

Executive Council Makes Preparations for the 37th (2010) General Assembly

The 5th Executive Council meeting of the 36th General Assembly period was held at the Kyodan headquarters July 12-13. In opening the proceedings, Kyodan Moderator Yamakita Nobuhisa followed the lectionary, reading II Cor. 10:1-10, and led the council in prayer.

New System for Electing Executive Council Members

One noteworthy item on the agenda was discussion on the process for electing Executive Council members. The General Assembly Preparation Committee had proposed having delegates select up to ten names on their individual ballots, but council member Okada Nobuyoshi put forth the proposal that the entire slate of council seats be voted for on each ballot. His primary rationale was that council members are not to be mere spokespersons for an individual district but that they should be elected in a process that expresses the thinking of the entire General Assembly. Likewise, such a process would be based on the principle that it is the right of each assembly delegate to elect the entire membership of the Executive Council.

In opposition to this proposal, other council members favored respecting the decision of the 2008 General Assembly to allow only seven names to be written on each ballot, noting that it is not appropriate to introduce a proposal at a council meeting that differs from that of the General Assembly Preparation Committee. Despite these objections, Okada's proposal was adopted with 15 of 29 members expressing approval.

New Committee for Screening Agenda Items

The second item of note concerned discussion on the proposed formation of a committee to screen items submitted for inclusion on the General Assembly agenda. The proposal is an effort to avoid the kind of confusion that prevailed at the 34th (2004) General Assembly when there were numerous separate agenda items with essentially the same content. It seems necessary for a committee to review the various proposals to identify ones with essentially the same purpose or ones that basically are contrary to the Kyodan Constitution and Bylaws. Okamoto Tomoyuki, chair of the Commission on Faith and Order, explained what "agenda screening" specifically entails and

suggested the format that rules on parliamentary proceedings should take.

With this as a background, the proposed Agenda Screening Committee was defined as a mechanism to help the moderator streamline parliamentary proceedings by performing the following roles: 1) combining proposals that express the same objective; 2) dividing complex proposals involving more than one issue into separate agenda items; and 3) weeding out those proposals that are basically contrary to the Kyodan Constitution and Bylaws. The proposal was adopted with 14 of 27 members in favor. The following council members were selected to serve on the committee: Fujikake Jun'ichi, Miura Osamu, and Takahashi Jun.

Revised Level-Two Church Requirements

One final agenda item involved issues surrounding the changes in the Kyodan Bylaws that concern "preaching places" (fledgling churches). Following the report by the Commission on Faith and Order in 2008 on the disparity between the provisions of the bylaws related to preaching places and the actual situation such small churches face, the Task Force to Study the Organizational Structure and Status of Preaching Places was established, with Sasaki Michio as chair.

Sasaki explained that since the Kyodan is presently unable to deal with the sensitive issue of ecclesiology per se, the one step it can take to alleviate problems caused by the present bylaws is to first adjust the prerequisites for allowing a preaching place to become a level-two church. Presently, at least 20 members are required for recognition as a level-two church. It was proposed to reduce that requirement to 10 members and, even if that number is not reached, to allow a preaching place to apply for level-two status by holding a church annual assembly or by forming a church administrative board. The proposal was adopted by majority vote and will be presented to the 2010 General Assembly for approval. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

Association of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains Founded

This year, the Fellowship of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains came to an end after 40 years. It was replaced by the Association of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains. From 1950 to 1968, the activities of prison chaplains were the responsibility of the Prison Evangelism Committee, under the auspices of the Kyodan's Committee on Evangelism. After 1969, such activities were conducted by volunteer chaplains who organized themselves as the Fellowship of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains.

At the first General Meeting of the Association of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains, held May 31-June 1, 2010 at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center in Tokyo, members approved items that are necessary for starting an association, such as regulations, principles, and a budget. They elected the new committee members. I am grateful to the Lord who led us thus far. In the regulations, the founding purpose of the Association states "to support the work of prison chaplains and to fulfill God's mission." Activities are (i) training seminars for prison chaplains, (ii) publishing a newsletter, (iii) encouraging networking and cooperation among prison chaplains, (iv) fundraising for its activities, (v) encouraging fellowship with prison chaplains of other religions and from overseas, and (vi) conducting networking and cooperation with the Committee on Evangelism.

