

## Commission on Ecumenical Ministries Reviews International Interaction

The second Commission on Ecumenical Ministries meeting of the 40th General Assembly Period was held Sept. 11-12, 2017 in the Kyodan meeting room. From this time, the representative of the Japan Christian Social Work League on the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, Nagasawa Michiko, was replaced by Miyamoto Kazutake.

Proceedings began with a report by Rev. Hayashida Yoshiyuki on the Japanese Church in Kaohsiung, Taiwan about his work there, which spanned many years. This was followed by a report on overseas mission personnel that was accepted and approved, including the following notes.

- Rev. Kuyama Yasuhiko will retire from his position at Centenary United Methodist Church in Los Angeles at the end of March 2018.
- Rev. Yoshioka Yasutaka of the Sycamore Congregational Church returned to Japan from Sept. 19 through Oct. 19 to extend his visa.
- Rev. Zama Yutaka of the Vancouver United Japanese Church will complete his term on June 30, 2018.
- The Rev. Chibana Sugako will return to the Pirapo Free Methodist Church in Paraguay on Sept. 12.
- Missionary Kawai Nozomu was not able to go to his assignment at Pine United Methodist Church in San Francisco, California, USA, because his visa application was not accepted even after waiting for one year.

The main items discussed were as follows.

- 1) The memorandum of understanding concerning mission cooperation between the Gereja Masahi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM, the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa) in Indonesia and the Kyodan was reviewed. There are four GMIM churches within Kyodan (all in Kanto and Chubu districts), and the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries desires to promote this mission cooperation with GMIM.
- 2) Participants for the EMS International Youth Workshop to be held from June 27 to July 6, 2018 will be sought, but each youth will be required to contribute ¥100,000 towards expenses.
- 3) Last year, youth were sent to Taiwan and Germany, and the commission wants to continue sending Japanese youth to international places and gatherings.

At the end, CEM member Wayne Jansen shared a paper, "The Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ Working Together." (Tr. WJ)

From *Kyodan Shinpo* (*The Kyodan Times*)

—Nishinosono Michiko, secretary  
Commission on Ecumenical Ministries

## Consultation on Missionaries from Korea Convened in Japan

Representatives of three churches in Korea and two churches in Japan gathered at the Doshisha Biwako Retreat Center in Shiga Prefecture, Nov. 27-28, 2017 for a consultation on missionaries, the fourth such conference. Attendees discussed assignments of missionary personnel who are sent to serve in Kyodan churches from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, and the Korean Methodist Church. Because of their involvement with the Kyodan through the work of teachers and missionaries, the Korean Christian Church in Japan also participated in this meeting.

The consultation has previously convened three times in Japan and Korea. Agenda items include confirmation of procedures concerning the sending and receiving of missionaries, reports on the number of missionaries sent and received, and the current status of the missionaries' work.

Those attending the Nov. 27-28 meeting included one missionary personnel representative from each of the three Korean churches, KCCJ General Assembly Chairman Kim Jong-Hyun and three other KCCJ pastors, Kyodan General Assembly Secretary Kumoshikari Toshimi and Kyodan Executive Secretary Makoto Kato. Missionary Choi Jang-Soo served as interpreter for the attendees.

After a review of the contents of previous discussions, reports dealing with the sending and receiving of missionaries were presented, and participants discussed the matter of ongoing assignments. Sometime after 2018 there will be a missionary conference centered on missionaries sent to the Kyodan from these three Korean denominations and the Korean Christian Church in Japan. (Tr. DM)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

## An Eventful Visit to the Christian Evangelical Church in Indonesia

On Dec. 4, 2017 I left for a seven-day journey to visit the headquarters of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa, located on the northern tip of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. I was accompanied by Rev. Akiyama Toru, chair of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, and Rev. Fukushima Sumio, chair of the Kanto District Commission on Ecumenical Ministries.

Due to a one-hour delay in our departure from Haneda Airport in Tokyo, we had very little time for the transfer to our domestic flight to Manado. Local staff of the airline were there to guide us, but we were told not to expect the transfer of our checked luggage. It was no joke. We told them that this was their responsibility, and after further deliberation they increased personnel, found our luggage, put it and us in a taxi, and we got to the domestic terminal. However, arriving at the terminal, we found that our gate was number 26 of 28 gates in the terminal. In other words, we walked—or rather half ran—at least one kilometer to our gate. When we finally arrived at the gate, we were exhausted.

The next day we left Manado and followed a mountain road about 25 kilometers north to the town of Tomohon. We were surprised at the number of churches we saw. In other words, most of the people living in the villages must be Christians. Even as we returned at the close of the day, we saw young people gathered at the various

churches we passed, enjoying themselves. The church there is the center of community life.

