional drum classes. That is something our readers can find out about on their own visits when you can also enjoy some delicious *kimchi* pickled vegetables. There was one more thing I wanted to know. "Who did you root for in the World Cup soccer matches, Japan or Korea?" "Of course, I rooted for Japan, and my wife cheered for Korea. It was really wild," he answered. What a wonderful church, and what a wonderful pastor they have in Nakae! All I can say is, "*Kamsahamnida*." (Thank you.)

(Tr. GWG)

Kawahara Kozo, pastor
Iwakuni Higashi Church
Nishi Chugoku District
Nishi Chugoku District News

West Tokyo District Holds Church Council Seminar

West Tokyo District held its 2007 District Seminar for Church Council Members at Kichijoji Church on Sept. 15 from 2 to 5 p.m. The speaker was Morimoto Anri, a professor at International Christian University. This year's seminar was planned for pastors and church council members to study about sexual minorities together. There were two reasons for choosing this subject. First, a sexually discriminatory remark made at the Kyodan's 35th General Assembly in 2006 needs to be addressed. Secondly, members of sexual minorities are attending churches in West Tokyo District. This year's seminar was planned to address this issue honestly. Morimoto has deep insight regarding this issue and has spoken about it at seminars in other districts as well. We are deeply grateful that our district was able to have such a qualified speaker.

The content of the presentation was clearly developed from four perspectives. 1) Scientific Reasoning: There is no way to talk about homosexuality as right or wrong from the perspective of science alone. 2) Biblical Basis: The biblical text does not exclude homosexuality. 3) Church Tradition: Church tradition is continuing in the footsteps of the "experience" of a previous period. 4) Experience: Homosexuality is discussed only on the basis of the personal experiences of people who feel a strong aversion to it.

Although at times we were unsure about how to respond, these and other points of view, which are rarely heard, provided many opportunities for us to rethink our positions. I felt that Morimoto was encouraging us to approach the subject of homosexuality as a broader discussion, rather than just as the narrow argument of right or wrong, and urging us to avoid the danger of specific standards or set notions. Is the "good news" truly revealed by the insistence that "the Bible says this" or "the tradition of the church is this"? I think the lecture was a call to consider this question seriously before beginning any discussion of sexual minorities.

The reality of Christianity today is that a multitude of lifestyles are maintained among believers confessing the same Lord. To think in terms of uniformity seems impossible. However, for Christians, there must be a form of acknowledging one another. Never too narrow, yet not acting irresponsibly, we should seek unity as we acknowledge our differences. Hopefully, this seminar served to further that purpose. (Tr. JS)

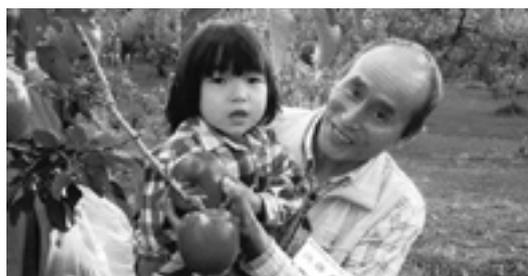
Doke Norikazu, district secretary
Pastor, Igusa Church
Nishi Tokyo District News

Morioka Holds Joint Church School Apple-picking

There are five Kyodan churches in Morioka City in Iwate Prefecture. Nearly ten years ago, the Joint Church School Apple-picking was started at Nakajima Orchard in Morioka. The most recent event took place on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 14, 2007, with 67 people from three churches taking part on a beautiful clear day.

Activities began with an outdoor worship service in the orchard. (The offering was sent to an organization that supports a world hunger program.) The program included an introduction of church school teachers, apple-picking, taking photographs, and saying goodbyes. All those who attended had a pleasant and enjoyable time again this year, meeting old friends as well as making new ones. All the participants picked bags full of fruit, while cramming their mouths full of delicious apples. (Tr. RK & RK)

Murakami Yoshiharu, pastor
Tatesakabashi Church, Ou District
Shinto no Tomo (Believers' Friend)



The Kyodan Newsletter: Identifying Its Purpose and Function

"You should take over the role of editor of the Kyodan Newsletter." This pronouncement was made in 1988 by David Swain, a missionary then serving as interim editor who has since retired. I was enjoying my role as English corresponding secretary at the Kyodan General Office but was intimidated at the very thought of succeeding David, who was well-known for his editorial skill. I refused the proposal, but he was persistent. So in 1989 I agreed, contingent on his fulfillment of the promise to serve as my mentor. Thus was born the practice of sending my final version to David and studying his corrections. The KNL Style Sheet developed from these notes and other materials he provided became my guide and standard for the 15 years I served as KNL editor, then as copy editor, and more recently, as editorial consultant.