Under the new regulations, all 97 prison chaplains have become its members. Associate members, organizations as well as individuals, support the ministry of the association and make donations to it. Activities supported specifically by fundraising include publishing the newsletter *Jails' Friends* and subsidizing the transportation expenses of all members when they attend the general meeting, district representatives' meetings, and seminars.

In spite of the current shortfall of funding, we were able to hold the overnight general meeting in Tokyo, attended by 30 members from all over Japan. We were able to accomplish this because God faithfully raised supporters from Japan as well as from overseas.



*The first General Meeting of the Association of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains
(1st row, 2nd from the right: Miyama Tasuku, author of article)*

Namely, 3,000 Euro were donated in 2010 and will also be provided in 2011 by the Mission Board of Evangelical Churches of South West Germany. Due to this generous support, we were able to make up for the shortage of funds, thus able to provide the transportation costs of the participants. I am pleased to report this to you, with gratitude.

At the lecture marking the founding of the association, Hugh Brown, a prison chaplain at Kobe Prison, gave a talk entitled "You can start your new life," which was appreciated by all. He is from Northern Ireland, a former terrorist who later became a pastor. All the chaplains gave reports on his/her district and were able to share prayer concerns, although there was no representation from Hokkai District or Okinawa District because no prison chaplains are serving there.

We would like to have more networking with prison chaplain fellowships from overseas as the Association of Kyodan-related Prison Chaplains moves forward and develops in the coming days. Comments and suggestions from readers of the *Kyodan Newsletter* would be much appreciated. (Tr. YY)

—Miyama Tasuku, pastor
Kokubunji-Minami Church
Nishi Tokyo District

Evangelische Missionwerk Sudwestdeutschland (EMS) Conference Held in Germany

The EMS Mission Council 2010 was held July 9–12 at the academy of the regional State church in Bad Herrenalb in the State of Baden. *Bad* (“hot spring” in German) indicates that the area is a mountainous spar. But we had no chance to take a dip in the hot spring. In order to be in time for the 9:30 a.m. meeting schedule, we stayed the previous night at a lodging facility for Catholic pilgrims, thanks to the arrangements by Pastor Lutz Drescher, EMS general secretary in charge of Asia and South India.

Pastor Vasantha Kumar, moderator of the Church of South India, also stayed with us, and we enjoyed a time of good fellowship. We learned that three percent of the Indian population is Christian and that the South India United Church has three million members. We ate our evening meal at an Italian restaurant and were overwhelmed at the large amount of pasta. The following morning all four of us managed to get into Executive Secretary Lutz’s mini-car, literally jam-packed together with our four extra-large suitcases, and headed for Bad Herrenalb.

We arrived safely at *Evangelische Akademie*, our destination. After the opening service followed by lunch and recess time, the main meeting began. The total attendance was approximately 50 persons, 16 of whom were from partner churches in Indonesia, India, South Africa, Ghana, Jordan, Korea, and Japan. The largest group was from Indonesia, nine in all including two interpreters. EMS’ overseas partner churches have faced financial difficulties. On the basis of their long-standing relationship, EMS lately has decided to invite all partner churches to the mission councils and general meetings and has given them decision-making rights. The meaning of “partner” was one of the agenda items for discussion this year.

The EMS’ finances depend on the contribution of the State churches. Due to the financial pinch of the regional State churches, EMS’ budget has been cut about 20 percent during the past two years. This has resulted in the reduction of the number of staff persons. EMS is facing the necessity of a drastic reform of its structure. Communication about the seriousness of this situation to its partner churches was one of the main purposes of this conference.

I first learned about EMS while I was a member of the Kyodan Committee on Education. Every year the Committee on Education makes a nation-wide appeal for Christmas contributions. The collected amount is divided, with one portion designated for domestic use and the other portion for overseas use. Both are targeted for children and youth. Several years ago, the EMS-assisted peace movement sponsored by the Ghana Presbyterian Church was selected as a potential candidate for our support. While reading various relevant website resources, I learned that EMS has been suggesting a vast range of social outreach projects. However, my participation in this recent Mission Council was indeed an eye-opening experience for me, as I learned about the structure of EMS and its relationship with its regional State churches.