Tomohon is a highland town. It is no surprise that there is only one hotel. However, there is a Bible School where 1,000 students are studying. The church also has a hospital as well as a factory for processing coconuts where 40 students are being trained. In short, the church is giving birth to industry there.

As we were returning to the hotel after a fruitful consultation at the CEC headquarters, the telephone rang. It was the travel agency, informing us that our original flight for the next day had been canceled and that the new flight would be at 11 a.m.

The next day, as we were riding the car that had been hired for our trip to the airport, we received another telephone call from the travel agency, informing us that the morning flight had also been canceled. As a result, we rushed through the lobby of the domestic flight terminal and waited in line for a taxi, where 100 taxis were lined up, to go to the international flight terminal. In the end, we were able to return to Haneda Airport as scheduled, but this was much more of an adventure than we had expected. (Tr. JS)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary  
From *Niji no Tayori*, Commission on Ecumenical Ministries

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## Nurturing Faith through “Gospel Email”

by Horioka Makiko, president

Hokuriku Gakuin Junior and Senior High School

Youth Director, Ishikawa Subdistrict Youth League, Chubu District

The ministers in Ishikawa Subdistrict have been sending out “Gospel Email” for over two years, since July 2015. This is an attempt to deliver the Gospel by email every day.

Until now I think the most frequent style of church evangelism has been: “Please come to us. If you do that you can hear the Gospel.” So people who are able to go to church on Sunday morning will receive the Gospel; but can people be expected to understand the Gospel by themselves if they are unable to attend church? The leaders of the young adult groups considered this question and began an experiment: “Let’s try to take the Gospel to those who cannot attend church and nurture our own everyday life of faith as well.”

The Gospel Email is sent to young adults on the mailing list of those expressing a desire to receive it. Normally, it is sent each morning during the six-day period of Monday through Saturday. A message from the district ministers or from a speaker invited by the young adults’ training session is sent to each young adult’s smart phone or cell phone. The message is intended to be 1) short, 2) made for that

one day, and 3) speaking the Gospel to the young people in that district. At this point, there are about 50 young adults receiving the email.

At present, “delivery” itself is most important, so the process has not reached the point of the sender and the receiver (a person who received the email) sharing their thoughts. There has been a period of give-and-take, but the number of contributors is limited. And if the content of the writing is long, preparation becomes complex, so the group is concentrating on “delivery.”

Essentially, there is joy in hearing the Gospel together with others, so we are hoping that in the future, even outside the tool of email, an opportunity will be created for young people to talk about the Gospel daily. A freshness of new ideas is needed to move beyond the mere tediousness of sending the email in order to continue and have the strength to deliver the Gospel. Nevertheless one day at a time, they are continuing to spread the gospel. (Tr. RT)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers’ Friend), November 2017 issue

## Laypersons with a Priestly Calling: Guiding Newcomers

by Ogasawara Akihiro, member  
Ofunato Church, Iwate Prefecture, Ou District

I entered Tohoku Gakuin University in 1980 and through God's guidance joined the men's glee club, where I had my first contact with hymns and religious music. I also studied the Bible, but only for class credit, without believing in God's teaching; so as I approached graduation, I put my Bible and hymnal on the back of my bookshelf.

On March 11, 2011, the giant tsunami caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake descended on the Sanriku coast of Iwate Prefecture, and both the house in Kamishi where I grew up and my house in Rikuzen Takata were washed away. I could not even cry at the sight of the hellish scene before my eyes.

In the whirl of the first year-and-a-half afterwards, my body and mind did not function normally, and I continued to experience insomnia. Somehow I was able to do my job, though completely exhausted when I got home, so I distracted myself with alcohol. I commuted to Kyoto to pray at shrines and also prayed at temples, but even when I did that, after ten days or so, I felt the same as before.

One day, I went to Tsuchizawa Church in Hanamaki to pick up some relief supplies. My wife's parents often performed ventriloquism there as volunteers. When I told the pastor that my Bible had been washed away, she gladly gave me one of the church's Bibles and hymnals. When I got home I casually opened the Bible, and the first thing that jumped out at me were the words in Matthew 6:25-34 "do not worry."

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. . . . So, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today." (NRSV)

At that moment I heard the Word of God. I felt strongly, "I need to go to church!" and I could not stop crying. Ofunato Church warmly welcomed someone like me into their church. I started attending services with my wife, who had been baptized in her youth, and eventually I too was baptized.

