

## Report on the First Executive Council of the 37th General Assembly Period (2010-2012)

The first Executive Council meeting of the 37th General Assembly period was held Dec. 20-21 at the Kyodan headquarters. Moderator Ishibashi Hideo began by summarizing the 2010 General Assembly as “an assembly that was in agreement on the necessity for reform towards a Kyodan that focuses on evangelism.” He then expressed his sentiments saying, “We simply must be concerned about whether the Kyodan will even be around to celebrate its 200th anniversary. I want us to aim at becoming a Kyodan that is serious about evangelism.” With respect to the functioning of the Executive Council, he stated, “I want us to adhere strictly to the rules laid out in the Kyodan’s Constitution and Bylaws. As there is no provision in the bylaws for the category of an observer requesting permission to participate (without vote) in an Executive Council meeting, as has been the practice previously, we should limit such attendance to non-participating observers.”

The item that took up the most time in the meeting was agenda item 22: the “establishment of a study commission on evangelism policy.” This item was number 37 at the 2010 General Assembly, and it had been delegated to the Executive Council for further deliberation. The originator of the proposal, council member Suzuki Isao explained, “In the midst of this protracted decline in membership, we need to establish a study commission on evangelism policy to look into the issue of evangelism within the Kyodan and make specific proposals on implementation.” During the ensuing discussion, council member Kobayashi Sadao asked that all members give their input, and as this was agreed to by the council, a great deal of time was spent in the process. The discussion proceeded beyond a simple vote on the establishment of such a commission and was expanded to a wider perspective, calling for a “vision of evangelism.” Everybody chimed in on the topic, including all of the district moderators in attendance and

the chairpersons of the various committees who were there at the request of the Executive Council. In contrast to usual procedures, no time limit was set so a wide variety of opinions was expressed from the unique standpoints of the various churches that were represented. Nevertheless, practically everyone was in agreement that urgent measures need to be taken to strengthen evangelism. The result was a unanimous vote to establish the “study commission on evangelism policy.”

The last agenda item to be addressed was one submitted by the moderator on the establishment of an emergency fund. Up until now, whenever there has been a major natural disaster, funds for relief response have been collected at that time. Thus, the rationale for setting up such an ongoing fund is that in this age when such disasters have been frequent, the Kyodan needs to be able to respond quickly when the need arises. The 60 million yen remaining from the funds raised for relief after the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake as well as what remains of the Kanto District fund for the 2007 Niigata-Chuetsu earthquake would become the foundation of the fund. After discussion, it was passed by a majority vote.

This first Executive Council meeting was noteworthy in several ways. First of all, there was no heckling at all from any of the observers—something that probably has not happened for several decades. Likewise, there were no participating observers there at their own request, and so the meeting was conducted entirely in accordance with the bylaws. But most of all, the majority of the two-day conference was dedicated to the discussions surrounding evangelism. No doubt, the true value of that will be a topic of discussion for some time. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

# New Kyodan Retirement Home Replaces Two Former Facilities

by Sumiya Tamiko, chair  
Nijino'ie/Shin'aiso Steering Committee

Nijino'ie/Shin'aiso, located in Tokyo's Ome City, is a new retirement home formed by the merger of Shin'aiso and Nijino'ie, two preceding Kyodan facilities. The dedication ceremony for the home's newly constructed B Ward was held on Sept. 27, 2010.

In 1957 Shin'aiso was created in response to the proposal of a member of Tokyo District's Social Action Committee to build a retirement home for clergy and their widowed spouses. While pastors were raising funds, a property in the Tokyo suburb of Ome was donated. The facility was built there 50 years ago. During these years, management of the facility has been the responsibility of Tokyo District. Because at the time of its establishment most retired clergy lived on very small incomes and many struggled greatly to make ends meet, the provision of this housing met a significant need.

Nijino'ie (Rainbow Haven) 's history began at a gathering of church women from the six districts in the Kansai region in 1966, following a report of the dire conditions faced by elderly female clergy. It was decided that the miserable conditions of elderly pastors could not be overlooked and that there was a need to create a place in which pastors could continue to witness the joy of their faith until their final day. In addition, those gathered wanted to create a facility that church women would be able to use without hesitation. All in attendance were in agreement with this decision, and to make certain that the concern did not merely end as words of a statement, one of the attendees made a 3,000 yen donation. The follow-up work was delegated to the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies (NFKWS), which was officially recognized by the Kyodan in 1968 as an autonomous organization. In 1973, after some difficulty locating property, Nijino'ie was founded outside Tateyama City in Chiba.