In the afternoon of the second day of the conference, all the participants from partner churches were gathered to hear the explanation of EMS Executive Committee members who had been sent by the regional State churches. It took those of us from Asia and Africa some time to understand the explanation at a deep level, although we all were aware at least of the unique circumstances of the German church.

During the conference, the participants were all separated into four groups so as to organize respective committees. The committee I participated in discussed the revision of the EMS covenant as well as the possibility of sending coworkers to Korea, with which we were in agreement.

In the afternoon of July 11, we were just told that we would be moving to Bretten. The bus took us through *Schwarzwald*, the Black Forest, to bring us to the Melancton Memorial Museum. The building is designed like the house Melancton had lived in and preserves more than a thousand of his original writings. Thus, we were given a glimpse of that time of the Reformation long ago. (Tr. FK)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

Local Events Promote Deeper Japanese-Korean Relations

Nishi-Chugoku District

Nishi Chugoku District's West Subdistrict held its 30th Joint Japanese-Korean Worship Service on March 14, 2010. The subdistrict has worked cooperatively with the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) in Shimonoseki City since before the Kyodan and KCCJ established a mission covenant.

Two annual events are scheduled. The first is the joint worship service, held on the second Sunday of March. The second is a time of fellowship, including dinner, on the second Friday night of September.

This year, the 30th anniversary of our joint worship service was celebrated by inviting Pastor Choi Young Shin from Ube Church of the KCCJ, located in Ube, Yamaguchi Prefecture. He is also moderator of the KCCJ General Assembly. In total, 85 people from Kyodan churches in Shimonoseki and KCCJ Shimonoseki Church attended this event.

—Shinohara Mitsuru
Ozuki Church, Yamaguchi Prefecture
Nishi Chugoku District
From *Shinto no Tomo (Believers' Friend)*

Ou District

On Sundays at Hanamaki Church, both Korean and Japanese are spoken. Even if people do not understand each other's language, connections are still made. What happened at Pentecost is still happening here at Hanamaki Church.

About four years ago, in the spring, a young man who spoke little Japanese came to our church. That was the beginning of something big. Of the 30 members who now attend the service, 7 to 10 of them are students from Korea who are studying as exchange students at a nearby private university.

One person will ask his or her classmate to come along, then that classmate will ask his or her friend to join them as well. In that way, many students are gathering every week. Sharing the gospel seems to be a real joy for them. Some of the students are Protestants; others are Roman Catholics and even Buddhists. The other day, I was walking around town and heard a voice addressing me as "pastor" in Korean (*mokusa-nim*). I looked back and saw a woman I did not recognize. Pretending that I recognized her, I said, "Oh, I haven't seen you in a long time. How are you?" She said, "I've never met you. I just saw you in photographs." I blushed. I learned then that the students who come to church show others the photographs they take there and talk about the church with friends who have never attended.

The source of the students' energy definitely comes from prayer. Even when they cannot attend the worship service, I see them coming to the church in the afternoons and praying. They also gather together on Wednesday nights and have prayer meetings.

When the number of Korean students increased, we convened a board meeting at Hanamaki Church. We decided that foreign students also deserve pastoral care. Since then, our church members have started praying for the students and have really begun to accept and embrace them. Of course, there are both cultural and generational differences at our church. Despite this, we are becoming one church.

Since there are both Korean students and Japanese church members, many different events are possible, such as a

bazaar, cleaning, and a choir. It is not simply a matter of Korean students attending a Japanese church; Korean students and Japanese members are working together to make this church their home.

Last year in February, many of the foreign students went back home for spring break. Very few of them stayed in Japan. I said to one of them, "You must be missing your family." They answered, "I have family here as well." It made me happy, knowing that the people at Hanamaki Church had accepted them as family.

In the Book of Ephesians, Paul wrote, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." (2:19, NIV) He talks here about what a real church is. We are experiencing the joy of our church being a place where people who are transcending nationality on this earth, yet sharing the same nationality in Him, join together.

This February, one of the foreign students went back to Korea to fulfill military service obligations. We sang the hymn "God be with you till we meet again" in both Korean and Japanese. I felt the Holy Spirit was uniting us as one when I heard one church member say, "Please remember, when you pray, that I am praying for you here in Japan."