A little more than a year later, a man with whom Ofunato Church Pastor Muraya Masahito had previously served as a volunteer probation officer started coming to church. With a record of more than 10 offenses, he was out of prison on parole. Pastor Muraya then asked my wife and me if we would help guide him as he prepared for baptism. It is the custom at Ofunato Church

for members to take the lead in preparing others for baptism. Nevertheless, we were flabbergasted to receive this request when we had only been attending the church for a little over a year. However, if it is God's mission, you cannot refuse, so we accepted.

This man had a home and a wife and children, but he was living in a room in the church. Pastor Muraya looked after him every day, and from time to time I would go to the church and talk about the Bible and other things with him. He was a hard worker, doing routine tasks around the church like cutting grass and clearing trees and bushes on the hill behind the church. He even helped at an NPO in the city. You would often see him reading the Bible, and at Christmas he made a detailed plan for the church illumination lights. I even bought a radio and gave it to him so he could listen to the Christian broadcast FEBC every evening. He deepened his understanding of the contents of the Bible, and his preparation for baptism seemed to be going smoothly. If he successfully completed his period of parole, his sentence would be complete. However, when he had only a few days left in his parole, he ran away with a woman he had met at his workplace. He was quickly found and sent back to prison. After that, he finished his sentence, but he never came back to the church.

What happened to the positive attitude he seemed to have had? My wife and I wondered if there had been something wrong with the guidance we gave him, and we spent our days questioning God about this. But this was not the end. Now the church is involved with a boy on temporary release from a juvenile correctional facility. At the same time, someone who had been shepherded through preparation for baptism by other church members was baptized on Pentecost Sunday in 2017.

Pastoral care or preparation for baptism are not only the job of the pastor. Ordinary members also have roles as laypersons, jobs that only laypersons can do. We are not transferred as pastors are, so we can continue to guide those who come to church for the first time. We are to become "the salt of the earth" and believe in God and that we are certain to bear fruit. With this in mind, I want to continue to reach out to new people who come to church. Amen. (Tr. DB)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend),  
October 2017 issue  
Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko

## 20 Years of Mutual Care Ministry

by Suzuki Mikio, member

Nishi-chiba Church, Chiba Subdistrict, Tokyo District

Mutual Care Ministry is a program of Nishi-chiba Church that provides care for the elderly. Preparation for this program was carefully done through workshops and questionnaires before it was launched in 1997. It marked its 20th year in 2017. At the beginning, the services were limited to 1) visiting people in their places of residence, 2) helping with household chores, and 3) helping with travel to and from hospitals and clinics.

These services were provided to those who applied for them, with the church being reimbursed for the actual expenses for items 2) and 3) above. We were a volunteer organization of 45 people, including 12 committee members, and we continued to think about the meaning of these activities. Our booklet Mutual Care was written around that time with Galatians 6:10 printed on the cover: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." This idea is the basis of our ministry.

I can recall receiving these words of encouragement from Rev. Gudrun Scheer, the missionary who served as the pastor of this church and who directed its ministry from the beginning. "Some people distance themselves from the rest of the group because they are afraid of becoming an inconvenience. However, love, service, and sharing in fellowship are at the heart of what the church is all about. By putting these into practice, both those who receive care and those who give care come together as the family of God and become the driving force of evangelism. The best volunteers are those who request care. Those who request care give something to live for, and give joy to those who give care. Those who feel that they are just useless are actually God's gift to the rest of us."

There is a coordinator who chooses and sends volunteers to those who apply for care. The present coordinator is the fourth person to hold that position. Our organizational structure has been improved by doing such things as appointing a committee chairperson whose main roles are leading committee meetings, preparing workshops, and negotiating with other organizations.

A committee meeting is held once every three months. First, we hear reports about the care given and discuss any problems there might be. Second, we discuss the content of workshops. Third, we make sure we really understand the circumstances of elderly people. From the beginning, these words were inscribed upon the hearts of the committee members: "There is a limit to the goodness of people. If we rely on people alone, we will all fail together. No matter what, we must have Jesus standing among us."

Missionary Scheer presented lectures at least ten times. We also have workshops once or twice a year, led by a specialist either from inside or outside the church. This learning experience is open not only to the approximately 60 volunteers but also to all church members. We study such topics as:

1. Specific directives on how to visit people in their places of residence, help with housekeeping and travel to and from hospitals, and read to people over the telephone;
2. How the public eldercare system works, and the situation of public eldercare in general;
3. The reality of the emotions, bodies, and lifestyles of elderly people;
4. The spirit of mutual care; and
5. Various activities that can delay aging.