In accordance with the purpose of their construction, Shin'aiso primarily served pastors and Nijino'ie served church women. Donations came in from all over Japan and also from the United Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church USA in the United States, all of which were greatly appreciated.

Because, at the time, Japanese people were not familiar with Christianity and therefore did not understand it, it was often difficult for Christians to gain permission to rent space for their various Christian gatherings. Thus, Nijino'ie provided hope for those who were in need of such space. Being located near the temperate climate of the seashore and blessed with its natural surroundings, Nijino'ie has been used not only by women's groups for meetings and retreats but also for church school events. During most years, the residents were able to enjoy and be encouraged by the over 800 visitors of a wide age range who made use of the facility. Also, the income generated by this usage helped support the maintenance of the facility.

As a ministry of outreach to the surrounding neighborhood, a Bible study for children was held on Saturdays. Roughly two dozen children —mostly from a nearby foster home and ranging from infants to teenagers— faithfully attended the weekly gatherings.

Holding worship services was another ministry. In 1984 a sanctuary was constructed. Once the cross was visible, neighbors came to worship together with the residents. Those neighbors who worshipped at the sanctuary in Nijino'ie were given the inspiration that enabled the founding of Nanbo Church in 1997. Because there had previously been a Kyodan church in Tateyama, one of the dreams of NFKWS when it began planning construction of the facility was that a new congregation would be established there. The realization of that dream has brought much joy to both the residents and believers living nearby. With the change of location of Nijino'ie, the children's Saturday Bible study will now be held at Nanbo Church.

Entering the 21st Century, as the Kyodan faced both declining membership and aging congregations, support for both Nijino'ie and Shin'aiso declined to the point that it became difficult to finance the operation of the two facilities. In addition, Shin'aiso's original building was aging and needed major renovations.

In February 2006 the moderator of Tokyo District deemed it necessary to consolidate the two facilities. In October 2007 the following four reasons were given for their merger into one building in Ome: ① declining church membership; ② danger of earthquake and natural disaster; ③ maintenance costs; and ④ personnel considerations. A committee composed of members of Shin'aiso and Nijino'ie had been formed to evaluate various options.

In October 2008 the Kyodan Executive Council approved the merger to create the consolidated Nijino'ie/Shin'aiso retirement home. Further, along with the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Protestant Mission in Japan a 50 million yen national donation campaign was conducted. With the additional donation of 75 million yen each by both Shin'aiso and Nijino'ie, the rebuilding of Shin'aiso with steel-reinforced concrete was made possible. The 27 residents reside, as appropriate, in units for either singles or couples that include an eating area, kitchen, bathroom, and laundry facilities.

In April 2010 Tokyo District, West Tokyo District, which became independent from Tokyo District in 1990, and the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies began cooperative operation of the facility through a joint committee that seeks to ensure that the residents enjoy their lives there. Although currently various financial and operational challenges remain, the steering committee as well as the staff are endeavoring to continue to improve the facility. (Tr. AK-O)

# Christian Ministry among Japanese in Indonesia

by Matsumoto Akihiro, pastor  
Jakarta Japanese Christian Fellowship Church

The Jakarta Japanese Christian Fellowship Church began its ministry 33 years ago, when a monthly house meeting was started. Weekly worship services were begun when Atsumi Yasuo, the current general secretary of the Japan Antioch Mission, moved as a missionary from Kalimantan to Jakarta. However, in 1989, Atsumi ended his 17 years of missionary activities and returned to Japan. Following Atsumi's return, four pastors from Japan served the Jakarta church in succession, but in May 2004 the church was without a pastor. At that time, I was serving the Juni'shito (Twelve Apostles) Church in Sapporo but felt a strong call from God to serve in Southeast Asia. Although I had not even heard of the church in Jakarta, my family and I found ourselves there in April 2005, having made a promise to help for two months.

After serving those two months, I entered the Discipleship Training Center in Singapore. While receiving training there and continuing to pray for the Lord's direction to my next task, I was invited to serve the church in Jakarta, and in November 2005 I became the pastor. This was the first time that a Kyodan pastor had served this church.

Our church rents an Indonesian church at the southern edge of Jakarta on Sunday afternoons, where we have church school from 1:00 p.m., followed by worship at 2:30 p.m. At the parsonage, we also have weekly gatherings for women on Wednesday mornings and a play group for mothers and small children on Friday mornings. Other than that, we use the homes of our church members for prayer meetings, house meetings for seekers, and lectures on such subjects as raising children. Public transportation in Jakarta is still being developed, and without a car it is very inconvenient to move about. As a result, we started having satellite worship services during Sunday mornings at various locations in the city. On the first Sunday, we meet in the western area, on the second Sunday, in the central area, and on the third Sunday, in the southern area. This practice has been well received.