Nobody imagined that this could happen in only four years. We have experienced many great and wonderful things. Looking back, it was not just because someone did anything specific. Prayers have promoted evangelism and resulted in the formation of a church. Throughout these four years, I have had a sense of Pentecost, as though it was happening constantly. Is this because Hanamaki Church is special? No, it came to us through the Korean students. The great thing is that every church can experience what we have experienced. (Tr. DV)

—Yamamoto Katsuyuki
Hanamaki Church
Ou District
From *Shinto no Tomo (Believers' Friend)*

Serving as a Kyodan Missionary in the U.S.A.

by Nishinosono Michiko, associate pastor
Wesley United Methodist Church
San Jose, California, U.S.A.

I have served as a Kyodan missionary at Wesley United Methodist Church (UMC) in San Jose, California, U.S.A. since May 2009. The UMC organization is different from that of the Kyodan.* Here, I sometimes feel the need for intercultural communication between the *nichigo-bu* (Japanese speaking section) members and myself. It is more difficult for me to understand the *nichigo-bu* than to understand the English-speaking section. I recognize that the Japanese people in the U.S. have had to struggle and be strong in order to live in a foreign country. They are direct and are strongly opinionated. And they have endurance. I need more time to understand them, and I try not to be hasty.

Wesley UMC is in Japantown, one of three remaining Japantowns in the United States. There is a monument on the main street that is written in both English and Japanese listing words that the *issei* (first generation of Japanese-Americans) used to say: *kansha* (gratitude); *gaman* (perseverance); *mottainai koto shinaino* (Don't do things that are wasteful); *enryo* (reserve, modesty); *shikata ga nai* (It can't be helped); *kodomo no tame ni* (for the children's sake). Many *issei* and *nisei* (second generation) worked hard as farmers without vacations. Some of them were incarcerated in concentration camps during World War II. The *issei*'s life of hardship is evident in the words on the monument.

Wesley UMC was built by these *issei* in 1895. The *nichigo-bu* was for them and their children, the *nisei*. Now, the English-speaking section has become bigger than the *nichigo-bu*. Of the 740 members at Wesley UMC, only about 40 are *nichigo* members. The English-speaking members formerly supported the *nichigo-bu* because it was for their parents and their grandparents (the *nisei* or *issei*), who had worked hard for them as their children, and they still support it. But many Japanese American churches have no *nichigo-bu* now. Almost all the *issei* have passed away, and the *nisei* are in their late eighties, nineties, or even older.

Among the *nichigo-bu* are the *kibei-nisei*, who were born in the U.S., grew up in Japan, then came back to the U.S. There are also the "new" *issei* who moved to the U.S. after World



Wesley United Methodist Church in San Jose, California, USA

War II, and some of them have come to live in the U.S. during the past ten years. Most *nichigo* members have American citizenship. Now, 80 percent of Wesley UMC members (English-speaking and Japanese-speaking) are Japanese-Americans, but there are also Chinese and other Asian people, Caucasians, African-Americans, and bi- or multi-cultural people, too. The relationship between the English section and the *nichigo-bu* is changing. Supporting the *nichigo-bu* is becoming harder for the English-speaking members year by year. If the *nichigo-bu* exists only for the *issei* or *nisei* whose first language is Japanese, the role of the *nichigo-bu* will perhaps come to an end in the future.

The *nichigo* ministry has some difficult problems now, but it has potential. There are many Japanese-speaking people outside the church in San Jose. What is the mission of the *nichigo* ministry in regards to them? How can we find a new direction? We are asking these questions and need to find answers.

My duties at Wesley UMC are:

- 1) To serve as the *nichigo* pastor (Japanese worship, Bible study, visitation etc.);
- 2) To serve and help other Japanese-speaking church members in the San Francisco Bay Area who have no Japanese pastor at their church; and
- 3) To serve at Wesley UMC as an associate pastor (participate in English and Japanese bilingual worship services and support English-speaking committees, attending their meetings and participating in their activities).

Working here is very hard for me, and the *nichigo* ministry situation is very difficult, but I trust in God's help. Prayers for myself and Wesley UMC, both from Japan and here, are my support, my power, and my comfort. I appreciate all the support of God and the people of Christ.

*Note: In the UMC, a church with 70 attendees at worship is called a small church. A church with less than about 45 attendees at worship might have to be discontinued.