We have implemented these various activities, making adjustments along the way. Recently the volunteers themselves are progressively getting older, so we are diligently researching the fifth topic above.

For the church worship service and other meetings, "protective assistance" has also been added. Recently, public nursing has become a complete system. Taking into account the fact that the volunteers are also getting older, help with housekeeping and help with going to and from the hospital is our response only when there is an emergency. Basically, the help we provide is in the form of introducing people to places like the regional comprehensive support center.

Currently, the main activity is visiting people in their places of residence. Most of the people who receive care are residents in a facility. Volunteers always ask them how they are doing, listen to what they say, sing their favorite hymns with them (the popular hymns being "Jesus Loves Me" and "What A Friend We Have In Jesus"), and pray with them. The cognitive functions of some people have declined, but we remember that they are companions who at one time participated in church activities together with us. Volunteers visit them and listen, even if it is something they have heard many times. Volunteers all experience the joy that comes from putting your face close to someone, holding hands, and praying together.

Sometimes volunteers also talk with family members of the elderly people and with the other people in the facility. We keep in mind that visitation by church members plays an important role in connecting our church with the families and with the facility.

This ministry has continued for 20 years, and the effect of its fruit has spread throughout our church. Awareness has formed among church members to inquire about each other's health. In every home meeting as well as in groups of elderly men and groups of elderly women, friends check up on each other. This has become the most important part of the reports during the regular monthly meetings.

There will be more and more people who, even though they want to come to church, cannot attend because of their advancing age. We must never forget even one such companion. At all times, every step of the way, we want to put love into practice so that each one will be inside the church's circle of fellowship until the end. To do that, we continually receive encouragement from the Great Shepherd Jesus Christ, who leads us. We pray that our ministry can go forward humbly. (Tr. KT)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), November 2017 issue  
Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko

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## Hiroshima Christian Center's 60th Anniversary Celebration Plans

It has been 60 years since Hiroshima Christian Center was built at its present location in 1957. Programs directed at evangelistic outreach to the area, fighting against buraku discrimination, and especially programs for children had already been begun before World War II by missionaries from the US and local Christians living in the area, but the major part of the center's founding work was done by Mary Francis Jones, a missionary. The current building is the upgraded version of what was constructed with contributions from the Methodist Women's Society in the US. In the literary text of the Cornerstone Ceremony, Jones wrote: "All the people of Hiroshima, through a new spiritual birth, are all equal persons, and our desire is that their God-given personalities and rights will be mutually recognized."

Now is the time when we must hereafter reaffirm this message. This desire and prayer has been expanded to include a nursery school, childhood education and care for the elderly, and from last year, the additional undertaking of providing meals, tutoring, and other services for children caught in difficult living situations. These all show how the needs of the area in each era are being sincerely addressed.

Commemorative activities included a worship service led by Director Nishijima Yoshihiro and a concert by the Kontrapunkt Ensemble (an orchestra comprised of



The Kontrapunkt Ensemble

Japanese and Korean people living in Hiroshima who use Western instruments and instruments originally from the Korean Peninsula). This was followed by a refreshing time of fellowship with homemade sweets made by the staff and greetings from those who attended. The 82 attendees were people from churches, former employees, and related persons in the area. Including the staff, there were 106 people present, so it was a successful event. We thank God and all the people who supported us as we look forward in hope to new activities and renovation. (Tr. RT)

—Rev. Nishijima Yoshihiro, pastor,  
Hiroshima Ushita Church

From *Hiroshima District Newsletter*, Issue No. 116: "Peace Sunday"

## In Remembrance of Kyodan Pastor Ninomiya Tadahiro

by Rev. Paicu Yasiyungu, (An Shu-Mei)  
Le-ye (Lalauya) Church, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

On Oct. 27, 2017, Rev. Ninomiya Tadahiro left our midst and returned to his Heavenly Father's home. The cremation service took place at 9 a.m., Nov. 3, at Chayi City Mortuary Hall, followed by cremation at 10 a.m. A memorial service was held at 10 a.m. on Nov. 18 at Le-ye (Lalauya) Church. Ninomiya was born in Miyakonojo, Miyazaki Prefecture, on Dec. 14, 1940. His parents were Ninomiya Hiroshi and Fumi, and he had two younger sisters: Rumiko, who lives in Gifu, and Mikako, who lives in Germany. When he was a child, his aunt (Ms. Inouye) took him together with his two sisters to church school at Kyodan Miyakonojo Johnan Church (founded in 1887) and through that became involved with church activities. During his college years, he became active in Fukuoka Watanabedori Church (founded in 1910) and received baptism there. Even though he was the first Christian in the Ninomiya family, he was happy to dedicate his life to following Jesus Christ and becoming an evangelist.