Approximately 8,000 Japanese are living in Jakarta, but the percentage of those who are opening their hearts to the Gospel is much greater than in Japan. One of the reasons for this is that many people are hungering to hear Japanese. A second reason is that Japanese living in a foreign country are seriously seeking their identity in the midst of a different culture. A third reason I would offer is that living in a very strong Muslim cultural environment makes it easier for Japanese to consider seriously what faith means to them as individuals.

Many people will respond to our evangelistic ideas and effort. For example, as we prepared for last Christmas, we advertised for participants to form a children's gospel choir. Almost 20 children and parents from outside the church participated, and we were given a new opportunity to spread the gospel. At our December satellite worship services, there were 76 people in attendance on the first Sunday and 75 on the second Sunday. For the third Sunday, we prepared a program especially for children, and 113 children and parents attended. There were 180 people at our Christmas Lunch Party.

At one time, Japanese posted by their companies in Jakarta formed the nucleus of the membership, but in the last ten



*Participants in the meeting on church cultivation held in October 2010*

years Japanese family members in international marriages have become the nucleus. As a result, since last year, we have been offering simultaneous translation of the sermon.

Of course, there is rapid transition in our membership, but more and more Japanese are choosing to remain in Jakarta, and there is a growing sense of stability. For example, in 2008 there were 7 baptisms, 6 new members who transferred membership to our church, and 10 members who returned to Japan. However, in 2010 there were 15 baptisms, 6 transfers of membership, and 6 who returned to Japan. One fact that deserves special comment is that 9 of the 15 baptisms were of students in our church school. As we see this harvest from the seeds that have been sown diligently until now, our church school teachers are encouraged. We have maintained an attendance level of around 30 persons in our afternoon worship services, but last year an attendance of 60 or more was not unusual.

Within Indonesia, there are Christian meetings in Japanese in Surabaya and Bali also, but there are no pastors. In order to have worship services in these places at least once a month, I have become the coordinator, arranging for preachers, as well as visiting those areas several times a year and preaching myself. Japanese churches across Asia have coped alone until now, but in February 2010, leaders from these churches met together for the first time, holding an Asian Mission Forum in Hong Kong. At this forum, the leaders in attendance affirmed cooperation as we move into the future. Members from Japanese churches across Europe have been gathering for joint annual retreats for over 20 years, but in Asia we will have our first joint family camp at Bali at the end of January this year.

Furthermore, in March of both 2009 and 2010, the All Nations Returnees Conference (for Japanese who have become Christians while in foreign countries, or who have been strengthened in their Christian walk while abroad) was held in Japan, and approximately 700 people gathered at both conferences. I participated in the conference in 2010, leading a seminar entitled "The condition and possibilities of mission outreach to Japanese in Asia". This confirmed for me the importance of this type of cooperation among Japanese churches. My term in Jakarta ends in March 2012, and I have decided not to extend my term of service here. As my successor, I am currently preparing a pastor who was brought up in the Jakarta church. As I look to the future, I hope to continue taking part in evangelism among Japanese throughout Southeast Asia and supporting mission in Japan from abroad. (Tr. JS)

# Kobe College: Rooted in the Pioneer Work of Missionary Women

by Saeki Yukae, staff of Kobe College Archives  
Translated by Ishimura Maki, Office Staff, English Department

On March 31, 1873, two missionary women arrived in Kobe. They were Eliza Talcott and Julia Elizabeth Dudley, the founders of what would eventually become Kobe College. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the first U.S. missionary agency that was founded in Boston, had sent them to Japan. They came to Japan at the beginning of the Meiji Era as pioneering missionary single women.

The following passage from Talcott's first letter to the Board's head office shows the two missionaries' strong desire to expand the Christian faith among Japanese women: "Many of the girls, as we meet them in the streets, look very attractive and I long to be able to talk with them - am very thankful to be here and for the hope of being able to do something towards giving the light of the blessed Gospel to this dark land" (Talcott's letter No. 313, Apr. 12, 1873)

In fall that same year, they started a private language school, assuming that the Japanese women could afford to "read the Bible only in a foreign language." (Talcott's letter No. 315, May 16, 1874) Besides running this small school, they visited nearby places for mission work: Talcott went to Banshu and Dudley to Sanda.

