

Fukushima Children Attend First “Little Lambs Camp in Taiwan”

For 22 residents of the region in Fukushima impacted by the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster, the year 2014 began with a four-day trip to Taiwan for the parent and children's Little Lambs Camp. The program, initiated at the invitation of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's Chai Presbytery, was made possible by a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). On Saturday afternoon, Jan. 4, we were warmly greeted at the Tawen International Airport by the melodious voices of Taiwanese children. As the singing began, the welcoming party in the airport lobby exceeded our expectations. Following greetings from the PCT general secretary and moderator, we received hats and floral garlands. From that point on, we continued to be graciously welcomed by the Taiwanese people. To begin with, Meishan Church purchased new mattresses and bedding so we could sleep there. For breakfast they prepared delicious homemade sandwiches, Chinese dumplings, and steamed buns. All the congregations of the Chai Presbytery extended warm friendship with tasty delicacies, and we were truly blessed by the fellowship we experienced with the Taiwanese people.

The following are words of gratitude given by one of the children at the welcome party at the airport.

Hello. My name is Hirakuri Seina, and I am from Fukushima in Japan. Currently, I am in the first year of middle school. Thank you so much for your kind invitation to join you in Taiwan. I do not have enough words to express my gratitude fully for your generous and continuing support of the victims of the March 11 disaster. As most of you know, along with the massive earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant malfunctioned, spreading dangerous levels of radiation throughout a large area. That day was just the beginning of the daily worries and difficulties that the disaster created.

Even during the hottest days of summer, we must wear protective masks and long sleeves and always keep the windows of the house tightly shut. We are severely limited in the amount of time we are allowed to spend outside each day. We cannot drink the water from the faucet and have to worry even about the safety of the food in our school lunches. Besides that, the situation has created difficulties in human relationships. Some friendships are strained by differences of opinions regarding the radiation issue, and other friendships are strained by the fact that so many friends had to move far away to escape the dangerous conditions.



Taiwan children welcoming Japanese guests with songs

I attended the first camp that was held during the summer vacation after the disaster. There I was able to run and bicycle freely outside and to sit on the ground and feel the grass beneath me, without worrying about my clothing. It had been many months since I was able to live this way. Before the disaster, these kinds of things were all a part of normal everyday life. With the nuclear disaster, that kind of daily life was taken away in an instant.

Out of concern for the children of Fukushima, so many people across Japan and throughout the world have responded generously and given me this opportunity to experience for the past several days a lifestyle that I am unable to enjoy in Fukushima. Although the level of nuclear radiation has been gradually decreasing, the accident will continue to impact our lives for a very long time to come. Retreats like this one will continue to be necessary. I am so thankful for all the many people involved in making this Little Lambs Camp possible. I will continue to be blessed by this experience. Thank you so very much for welcoming us.

Nearly three years have passed since the March 11, 2011 disaster. Throughout this time, the Little Lambs Camp participants have been struggling in their daily lives with the difficulties thrust upon them by the radiation from the damaged nuclear power plant. UMCOR is graciously providing funding for a variety of similar programs aimed at giving support to a large number of the March 11 disaster survivors. Through this generous grant from UMCOR, the Kyodan, in cooperation with the PCT and the YMCA of Japan, will be holding six Little Lambs Camps over the next three years. (Tr. AKO)

—Iijima Makoto, executive secretary
Great East Japan Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters

Doshisha University Founder Nijijima Jo: Pastor and Missionary

Thanks to the national broadcasting network (NHK)'s Taiga Drama Series "Yae no Sakura" (Yae's Cherry Blossoms), which was telecast throughout Japan in 2013, the name of Nijijima Jo (1843-1890) was frequently heard. This drama was televised nationwide every Sunday night for one year, 50 times throughout the year. The leading character was Yae, who was Nijijima Jo's wife.

Nijijima Jo was actually a pastor and missionary, but in Japan, he is better known as an educator, especially as the founder of Doshisha University. How did this gap originate? The main reason is that the Christian educational enterprise he began has become the large-scale institution it is today. There are two colleges and several graduate schools, four high schools, four middle schools, and two elementary schools, each of which has a kindergarten. With that scale, by adding together all the staff and kindergarten pupils, students, college students, and graduate students, it swells to well over 40,000 people—about the size of a small town.