On Dec. 29, 1988, he married Paicu Yasiyungu, of the Tsou people of Taiwan, and they raised three daughters. The oldest, Yangui, is presently working on her PhD at the National Chengchi (Political) University in Taiwan, after earning her Master's Degree at Hiroshima University. The middle daughter, Motoyu, is working for a Japanese company in Taipei, and the youngest daughter, Taomi, is a senior at the same university as Yangui. This year, our family experienced its first Christmas without our father and husband, so it was a lonely one indeed.

We give thanks to God for his life. He loved God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as he protected his family



The Ninomiya's daughters, lft-rt.: Taomi (youngest),  
Yangui (oldest), Motoyu (second oldest)

for 29 years of married life, and as a father for 27 years, always giving his children the very best. He taught his children to read the Bible and pray before meals, and after we came to Japan, he led our family worship time every week, where we learned Japanese hymns. He also taught us Japanese children's stories. We learned to play the piano in Japan, but only because he dedicated two hours each time to take us to our lessons, so his daughters all serve in their churches as musicians.

We give thanks to God for his life. He became the husband of a tribal woman in Taiwan, wearing the traditional

(Cont'd on p. 8)

## Acting General Secretary's Report:

### District Moderators Consider Issues of Church Evangelism

It has been a year since I began writing these notes "Acting General Secretary's Report" and this one will be my last. As of April 2018, Rev. Akiyama Toru, chair of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries and pastor of Ageo Godo Church in Kanto District, will begin serving in the capacity of general secretary, so he will write "General Secretary's Report" for the next issue of KNL.

During the second week in Advent, on Dec. 11-12, 2017, Kyodan district moderators gathered in Atami (Shizuoka) at "Heartpia Atami," under the auspices of the Committee on Evangelism Strategy. The 26 participants from 16 districts began the conference by asking each other about the condition of evangelism in their respective districts. With the exception of Okinawa District, which did not send a representative, the district moderators shared reports on the condition of evangelism in their districts and the various issues they are facing. While urban and rural areas face different issues, together they face the common issues of declining numbers and financial pressures. They all came to a common understanding that these issues are not ones that individual districts can handle on their own but that these need to be dealt with by the Kyodan as a whole. Having received these reports, the second day of the conference centered on the response that is needed. Some moderators emphasized that there is no clear vision of who we are trying to reach, but we all were in agreement that it is not the Kyodan as a whole or the districts that are at the center of evangelistic efforts; it is the local churches. Thus, the increase of our evangelistic strength must come through local churches increasing their abilities and efforts. So, with the backing of the Kyodan and the districts, we hope to develop ways of encouraging and facilitating local church efforts to meet this need.

(Cont'd from p. 7)

costume of the Tsou people at the wedding and giving Tsou names to his children.

We give thanks to God for his life. As a means of affirming the tribal recognition movement of native peoples of Taiwan, he always addressed the students at the seminary by their tribal names.

I give thanks to God for his life. He always supported me and prayed for me as I served in the life of the church. He was a child, a husband, a father, and a brother in Christ who loved Jesus. He showed great filial piety to his parents, and he was a faithful husband, a loving father, and a compassionate brother in Christ. (Tr. TB)

Looking ahead, the Kyodan Mission Planning Conference will be held at Fujimicho Church in Tokyo, March 5-6. The theme will be, "What does Evangelism in Japan Mean in the Context of the Basic Mission Plan?" The Kyodan established its "Basic Mission Plan," as based on its "Basic Theory of Mission" back in 1963, and it has not been modified since then. During the 37th General Assembly Period (October 2010–September 2012), work began on a "Revised Basic Mission Plan," but the Kyodan as a whole has still made no decision on this. While the focus of this conference will not be on that per se, I believe that this is an important opportunity for us to reconfirm our basic direction as we consider anew what Japanese evangelism means in today's context.

The Kyodan has endured a long period of struggles, and while we have made certain gains in regards to our understanding of evangelism, we have also experienced loss in other areas. Reconsidering our "Mission Theory," based on trust and the unity of a common confession of faith and the Kyodan Bylaws, is a critical need. It is my prayer that this will be a fruitful conference in fulfilling that end.

May the grace and blessings of Jesus Christ be upon all of you abundantly in this New Year! (Tr. TB)

—Acting General Secretary Dohke Norikazu  
Executive Secretary of General Affairs

#### KNL Corner

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