"It is beautiful to see the young Christians so ready to work. Surely this country shall soon have many of her sons and daughters as leaders and teachers in this 'way'. When I returned from S(anda), two or three mothers said to me, 'I would like to have you take my daughters and teach them better than I can'-and the girls whom I had met twice every day while there wept and would have come with me" (Dudley's letter No. 71, June 20, 1874)

Dudley's successful mission work in Sanda encouraged the two missionaries to transform their tiny school into a new boarding school for girls in Kobe. On Oct. 12, 1875, Talcott and Dudley started the "Girls' School," which Dudley called "a home where girls may be under our more direct influence" (ibid.). Talcott wrote in her letter, "Our girls may receive not only religious but also secular training that shall fit them to be teachers of others" (Talcott's letter No. 315)

While the Girls' School thrived and grew steadily, Talcott and Dudley did not limit their efforts to education there. They actively went out visiting Japanese homes and doing mission work. "I do not intend to neglect the interests of the school, but could find full employment, and much more than that for all my time, without going into school at all. Sometimes, indeed, the hopefulness of the work among the women in their homes makes me feel almost dissatisfied with school work until I take a wider view, and realize how much the future of our work depends on the girls." (Talcott's letter No. 316, Dec. 1, 1874)

Five years later, the two founders decided to leave the school and to concentrate on mission work. In 1880, Talcott moved



Left: Eliza Talcott Right: Julia Dudley (c)Kobe College

to the Board's Okayama Station and continued working as a missionary, especially in Tottori and Kyoto, except during her furloughs. In Okayama, she inspired Ishii Juji to found Okayama Orphanage. She also taught Christianity at the Kyoto Training School for Nurse.

When the Great Nobi Earthquake occurred, she went to help people in the stricken area. In Hiroshima, she visited hospitals as a missionary and was called the "Japanese Nightingale" for this work. In her later years, she was based at Kobe Woman's Evangelistic School and continued evangelizing neighboring areas. Other missionaries called her an "Emergency Evangelist of the Mission," for she went anywhere she was asked to go.

In Kobe, Dudley, the other founder of Kobe College, felt an increasing need for indigenous "Bible women": "Mr. Atkinson has written you that we feel the need of a class of trained women to do what we cannot do. We who have worked for the women have tried so far to make each one feel her own responsibility to the work, and they have done nobly. But there is a greater need than can be met in this way." (Dudley's letter No. 77, Aug. 30, 1880)

For this purpose, Dudley founded the Bible School for Women (later Kobe Woman's Evangelistic School) in 1880 and trained young Japanese women until her retirement. Kobe Woman's Evangelistic School sent many capable Bible Women out into the Japanese mission field.

Meanwhile, the Girls' School founded by Talcott and Dudley expanded significantly after they left and changed its name to "Kobe College," becoming an institution for higher education for Japanese women. Virginia Alzade Clarkson, the second principal, led the way in changing course from a religious school to an institution for general education. Emily Maria Brown, the third principal and president, and Susan Annette Searle, the fourth president, further developed the Girls' School into an institution for women's higher education. Charlotte Burgis DeForest, the fifth president, perfected the efforts of her predecessors. Today, Kobe College continues to pursue the ideals of these missionary women as an institution of higher education for pioneering women in Japan.

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# ACEF's 20 Years of Support for Education in Bangladesh

by Nakagawa Hideaki, director  
Asia Christian Education Fund, Tokyo

ACEF (Asia Christian Education Fund) celebrated its 20th anniversary in October 2010. Since its establishment in 1990, the objectives of the Christian NGO have always been twofold: working in partnership with BDP (Basic Development Partners), a Bangladeshi Christian NGO, to establish and operate non-formal primary schools for the underprivileged children of Bangladesh; and training and nurturing Japanese youths who opt to take up their share of the challenges faced by our neighbours in other parts of Asia.\*

Basic Development Partners was founded by Mina Malakar, a Bangladeshi medical doctor and a devoted Christian. She was engaged in public health activities aimed at disseminating basic knowledge on health and hygiene to rural women, especially young mothers, but soon noticed that none of the women were taking notes while earnestly listening to her seminars. She then realised that these women were illiterate and that her efforts to help enlighten and empower them could not be very effective. As they could not read the handouts or take notes, there was a limit to the amount and the accuracy of what they could learn on the spot and take home with them. With this realisation, Dr Malakar determined that literacy and education were the keys to the development of these women as well as of their communities. Consequently, she resigned from the hospital and started her own NGO, initially named Sunflower Education Programme (SEP), which later became Basic Development Partners. Several months later, ACEF was established by Japanese Christians who wished to participate in the new endeavour established by Dr Malakar.