In comparison with this kind of educational enterprise and viewing it from that perspective, Nijijima's religious activities could be said to cast a small shadow that is noticeably and decidedly scanty. There are persons, even large numbers within the school, who do not know that Nijijima founded a church (Doshisha Church). Even now, there are only about 100 church members.

Accordingly, it is easy to overlook Nijijima's religious side and influence. From the time he traveled to the United States in 1865 and during the course of the following eight years, he studied at three distinguished private colleges in New England: Phillips Academy, Amherst College, and Andover Theological Seminary. At the last school, a seminary, Nijijima received training to become a Congregational Church pastor. Before he graduated (in July 1874), he was appointed as a missionary by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). As a foreigner (in the U.S.), particularly as an Asian person, this was an exceptional case.

So in November 1874, when he returned to Yokohama after an absence of ten years, he was being sent back to Japan in the position of a missionary for overseas evangelism. He called himself by the English name of Joseph Hardy Neesima. The origin of his middle name goes back to Alpheus Hardy, who welcomed him to Boston as if he were his own son. Hardy was not only a prominent businessman in Boston but also a devoted member of the Congregational Church. In addition, he was the chairperson of the administrative committee (the Prudential Committee) of the ABCFM.

Nijijima's support for a period of more than ten years, until he died in 1890 in Oiso, Kanagawa Prefecture, was borne by the mission (actually by Mr. Hardy). During that time, there is no evidence that Doshisha University paid even one yen towards his salary for his work as president.



Nijijima Yae and Jo in the early days of their marriage

(c) Doshisha University

Furthermore, there were complaints from Nijijima's colleague missionaries from North America in the ABCFM Japan Mission about Nijijima devoting so much energy toward establishing Christian education, beginning with Doshisha and its maintenance and its growth. "You are putting too much emphasis on education at the expense of evangelism."

Regarding the evangelization of the Japanese people, Nijijima was of the conviction that putting his energies into education was the best means of accomplishing that goal. He felt his calling was to at least be 50 percent evangelism and 50 percent education. This can be understood from the motto he kept to the end of his life: "Freedom of education, self-governing church, both parallel, and long life for our country." Education and the church were both ultimately wheels on the same car, which is characteristic of his thinking.

The ABCFM decided the place of Nijijima's appointment. He was born in Edo (present-day Tokyo) and, from his perspective, might have favored Tokyo or Yokohama as the site to build the Christian school he dreamed of during his study abroad. Nevertheless, his school (Doshisha) was built in the far away area of Kansai (Kyoto).

The immediate factor at the time was that the Japan Mission had mission stations only in the Kansai area (in Kobe and Osaka). Later, Nijijima was assigned to the mission station in Osaka. This became the reason for building the school in Kyoto, which was a neighboring town to Osaka. (Tr. RT)

—Motoi Yasuhiro, former professor
Doshisha University

Transcending Earthly Citizenship

by Nag Woon-hae
Kyodan missionary to Korea

Korea can be numbered among the countries most active in Christian mission throughout the world. According to the Korean World Mission Association, as of January 2013, there were 25,665 missionaries from Korea serving in 169 countries. In terms of the number of missionaries as a percentage of the population, Korea has now overtaken the USA to become number one in the world. The Kyodan made the decision to send someone to be engaged in evangelistic mission in such a country, and so on Oct. 18, 2011 my commissioning service took place in the Kyodan conference room in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

I have been sent to the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary (PCTS) of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), where I am engaged in education, research and administration as a member of the foreign faculty in the Systematic Theology Section. I also continue to serve as a pastor, in cooperation with PCK's Saemoonan Presbyterian Church, where I am responsible for the Japanese language worship service. The university lies at the foot of Walker Hill on the eastern edge of Seoul, and the church is situated in the center of Seoul in the same area as royal palaces from the Choson [Korean] Era and the Japanese and American embassies.

PCTS has around 3,000 students from undergraduate to doctorate level. It is extremely difficult to be admitted, and it is said that the average student must make four attempts to enter the master of divinity course that is a prerequisite for taking the denomination's ministerial licensing examination. Whether or not this is a good thing from an earthly point of view, one characteristic of PCTS is that it has many students with excellent grades.

Saemoonan Church, established in 1887 as the first organized Protestant church in Korea, is now very, with a membership of around 13,000 and an average weekly attendance of around 6,000 at Sunday worship. The "main" Sunday worship takes place five times, so including the early morning and evening worship services, there are seven weekly Korean language services. In addition, weekly worship services take place in other languages, such as Chinese, Mongolian, and English. About 50 of us meet to worship in Japanese, around ten percent of whom are Japanese and most of the rest Korean.