The monument in Japan Town, listing words and phrases often used by early Japanese immigrants

Hokusei Gakuen :

Founded by women missionaries on the frontier of Japan



Lft.-rt.: Alice Monk, Sarah Smith, and Elizabeth Evans as photographed in 1918

Hokusei Gakuen remembers three U.S. missionaries, in particular, as women who gave completely of themselves for the establishment of the school. Hokusei Gakuen was founded by Sarah C. Smith, who established the educational principles of the school. Following Smith, Alice M. Monk brought further development through her leadership and innovation. After World War II, Elizabeth M. Evans led the school through its transition to the newly developed national educational system. Through the work of these missionaries, Hokusei Gakuen was founded and nurtured.

Sarah C. Smith

Hokusei Gakuen is located in Sapporo, on the island of Hokkaido. Nowadays, Sapporo is called the greatest city north of Tokyo. Sarah C. Smith was assigned to Tokyo in 1880 by the Association of Presbyterian Mission International. Three years later she became ill due to the Tokyo climate and moved to Sapporo, where the climate was similar to her place of origin in New York State. She recovered within several months and remained in Sapporo to further the mission work there. She asked the mission board in her hometown for support to establish a school for girls. However, around 1880, Sapporo was still a frontier, having just been opened for development, so the board decided that it was not a suitable area to establish such a school. As the mission board determined that there was little hope of success and provided no financial support, she waited for another opportunity and moved on to Hakodate, which was a more advanced city in Hokkaido at that time.

In December 1886, Smith was invited to teach English at the Public Teacher's College of Sapporo. She accepted the position and planned to open her own school at the same time. She had gained support from people in local government as well as from the business and academic circles. As the result, she was able to open a school for girls in 1887 without the permission of her home mission board. For nearly two years, she completely supported the school through her own efforts. Afterwards, the mission board recognized her strong commitment and began supporting her.

In 1894, Smith's School for Women was renamed Hokusei Girls' School. The word *hokusei* (north star) is taken from Philippians 2:15, "Shine like stars in a dark world." Through her dedicated work in establishing the school and carrying out its educational goals, Smith left a lasting impression on her students as she shared life with them in personal ways and overcame scarcity to serve them. Overturning a forecast of "little hope of success" and defying multiple difficulties, she built a solid foundation for the school. Smith returned to America in 1931, when she was 80 years old, bringing to a close 50 years of service in Japan. During that time she had brought women's education to the frontier of Japan and spread the gospel of Christ. She had worked tirelessly to raise the level of education, culture, and morality. At her last worship service, she read the words from Romans 15:3: "For even Christ did not please himself." (NIV) These words provide a condensed summary of Smith's lifestyle.

Alice M. Monk

After working for almost 20 years following the founding of the school, Smith became concerned about the lack of missionaries,

as she was hoping to find someone she could trust to follow her. In November 1905, Alice M. Monk came to Hokusei Girls' School. Although an effort was made by Joshigakuin in Tokyo to have Monk teach at that school, she chose instead to teach at Hokusei, where conditions were less than favorable. This was when she was 33 years old, just one year after her arrival in Japan. Monk helped consolidate the educational program and worked for its expansion as well. Monk became principal in 1915, and in the same year the school was recognized by the Ministry of Education. A new site for the school was obtained in 1924; a dormitory and a missionary house were built in 1926. Then in 1929, a modern three-story frame building was completed. Today this is the site of the junior and senior high school. In 1989, as a part of the centennial celebration, the missionary house was restored to its original state. In 1998, it was registered as "tangible cultural property."

Intending to dedicate her entire life to Hokusei, Monk made plans to remain in Sapporo for the duration of her life. However, history's timing did not allow it. U.S. missionaries were told by the Japanese government to return to their country, and on August 15, 1941, Monk left Sapporo. When she returned to the U.S. she became ill and, following years of poor health, died in Washington State in 1952. She was never able to return to Sapporo.

Elizabeth M. Evans

Elizabeth Evans arrived in Hokusei in October 1911 when she was 25 years old. She came only six years after Monk, but because of the brilliance of both Smith and Monk, her distinguished service was not as noticeable. However, when Evans arrived at Hokuriku, Smith's health was not good, and because Monk assumed most of the administrative work, Evans took over much of the teaching and direct contact with the students.