In 1990 SEP established a non-formal preschool in the slum area of Juline in the outskirts of Dhaka, the capital. The initial classroom was set up in an open space in front of a private house, with 163 children and 10 female teachers, some of whom were high school students. On one hand, this arrangement supported the young teachers by making it possible for them to continue their secondary education. They would otherwise have been forced to leave school and get married at an age as young as 14 or 15. On the other hand, their employment also supported the empowerment of women in their communities. Even today, almost all BDP school teachers are women. BDP has maintained a "female teacher only" policy and believes that this policy is the key to an effective education for children as well as to the empowerment of women in rural society.

Since then, 20 years has passed, and the number of non-formal primary schools operated by BDP and supported by



BDP School children (c) ACEF 2010

ACEF has now reached 75. In these schools, 300 teachers teach 12,000 children. The ACEF membership has also grown from 74 in 1990 to more than 1,200 in 2010.

One of the major achievements of BDP and ACEF is the improved enrolment rate in the areas where BDP schools exist. Although the numbers and ratio of children attending the schools have now increased dramatically compared to 20 years ago, even today only half of the students can complete the five-year primary education program. Improving the completion rate at BDP schools is emerging as a new challenge for BDP and ACEF.

Neither measurable indicators nor specific targets were set when BDP and ACEF started to work together in 1990. If these organisations had announced at that time that they were planning to establish 75 primary schools within the duration of 20 years, people would have thought the organisers were crazy and the plan unrealistic. Potential supporters would have been reluctant to participate in such an impossible mission. Instead, the two organisations continued to persist in their low-key efforts, without a grand plan, and to do what they could do each year, however small and limited it might have seemed. They continued to follow Christ, giving thanks for whatever they had, and did whatever they could do with it. Eventually, their persistent efforts have graciously been multiplied and maximised to bear the miraculous fruits of education in time. It seems as miraculous as when 5,000 people shared five loaves and two fish and were satisfied. (Tr. FK&HLN)

\*Many Christian schools in Japan, both Roman \*Catholic and Protestant, are supporting ACEF with their prayers and contributions.

## The General Secretary's Diary : The Succession of Faith

On Jan. 10, 2011 the 18th Chiba Subdistrict's Lay Rally was held at West Chiba Church, with the theme "Let's Connect: the Circle of Faith and the Succession of Faith." Chiba Subdistrict is one of Tokyo District's five subdistricts. It has 62 churches and preaching points, 46 of which participated in the Lay Rally. I attended the rally this time and gave an address with "the succession of faith" as its main focus. Here I want to present the key points of that address.

"The succession of faith" is an important concern for all churches, and especially for the Kyodan, as an issue of evangelism. However, it is by no means easy to achieve because it is deeply related to the basic essence of faith. That is to say, "the succession of faith" is not a succession of assets or the transfer of wealth and is different from the inheritance of things. Rather, it is a matter of the heart, which connects one's being and one's deep spiritual nature in faith and is also connected to eternal truth (life). Simply stated, faith is basically my relationship with God.

I cannot have faith on behalf of someone else, and no one else can have faith on my behalf. No matter how great our love for someone else (such as a parent, child, husband, wife, best friend), persons with a true living faith cannot permit this love to come between themselves and God. No matter how much I love my children, I cannot stand in my children's place and believe in God on their behalf. Praying earnestly to God the Holy Spirit is the only way for the succession of faith to be realized in the lives of our children and for them to come to believe in God themselves. According to the Bible, only God the Holy Spirit can give us faith that Jesus is Lord (I Cor. 12:3) and lead us to become one who prays deeply, calling on the "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:14-15). Therefore, if we want a succession of faith, we must pray to God, pray deeply, and continue to pray that "our children will be given true faith," and it is important that the church, as the family of God, pray together for God to give faith to the next generation. Next, in order to realize the succession of faith, it is

important to have the assurance of faith that the living God gives me individually. And it must be constantly made clear that this faith gives me deep, living joy, which gives me "living" courage and a "living" hope. Faith in Christ the Lord is the greatest treasure that God has given me. Further, it is necessary that we clarify the content of our faith. For that reason as well, we must correctly understand the Kyodan's Confession of Faith.

To make the succession of faith a reality, infant baptism must be seriously considered. In order to raise true believers, the parent(s) of the child who has received infant baptism and the church through its prayers, must become the means of continuing to offer education in faith. The prayers of the parent(s) and the church give birth to the "catechism," and church history teaches us that they have played a large role in the realization of the succession of the Christian faith. I see the posture of those who diligently pray and strive for the succession of faith reflected in the posture of Joshua, the leader of Israel after Moses, who declared, "... as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). (Tr. RT)

—Naito Tomeyuki, general secretary

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