Now, what meaning can it possibly have for Japanese Christians to engage in mission in Korea, or in other words, given the situation of Christianity in Japan, how can such a country be sending missionaries to a country like Korea, given its fervor for mission?

There are people who ask why we should undertake mission in Korea, suggesting that the Japanese church should currently be urgently focused on evangelism and mission in Japan. Others say that if Japan is going to send missionaries abroad, it should be to countries other than Korea, of all places.

My own opinion is rather the opposite. In spite of the difficulties we face in evangelizing our home country, churches receiving the Holy Spirit have, from the



A chapel on the PCTS campus

beginning, sent people out to evangelize the world. I want people to remember that from the beginning, the church has sent missionaries to spread the gospel not only into the local area but also to the far corners of the earth. It is through such action that the sending church becomes even more active.

Japan and Korea share a dark, unhappy past. Before its defeat in 1945, Imperial Japan had colonized Korea and various other Asian countries. There are still a lot of people in Korea, both inside and outside the churches, who experienced the suffering and humiliation of that time. A great difference of opinion can be seen between Japan and Korea's attitudes to the issues of postwar reparations, the understanding of history, and the so-called "comfort women," and resolution of these problems still seems a long way off. At present, reconciliation has not been achieved between the two countries.

However, surely it is important that, given these circumstances, a Japanese missionary has been sent to Korea by the Kyodan. Even if the work is very small, the fact that a Japanese Christian is serving Koreans and Korean society through the church and in education must be meaningful. When Korean and Japanese people stand together before God in worship, transcending earthly citizenship and historical conflict, unity in Christ is occurring. What a blessing! Seen from the perspective of the work of God's Kingdom in the redemption of history, we can indeed say that this is an historic event.

When people receive the Holy Spirit, they engage in mission and evangelism. When the church receives the Holy Spirit, it sends people out into the world to do mission. The Kyodan has sent me to work in mission in Korea as a small Japanese presence. Humanly speaking, the work that I have been given to do would be too heavy to bear, but by continually seeking the help of the Holy Spirit, I wish to continue this work. If my prayer is granted, some day I hope to start a church in Korea with worship in Korean, serving and walking with people both inside and outside the church who are being alienated, in order to live together as the people of God's kingdom, transcending earthly nationalities. I ask for your prayers to make this hope a reality. (Tr. SN)

Protect Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution – A Precious Treasure for Building Peace

The Core of Article 9: renunciation of war, refusal to maintain any kind of war potential, and denial of the right of belligerency

In the present Japanese political environment, there is a growing movement to revise the Constitution and, in response, many denominations within the Christian community have been organizing groups and holding meetings all over the country to gain a better grasp of the situation in which we find ourselves. We would like to introduce some expressions of opposition to the proposed amendments, including some from other churches and denominations.

The Constitution is the rulebook that must be honored by the state and those who work on its behalf. While it stresses the importance of the democratic process, the Constitution is also designed to apply the brakes to a state or government that is running out of control.

What is necessary to amend the present Constitution? Article 96 makes clear that a two-thirds majority in both the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives is needed for the government to make a proposal to amend. There must then be a national referendum on the proposed amendment, and the approval of at least half of those voting is necessary for the amendment to be enacted. The Liberal Democratic Party is making a proposal to change Article 96 so that a simple majority in both Houses would be adequate for a national referendum to take place.

The Liberal Democratic Party's draft of a revised Constitution would bring damaging changes to both Article 9 (the peace article) and also to Article 97, which deals with respect for basic human rights. If more than two-thirds of the Diet members should come to agree to these revisions, we would find ourselves in a very critical situation.

Response of the Kyodan's Districts

According to research undertaken by the editorial committee of the church magazine *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), of the 17 districts of the Kyodan, six have issued statements or passed resolutions concerning the proposed revisions to the Constitution at their annual assemblies, which were held between April and June in 2013. We want to introduce the content of those resolutions and statements. However, we also wish to make clear that the lack of a statement or resolution is not necessarily an indication of a lack of interest in the proposed changes to the Constitution. For example, there was discussion about the Constitution at the Nishi Chugoku District assembly, but a more pressing issue at the time, opposition to the deployment of Osprey planes at military bases in the district, required a resolution.