In 1941, two months before all U.S. missionaries left Japan, Evans had returned for a furlough and was forced to stay in the U.S.. The war ended in 1945, and in 1946 the school was renamed Hokusei Gakuen. However, it was a mission school without missionaries. The school asked the six missionaries who had served before the war to return. In 1947, Evans answered the call. Although the war had kept her away, she returned to embody the spirit and tradition she had received directly from Smith and Monk. Evans played a major role in the restoration of the school following the war, and was named the first president of the Women's Junior College that was established in 1951. She reached retirement age six months later and returned to the U.S. in September 1951.

Evans died in Minneapolis in February 1972 at the age of 86. In accordance with her will, one-third of her estate was given to Hokusei Gakuen. This inheritance is the endowment for the Smith/Monk/ Evans Scholarships that continue to be used to help students. (Tr. JS)

—Kimura Ikumi,
Planning and Public Relations Office
Hokusei Gakuen

38th Northeast Asia Church Mission Conference Held in Sapporo

The 38th Northeast Asia Church Mission Conference was convened June 10-14 at the Sapporo City Education and Culture Hall, the 38th such conference to be held in 38 years. Local pastors and lay people in three countries—South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan—take turns raising the necessary funds and making the logistical arrangements. This year it was Japan's turn. The Japan Committee, with Pastor Miyauchi Makoto as chairperson, spent one full year, made preparations. This year the number of participants was unusually low, due to the difficult circumstances in the participating countries. Even so, there were 21 participants from Korea, 19 from Taiwan, and 25 from Japan.

The main theme of the conference was "The Advancement of the Evangelizing Church," and the subtheme was "Globalism and the Church, as seen from the Standpoint of Internet Mission." The key lecture on the main theme was given by Pastor Harita Makoto of Toriizaka Church. After each participating church's report on its current situation, church pastors and members from the three national groups discussed possibilities for more aggressive use of the Internet in mission as well as how this information could be shared more widely and put to practical use.

Harita also addressed the question of how the Internet could be used more intentionally for mission in the three countries, apart from a mere presentation of church data. He used an overhead projector to clarify his explanations, with translation provided for the Korean and Taiwanese groups. If one large website were created, he said, local churches of any size or status could use it to compare its own organization in relation to the whole church. In today's bewilderingly changing social situation, making use of this kind of communication would enable the exchange and sharing of mission programs and enable churches to keep updated and to respond quickly to opportunities and needs. This was the line of thought presented by the lecturer.

The conference consisted of worship, Bible study, and reports from the churches of each country. Elder Roh Dae Rae compiled the reports of the Korean churches, and Pastor Chuang Chin Hsin compiled the ones from Taiwan. For their Bible studies, Pastor Wang Kuo Lily from Taiwan spoke on the theme "Face Forward and Advance," focusing on Philippians 3:12-14, and Pastor Kim Dae Shik from Korea addressed the topic, "By the Name of Jesus Christ," centered on Acts 3:1-10. With the circumstances of each country needing to be taken into consideration, it was newly ascertained that to spread the Gospel word to the ends of the earth, the church must examine and question the posture of the ones who speak.

On June 13 participants separated into groups to attend worship services in Sapporo and its environs. At some churches, the Korean and Taiwanese pastors were asked to preach. A "Mission Evening" was held at Sapporo Church



Northeast Asia Church Mission Conference participants at the statue of Dr. William Clark, the 19th century missionary famous in Japan for his appeal "Boys, be Ambitious for Christ!"

to close the conference. Sakae Shinobu, principal of Towno-mori San-ai Senior High School, preached on "The Lord's Words, and His Silence," with Mark 15:1-5 as his text. At this service, participating youth from Korea and Taiwan sang and led songs of praise. This year, for the first time, a program for youth was included, with youth from Korea taking major responsibility for leading it. At the end of the evening, each country's group of participants approved a joint statement, which was read in each language.

On the second day of the conference, participants were taken to see the statue of Dr. William Clark, the first professor of Hokkaido University. (The statue is now in Hitsujigaoka Park.) Next they visited the suburban Kita Hiroshima Church, then went to Hokkaido Pioneers' Village (the historical park in Nopporo). Professor Miki Nobuhiro of Future University Hakodate made arrangements for the day's sightseeing and introduction to "Hokkaido and Christianity." During the conference, there were also times when persons other than the pastors and lay persons from participating churches in the three member nations attended for the first time and enjoyed making new friends.