Beyond the basic editorial principles for newspapers and newsletters, David shared his passion for communicating the actual meaning intended by each writer, whether it was expressed adequately or not. He pointed out the difficulties involved in taking translations of the vague allusions and hinted conclusions permissible in the Japanese language, due to the nature of the Japanese culture, and editing them to form the kind of statements demanded by the English language, which expresses a totally different culture. Sometimes a paragraph or a whole section of an article had to be moved to the beginning or the end to enable a more natural flow of thoughts in English. Editing continues to be a challenging task, but there is quite a feeling of satisfaction when each edition is finally produced in print.

The KNL Editorial Committee struggled to identify the unique purpose of this newsletter published by the Kyodan in English and decided that the goal is to produce articles about activities and events sponsored by or involving the Kyodan as well as about internal church issues and the social and cultural issues being confronted by the Kyodan and the Christian community in Japan. Sometimes this could be accomplished through the translation of articles written in Japanese by pastors and laypersons that had appeared in other Kyodan publications. Often, however, articles written for Kyodan publications assumed a basic familiarity with Japanese national or church history that could perhaps be expected of missionaries presently serving in Japan or retired missionaries, but readers of KNL in related churches around the world would not have this kind of background information.

How could overseas readers develop an understanding or appreciation of the situation of the Kyodan and the small Christian minority in Japan without some knowledge of the society and culture of the country? To provide such background, articles taken from Kyodan publications were sometimes prefaced with a short historical introduction, or national and internal church references were further explained



in footnotes. Specific articles written especially for KNL's overseas readers were often solicited on current issues being faced by the Kyodan and the historical development of these issues.

Periodically, the committee considered the question of what constitutes "the Kyodan" that it was trying to present. Is "the Kyodan" only the national church leadership and its activities and events only those that take place at the national level or in ecumenical and international circles? Committee members unanimously agreed that "the Kyodan" embraces all the individual congregations, the local subdistricts, and the 17 districts throughout the country. With this consensus, there has been a concerted effort to include articles on issues, events, and movements concentrated in particular areas or districts, such as those dealing with discrimination, military, or nuclear concerns, in addition to the church-centered issues of aging congregations, lack of youth participation, and stagnant church growth.

Individual committee members accepted responsibility for reviewing district, and sometimes subdistrict, newsletters in search of articles depicting local church life in Japan and describing the events and movements that demonstrate how Kyodan Christians are living out their faith in their local communities in Japan. It became evident that many of these church members are making an impact on Japanese society through their work in the Kyodan-related schools and social work institutions, many of which had received support and/or were founded by mission personnel from the overseas churches receiving the Kyodan Newsletter. It seemed appropriate to include articles about the continuing witness that Kyodan members are making in and through the Christian schools and social work institutions.

Editing articles on these varied topics, attending meetings and events to be reported, interviewing visiting executives from overseas churches, and discussing current concerns with KNL Editorial Committee members and others has proved to be more educational and inspirational than I could have ever anticipated, and I am grateful for these experiences. I will continue to pray for God's guidance for Editor Ishimaru and the KNL Editorial Committee, joined by my husband, who has been a committee member since the mid-1980s. We will also look forward to the enjoyment of reading future issues of the Kyodan Newsletter together.

The General Secretary's Diary

The 4th Executive Council meeting of the 35th General Assembly biennium convened Feb. 18-19 and approved the feasibility report of the Task Force on Restructuring the Kyodan, which concerns the structural reform that has been under discussion. It was an excellent report that deals with six major areas. The present Kyodan structure was established at the time of structural reform in 1968, but during these past 40 years, society has changed rapidly, so it is time for reconsideration. Thus, this was indeed a very timely report.

The following six areas were included in the report.

1. Research Institute for Mission
2. Board of Publications
3. Board of Pensions
4. Buraku Liberation Center
5. Various centers stipulated in the Kyodan Bylaws, Article 30
6. General Assembly

Of these, items 2, 3, and 4 are regular Kyodan boards and agencies, so reconsideration of their roles and functions is an important issue for the Kyodan today, which is precisely what is now being done. I am particularly glad that the goals and functions of the Board of Publications are being discussed. With the recent change in the leadership of this board, it is important to identify a new path for the future. The crucial point concerning the restructuring of the Board of Publications is that as a public corporation with a board of directors, the division of responsibility for finances (assigned to the board of directors' chair) and management of operations (assigned to the director) was problematic. To resolve the situation, the board of directors has been eliminated, and the job description of the director of the Board of Publications has been revised to include responsibility for both finances and management of operations. An advisory council has been established to assist the director with the supervision of daily operations. Finally, as it is specifically the Kyodan Board of Publications, it has been placed within the Kyodan's administrative structure under the overall jurisdiction of the Kyodan General Secretary. (Tr. TB)

Naito Tomeyuki
Kyodan General Secretary



This is a map of Japan showing districts (areas) of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ).

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