Hokkai District passed a resolution calling for "Approval of Action to Prevent Undesirable Changes to the Japanese Constitution." In solidarity with individuals and groups both within the church and beyond, the resolution calls for action to maintain Japan's Peace Constitution and to stand in the way of any undesirable changes to it. It calls for people to deepen their understanding of the problems and dangers of the proposed revisions and to heed the call of the Prince of Peace in approving action to hinder the adoption of undesirable changes. Criticism was also made of the Abe government and its desire to change Article 96 in an attempt to facilitate revision. As a reason of the criticism, the resolution states that "the reason why it has been made difficult to revise the Constitution is so that the universal values enshrined in it may be maintained." In fact, the draft prepared by the Liberal Democratic party makes clear that it is actually hoping to delete the article that guarantees basic human rights.

Ou District approved a statement opposing the proposed revisions and urges people to be aware of the dangers involved in revising the Constitution. For people in Ou District, maintaining Article 9 is not unrelated to the desire to bring an end to nuclear energy. As a district touched by the March 11, 2011 disaster, many people continue to suffer and face difficulties due to the earthquake and tsunami as well as contamination due to radioactivity. While remembering those people in prayer, this statement was approved in the search for a peace in which the renunciation of war expressed in Article 9 and the desire for people to be free of nuclear energy and continuing contamination are linked together. The statement says, "As Christian people of faith and conscience who believe in the Lord of Peace, Jesus Christ, as our Savior, we are called to protect Article 9," and it also reminds people of the importance of Article 20, which guarantees freedom of religion and separation of church and state and forbids the state to engage in any specific religious action, such as forced worship at a specific shrine.

Kanto District also approved a statement calling for opposition to "amendments" to the Constitution. The statement expresses opposition to the shift from sovereignty of the people to sovereignty of the State. It states the view that the core of the proposed "revisions" is nothing less than a threat to the Peace Constitution's renunciation of war, the guarantee of basic human rights and freedom of religion. The statement calls for unrelenting opposition to the revision of Article 96, which seeks to make it easier to change the Constitution as a whole. The statement portrays the painful history of a country that made the emperor a god and drew the Christian church into its web in order to make it cooperate with the war effort. It calls for repentance before the Lord and asks that, as Christians, we make our opposition to the proposed undesirable changes clear to all.

Osaka District passed a resolution calling for "opposition to the proposed change to Article 96 and to undesirable changes to the Constitution" as a whole. The resolution states that if Article 96 were to be amended, Article 9 would undergo major changes. The draft prepared by the Liberal Democratic Party already speaks of a standing army, which is in complete opposition to pacifism and also allows for involvement in combat. There is also a danger that the guarantee of basic human rights may be threatened.

Higashi Chugoku District approved a statement calling for "the protection of human rights, the sovereignty of the people, the principles of peace laid out in Japan's Constitution and opposition to any attempt to "amend" Article 96." Quoting Matthew 26:52, "Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword," the statement recognizes the Constitution itself as the best protection against the arbitrary use of government authority and calls for unrelenting opposition to any detrimental changes to its content.

Okinawa District likewise approved a statement "concerning undesirable changes to the Constitution." In World War II, Okinawa was the only place where a land battle was fought, and many lives were cruelly sacrificed. Even now, Okinawa is burdened with the presence of military bases. The statement refers to the fact that the people of Okinawa have been limited in their ability to express their opinions regarding the Constitution freely and states clearly, "We seek the renunciation of war, the removal of all military bases, an end to all forms of discrimination, protection of the environment, a peaceful life for our residents, and a decentralization of government authority to give more autonomy to local regions in Japan."

(Cont'd on p.5)

10th WCC Assembly Held in Korea in 2013

Representatives of Christian denominations from around the world gathered for ten days, Oct. 30-Nov. 8, 2013 at the BEXCO event site in Busan, Korea for the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The theme was “God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace.”

The assembly was held in a grand venue in Busan, which is at the center of a region that has seen remarkable development. The hall was filled with the faces, multicolored dresses, and song and dance performances of delegates from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, South America, the Middle East, North America, and the Pacific. They presented quite a different image of the church from that of the past, which was centered on the European and American Protestant denominations. Notably, because this was the first assembly to be held in East Asia, the effort put into hosting it by the nation of Korea and the Korean churches was quite evident. However, Korea's evangelical churches opposed holding the assembly in the Republic of Korea, and as many as 10,000 people convened a counter-gathering before the opening of the WCC assembly.