The conference lasted five days, but when asked what they most desired to hear of each others' hopes, the participants from the many churches in Taiwan, Korea, and Japan were moved deeply to hope for the advance of the churches' mission work. It was that kind of conference. The next conference is projected to convene in Korea in May or June 2011. Thanks be to Christ our Lord that this year's conference could be held in Hokkaido, with the support of so many related people. (Tr. RB)

—Katsuyama Ken'ichiro, pastor
Takeoka Church, Chiba Subdistrict
Tokyo District

The General Secretary's Diary

Reviewing the District Assemblies

Between the end of April and June 26, all 17 Kyodan districts held their respective 2010 annual assemblies. There are several aspects of this year's assemblies that I would like to highlight.

1. Delegates were elected in each district for the upcoming 37th Kyodan General Assembly in late October. However, Okinawa District will again decline to send delegates to the assembly. Of course the district has its reasons for this decision, but strictly speaking, this is in violation of Article 1 of the Kyodan Bylaws and is thus very sad. Likewise, Kyoto District has joined with Okinawa District in refusing to allow an official Kyodan representative to be seated at their district assemblies. According to Article 6 of the Kyodan Constitution, the purpose of having districts is to facilitate the Kyodan's ecclesiastical functions and operations, so the presence of an official Kyodan representative provides a great opportunity for dialogue between the Kyodan and districts. Thus, I wish that such unilateral decisions would be given second thought. As a part of the body of Christ, the Kyodan functions as an orderly expression of that body. It is my profound hope that all of us would remember that fact and engage in free and open discussion, while at the same time abiding by our joint Confession of Faith and the Kyodan Constitution and Bylaws.

2. The continued decline in church membership and the accompanying financial squeeze is a serious situation that all of the districts face together. Societal factors, such as the depopulation of rural areas and the current economic hard times certainly exacerbate the problem, but we must also admit that the decline in evangelistic fervor plays a major role as well. I believe that the greatest cause of this decline is our loss of confidence in the truth as expressed in I Cor. 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." An additional concern is the peculiar understanding of the sacrament of Holy Communion held by those who insist that it is permissible to offer the sacrament to persons who are not baptized. Thus, people end up thinking that baptism is no longer necessary, and it is difficult to deny that this way of thinking contributes to the steep decline in the number of baptisms. It is certainly a situation that causes me great grief.

3. The Kyodan shows signs of a split due to issues surrounding the admonitions over differences in understandings of Holy Communion. When the church was established, especially as the Kyodan's Constitution, Bylaws, and Confession of Faith were being formulated, there was a general consensus concerning the basic doctrines of the faith. While there were differences of opinion, no one held interpretations outside the pale. The sacrament of Holy Communion is one of those basic doctrines and is thus not something that individual churches can decide to modify at their convenience. My wish is that everyone would abide by this understanding as long as they are affiliated with the Kyodan.

4. Ordination and licensing ceremonies were held in each district, and new churches were authorized in some districts. As I watched the delegates at various assemblies give their blessings to these proceedings, I was encouraged, feeling that the Living Lord was shining a light of hope on the future of the Kyodan. The difficulty of evangelization is not something that has just been encountered recently. Indeed, in one sense, it is not an overstatement to say that the entire history of the Christian church has been one of difficulty. It is my sincere desire to strengthen our cooperation as we pray together in hope for the future of evangelism within the Kyodan. (Tr. TB)

—Naito Tomeyuki, general secretary

KNL Corner

Publisher: Naito Tomeyuki

Editor: Kawakami Yoshiko *Copy Editor:* Hazel Terhune

Executive Secretary: Kato Makoto, *Staff Assistant:* Niina Tomoko

Editorial Committee: Akuzawa Tadao, Anderson Reiko,

Timothy Boyle, Ishihara Chokai, Nishio Misao,

Mira Sonntag, Tokuta Makoto

Translators: Robert Barker, Timothy Boyle,

Fusako Krummel, Joe Stroud,

Donald Van Antwerpen, Yokoyama Yoshie

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