In attendance from the Kyodan were Vice-moderator Ito Mizuo as an official delegate, Executive Secretary Kato Makoto as an adviser, and myself as an official observer. Other official delegates from Japan were Rev. Nishihara Renta of the Anglican-Episcopal Church in Japan, Rev. Heo Baekki of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, and a priest of the Orthodox Church in Japan. In addition, other Japanese participants included members of Tohoku HELP (an ecumenical endeavor in which the Kyodan participates) and members of various ecumenical committees.

It goes without saying that the WCC is an organization that aspires to realize the visible oneness of the promise and purpose of the Word expressed in Ephesians 1:10: “. . . to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” Prior to the 10th assembly, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) presented an ecumenical mission statement entitled “Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes.” Discussions were held on each theme in the statement.

The first statement was, “We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life. God created the whole oikoumene in God’s image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God’s love

for the world (John 3:16). Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ’s ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Genesis 2:7; John 3:8). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth. How and where do we discern God’s life-giving work that enables us to participate in God’s mission today?”

Mission that is led by the Spirit is not a movement taking place from the center to the periphery or from the privileged to the marginalized of society. It is a shift of the mission concept from “mission to the margins” to “mission from the margins,” arising from the situation of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized who now must be heard. The major theological progress that came out of this assembly was its emphasis on the point that mission is not furthered through empathy based on a benevolent spirit and humanism but through the Triune God, in particular through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Concern over the Great East Japan Earthquake and the radioactive contamination in Fukushima is high among churches in the world, and in advance of a Kyodan-sponsored international conference to be held from March 11-14, 2014 at Tohoku Gakuin in Sendai, we approached the WCC to release a statement on the issue, and its adoption was referred to the central committee.

Each morning at the general assembly, representatives from Islam, Judaism, Palestinian churches, the evangelical alliance, and Roman Catholic cardinals greeted the delegates. Instead of merely extending words of courtesy, each made a passionate appeal for world unity through true justice and peace. Today, even in the midst of the debate over a decline in ecumenism, it was confirmed that the WCC occupies a prominent position in the promotion of the mission and testimony of contemporary Christians all over the world. Our Kyodan aspires to be “a Kyodan with a passion for mission” and looks ahead to the reality, task, and direction of mission that shoulders the responsibility for the Christian church in the world. I hope that we will bear the burden of this task with a cooperative spirit as one member of the body of Christ.

(Tr. DB)

—Akiyama Toru, pastor of Ageo Godo Church
Moderator, Kanto District
Chair, Kyodan Commission on Ecumenical Ministries

(Cont'd from p.4)

The proposed “amendments” will make Japan a country that engages in war and a country where only the strong may survive. We express our opposition to any “amendments” (negative changes) to the present Constitution.

Response of Other Churches and Denominations

The Roman Catholic Church. On June 23, 2013 (a day of remembrance for those who died in the Battle of Okinawa), the Japan Catholic Council of Bishops introduced an informal message in the name of Bishop Okada Takeo, which was shared during a special time for thinking about peace (Aug. 6-15). The message says, “We are in a very dangerous situation. We believe Article 9 is a treasure the whole world can be proud of and that it proclaims the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning love.” The message was introduced on June 23 and draws attention to the fact that the people of Okinawa call this day “the day of humiliation,” referring to the fact that an unfair accord was signed between Japan and the United States that even now reminds us that Japan’s sovereignty is not yet fully restored, something that we must never forget.

The Mennonite Church. On May 3, Constitution Day, concerned persons within the Mennonite Church issued a statement calling for peace and the preservation of the present Constitution. The statement was issued to all Mennonite churches in Japan and to their brothers and sisters in Christ in all churches saying, “Let us protect Japan’s Constitution. Let us make peace a reality.” This is not a time for the “peace” churches to be silent. The statement further states: “Our integrity as Anabaptists and Mennonites, as members of a church in which many were martyred for their opposition to war, is being questioned.” It calls on people to maintain Article 9, “being strengthened by Christ, to speak out saying Japan must not build a path to war again and that war itself is the greatest sin.” It is a rare opportunity for this group to cross denominational lines and call out to other denominations so that “being guided by the Holy Spirit, we may all work together to be called children of God”. (Tr. RW)

Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko
From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers’ Friend), August 2013 issue

The Church as “Free Space”: A Haven for Youth Who Choose Seclusion

by Kurahashi Tsuyoshi, pastor
Nishi Ogura Megumi Church, Kyoto District

Nishi Ogura Megumi Church is a small church in the city of Uji, near Kyoto city. Every Monday afternoon a group of young people gather there. It is hard to call them a robust group because it is with great effort that each of them gathers the courage, as well as physical and emotional energy, to come.

These are youth who often find it difficult to leave their rooms, let alone their homes. But when there is that desire to get out—even for a brief period of time—is there a haven where they can feel safe to go? Is there a haven with staff or companions who can understand the distress they feel? With those questions in mind, our church has opened a small “free space” (haven) for these youth, called “Oyasumi” (rest).

It began when my own child became reclusive. There is no special medication to deal with this, and as a parent, I could not restrain my impatience to do something. Not just the reclusive individual but also the parent/guardian wants to find a space for relief. Since starting that search, I have met countless youth who are doing their best while struggling with their reclusiveness.

I would like to share with you a special message these young people have entrusted to me. One youth, starting with truancy from school, went down the path to full seclusion. He was willing to talk with me about his recollections of that time in his life. “It was becoming increasingly stressful for me to go to school. I told my parents about it, but they forced me go. In the midst of this I began to feel strongly that there was no trust from my parents, that they were not on my side, and that there was no one to protect me.”

Another youth told me, “One of the painful things now is that I cannot trust others. In order to be accepted by my parents, I did my best from the time I was little to be a “good boy.” It is not an exaggeration to say that it was like walking a tightrope. Every day I lived with the uncertainty and fear of falling from a very thin rope as I struggled to keep my balance. To be honest, I was exhausted.” There was one youth who had been bullied and severely injured. For seven years, he hardly ever left his home. When people become the source of fear, the hurdle to get outside becomes higher. I was told this as well: “In no way do I think I am being lazy. However, I am completely different from my parents or the adults around me. My personality and the things I can do are also different. However, my parents often tell me that there is no reason that I cannot do what they were able to do. They tell me that the world we live in is not easy and that I need to try harder. But for me, I am doing all I can just to live in the present.”

The leading causes of death for Japanese people are cancer, heart disease, and brain disorders. However, for the age group of 20 to 39, suicide is number one, and for the age group of 15 to 19, it is number two. In current society, the mention of the word *hikikomori* (a recluse who avoids the public) creates a strong negative image. What these youth hear most often are words like “lazy,” “spoiled,” and “too weak.” These words reflect prejudice

and a lack of understanding. Rather, these young people are conscientiously trying their best to live (in extremely challenging conditions) and seriously thinking about what it means to live. Undoubtedly, these young people have delicate feelings that are easily hurt. However, they know deep pain that has caused them to become individuals who possess the important qualities of “kindness” and “thoughtfulness.”

First, we must learn to accept these young people as they are: individuals who are in situations in which they feel their only alternative is to seek isolation, while at the same time they are seeking a place of rest for their spirits. I feel that their only chance for a fresh start begins with an affirmation—letting them know that they are accepted as they are. We are all special individuals loved by God, and fresh starts come from that awareness. Trying to walk with young people who tend to seek isolation is a difficult task for us as a small church. However, support from churches as well as links with local government and community agencies are gradually making it possible for us to take small steps with these youth.

Finally, let me leave you with the voice of these young people who come to us for haven. “I wish there were some places closer.” There are neighborhood youth (who come to our church), but many come from long distances. It is not difficult to imagine the extreme stress felt by a young person who must leave his or her home to go to a different neighborhood when that person is already having difficulty building relationships. I cannot help but hope that “space” can be made available for these young people in local communities by churches and other organizations. I believe that young people who have found a place of rest and are given opportunities and time to interact with people in trustful relationships can restart their personal journeys. It is my fervent hope and prayer that the church can become a “free space”—a haven—where these youth can be accepted just as they are. (Tr. JS)

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

Support for the Homeless Crosses Denominational Lines

by Kusachi Daisuke, pastor of Hofu Church
Nishi Chugoku District

The city of Hofu is located about halfway along the coast on the Seto Inland Sea side of Yamaguchi Prefecture, with a population of about 120,000 people. There are a number of Christian churches in the city, but fellowship among these churches in different denominations has been nonexistent for over ten years, and so has not flourished very much. However, starting about a year-and-a-half ago, due to their shared concern for the homeless, pastors of the Roman Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, and Kyodan churches have been sharing information regularly. In addition, we began a service for people who want to settle down by negotiating with the city on their behalf and are also cooperating to provide for persons in need of food.

Members of the various churches had been in contact with each other, but until recently partnership among the churches had only been business-like at best. However, since their first ministerial meeting, the pastors and priests have been gathering at the respective churches about once every three months, with discussion centering on support for street people. Now, under the shared awareness of “shouldering the propagation of the gospel among all the churches in the area,” they are enjoying a fellowship that crosses denominational lines and a deepening experience of grace.

None of the churches has a large membership, but when they are working jointly to support the homeless, the churches are given new wisdom and a new perspective. Of course, there are denominational differences, but they are all led by the same Lord and, through implementation of the spirit of love shown by Christ, the overcoming of those differences is being realized. It was discussed that “when there are persons in distress, persons seeking aid, we must transcend denominational differences.”

The other day, there was a baptismal service for a man and his two children at the Roman Catholic Church. His wife was already a member there, so they wanted to be together as a family in the same church. He had also been attending our Kyodan church and, during the development of his desire to

be baptized, I had a chance to meet with him personally and have fellowship with him. The family was closely related to both churches, and since we had already been in a deepening relationship, I was able to discuss with the Roman Catholic priest the question of how to lead them to faith.

As the churches had once again begun to cross denomination lines to offer support, the discussion went very smoothly for all those living in Hofu. As a result, it was decided that the “service would be done together” and we would participate as officiating pastors together in the service at the Roman Catholic Church. That day, members of the Hofu Church and the pastor of the Baptist Church attended the baptismal service at the Roman Catholic Church. In addition to this being a joyous “carrying out of a ‘cooperative work’” that crossed denominational lines, the smiling faces of that family, who were able to share their common faith together, left a very radiant impression.

We are hoping that the solidarity of the area churches, which began with the discussion about supporting persons facing difficulties, will only deepen further. There are homeless persons who are seeking concrete help. How to care for such people now, and from here on, is being discussed not only by pastors but also by lay people.

Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church is appealing to persons throughout the city every year by holding an Advent concert during which the priest says, in his message: “By all means go to a church near the various places where each of you live for the Christmas worship service.” Appeals to attend the various church gatherings are also made freely, and actually the various believers take part in one another’s meetings and are deepening their interaction. As the pastor of a Christian church built in this same area, I hope to continue the “cooperative work” from now on as a witness to the Lord. It is my great desire that in this way the grace of the gospel will reach as many persons as possible. (Tr. RT)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers’ Friend), October 2013 Issue

A Message From General Secretary

Kyodan Tohoku District Nuclear Disaster Relief Task Force “IZUMI,” the office that Tohoku District set up to deal with radiation issues, had its opening ceremony on Nov. 1, 2013. We listened to a lecture about nuclear power generation and how, in the process of producing electricity, poisonous radioactive waste is also produced, for which disposal and treatment methods are still undecided.

The following day, I journeyed south through the Hamadori section of Fukushima to visit the churches. I was guided from the tsunami-stricken area of Arahama to the churches in the radiation contamination zones, all the while thinking how shameful it is that urban areas using electricity have forced this problem onto Fukushima. As I watched the huge dump trucks destined for reconstruction projects lumbering along the damaged roads and saw signs stating “under decontamination” posted in yards, parks, and fields, I was further reminded of the scale of the disaster. Contaminated soil that had been scraped off was put in large black bags and piled up in fields that would have been ripe with harvest and then covered with plastic to keep off the rain. At every church we visited along the way, there were nursery school and kindergarten facilities, and these were to be places of mission and outreach. They were supposed to be places where children and their

parents and guardians would be directly exposed to the gospel message. But the effect of radiation from the nuclear accident becomes the focus of attention in places such as these, which concentrate on children, and casts a pall on their future. For instance, in regards to drinking water, divisions between people arise if some parents think it better not to drink tap water while others think it is not dangerous now. Town officials want to emphasize that it is now safe, so if the kindergarten provides bottled water, they are not happy about that.

Likewise, some people receive compensation while others do not, and numerous other factors caused by the nuclear accident subvert harmonious relationships in the community. These include divisions between nuclear plant workers and temporary workers coming in now to deal with the situation, people who have been forced to move into temporary housing and other local people. Local governments, industries, educational institutions, medical facilities and society as a whole have all been seriously affected. And standing there beside the confused adults are the anxious children, with their world turned upside down. These children should be our first priority, as they are the ones who have been the most victimized. (Tr. KY)

—Nagasaki Tetsuo, general secretary

RCUS Women Missionaries and the Beginnings of Miyagi Gakuin

The Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in the United States was founded in 1838 for the purpose of fulfilling Jesus' command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." However, for some 35 years, the mission board never really began functioning, so it was reorganized in 1873, when the decision was made to focus on evangelism in Japan. The first missionary to be appointed was Ambrose D. Gring, who finally arrived in Japan in 1879. During the next ten years, that board sent four more men and three women as missionaries.

The Founding of Miyagi Gakuin

Hattie L. Gring, the wife of Ambrose, had been appealing to the board to send some women teachers to Japan, and the net result was that Elizabeth (Lizzy) R. Poorbaugh and Mary B. Ault answered the call to educate Japanese girls based on Christianity. They arrived in Sendai in 1886, with the vision to liberate women from the shackles placed on them by the society of that time. Compared to Tokyo, it was an undeveloped region to say the least, but they settled in Sendai, the largest town in Tohoku, where they established Miyagi Jogakko (School for Girls) on Sept. 18, 1886. This was the forerunner of Miyagi Gakuin.

Principal Poorbaugh

The school began with eight students, two foreign teachers and two Japanese women teachers in a two-story house. It soon generated great interest in the town, with passersby stopping by to peek in the windows. As the first school for girls in the Miyagi area, it developed a reputation as something new and exotic.

According to Poorbaugh's report of the second year of operation (1888), there were 48 students, and 12 of them had received baptism with another 3 preparing to be baptized. The students all really valued the hour-long daily Bible study class, and two-thirds of the students attended the Sunday school there, with the other third helping with Sunday schools in other locations. Her report showed that her work was bearing much fruit among the lives of Japanese women.

Poorbaugh was born on Dec. 27, 1854 in Berlin, Pennsylvania and graduated from York High School, becoming a public school teacher. When she came to Japan at age 30, she was accompanied by her six-year-old niece, Sarah Kathleen (nicknamed Kittie), whom she was raising due to the death of her sister-in-law in childbirth. She served as principal of the school for seven years before returning to the U.S., where she married Rev. Cyrus Cort, and served as a pastor's wife for the rest of her life. She spent her final time on earth in the care of Kittie and her family, and her ashes were scattered in the garden of Kittie's home, which was designed to resemble the Japanese gardens that they had both so loved.

Women Missionaries

The other woman missionary teacher at the founding of the school was Mary Ault, a pastor's daughter born in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania in 1863. She had dreamed of being an overseas missionary from the age of seven,



The Japan Mission of the RCUS in 1889
From bottom left: Anna Schneder, Annie Moore, Kittie Poorbaugh
From top left: Emma Poorbaugh (Lizzy's sister), Principal Poorbaugh, David Schneder, Jairus Moore, William Hoy, Mary (Ault) Hoy

and after her marriage, she and her husband, Rev. William Edwin Hoy, came to Japan in June 1888 as the third missionary couple sent by the RCUS. She spent her entire life after that in overseas missions with her husband, passing away in 1937 in Hankou, China.

The work of these missionary women in the early days of the mission was a critical factor that should not be overlooked. After the Grings, the second couple to arrive was Rev. Jairus P. Moore and his wife Annie. They were followed by Rev. David B. Schneder and his wife Anna. Each of them had a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of Japanese women and gave their lives in loving service to them.

Following these initial ten missionaries, Miyagi Gakuin has over the years received numerous RCUS missionaries. By 1985 that number had reached 148 persons, of which 116 were women, all of whom had put their hearts and minds into educating the students. This number does not include wives, such as Anna Schneder, who did not teach at the school but who nevertheless contributed to the work in the Sendai area. In addition to being a support for their husbands' work, the loving examples they showed in their Christian lives were of great benefit to not only Miyagi Gakuin students but also in a variety of other ministries, including kindergartens throughout Tohoku, caring for the sick, and women's groups in churches. These women lived in a society that at the time in Japan was still feudalistic in its thinking, and they communicated the love of Christ through their daily lives.

Graduates of Miyagi Gakuin

The women missionaries at Miyagi School for Girls not only taught the Bible and other subjects but were also involved in the lives of their students, serving as role models like kind mothers or older sisters. They said, "As the students go off to get married and build their own Christian homes, the Christian faith will continue to spread to their children and to following generations as well." This tradition of sending out graduates raised up in Christian values has been continued by that school's successor, Miyagi Gakuin. (Tr. TB)

—Umino Michio
Miyagi Gakuin President's office

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