

Executive Council Considers Restructuring Proposals

The 4th Executive Council meeting of the 40th General Assembly Period (2016-18) was held Feb. 5-6 at the Kyodan headquarters, with 26 members present. Executive Secretary and Acting General Secretary Dohke Norikazu gave the general secretary's report, in which he reported that 80,720,000 yen was sent to five churches as part of the relief efforts following the Kumamoto-Oita earthquake.

Commission on Ecumenical Ministries' Executive Secretary Kato Makoto then reported that about two-thirds of the approximately 40 schools that are members of the Mission Schools Council have no resident missionary at present and thus are appealing for missionaries. He also reported that while the office of the Committee on Continuing Relief Strategy for the Great East Japan Disaster will close its office in March 2018, committee members will continue to commute from Sendai to continue their work.

Next, during the report of the Committee on Evangelism Strategy, Chair Sasaki Michio explained the interim report of the subcommittee that was established to look into structure and finances.

- Its recommendation is to revise the original proposal to have each division debate and decide its own plan. Instead, all items related to Kyodan restructuring and finances would be decided by one committee.

- Likewise, in order to reduce costs, no special commission (task force) will be established, and the number of committee members will be reduced. The present committee will be restructured and a general affairs section and evangelism section established.

- The General Assembly will become a body that deals mainly with legally required agenda items over a two-day period in a format of about 200 delegates so that church facilities will be adequate.

- Other agenda items will be dealt with in a separate meeting of the Mission Policy Conference, which will then be passed through the Executive Council to the General Assembly for ratification.

- A fund called the "Nationwide Evangelism Promotion Fund" will be established to strengthen local churches and help churches that have not reached a certain level.

These changes are being made to reflect the average loss of yearly income of some 5 million yen, and thus the goal is to decrease the overall church apportionments from 250 million yen to 200 million per year and the annual personnel costs from 150 million to 100 million yen so that it is sustainable over the next ten years.

The matter of shared expenses for the National Christian Council in Japan was also discussed, and Moderator Ishibashi proposed that the Kyodan increase its contribution by 900,000 yen to make it a total of 9 million yen. The Kyodan discusses its portion on a yearly basis, although the NCCJ's General Assembly decides on a three-year budget that does not change over its three-year general assembly period. Thus, there is a mismatch, which is why this proposal was made. Commission on Finance Chair Aizawa Toyoshige then reported his committee's opinion that no supplementary budget be made when an item is going over budget, for clarification purposes.

(Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

A Visit with Kyodan Missionaries in Belgium and Germany

by Kato Makoto, executive secretary

From Jan. 12 through Jan. 19, I visited Brussels, Belgium and Cologne, Germany. Rev. Kawakami Masaki and her husband Rev. Kawakami Yasushi were assigned as missionaries to the Brussels Japanese Protestant Church in April 2017. I visited them and preached at the church on Sunday. Further, I participated in an evaluation held by the Belgian Evangelical Mission (BEM), the body that receives our missionaries. The word "evaluation" may sound somewhat pretentious, but it was a very thoughtful interview.

BEM is a devoted missionary group mainly consisting of British Christians who share the Gospel with Belgians and establish new churches. Having had to learn French to share the Gospel, they have experienced difficulty and loneliness, but they have also experienced the joy of growth. I was invited to join the Kawakamis in this evaluation, where we shared our joys and struggles together. "What is the ultimate joy of mission? When you are at your lowest, what do you do? What do you think of the church look like in five years?" These were some of the questions that we considered together. Because both Japanese missionaries are BEM colleagues as well as personnel for whom BEM has visa responsibilities, serious discussion continued for about two hours.

The "Thalys" is a super express train that enables a convenient overland trip from Brussels to Cologne and Dusseldorf. However, three years ago, there was a robbery at Brussels South Station that affected many people. I was one of those people.

While visiting Cologne, I attended a house meeting of the Cologne-Bonn Japanese Church with Rev. Sasaki Ryoko. At its congregational general meeting in January, this church voted to extend its ministry until 2022.

In the past, the Rheinland Church took responsibility for the salary of the missionary assigned to Cologne-Bonn Japanese Church. However, since the assignment of Rev. Saito Atsushi (from April 2012 to March 2015), the responsibility has been taken over by Cologne-Bonn Japanese Church, together with a support group.

At the smaller Brussels Japanese Protestant Church, its support group has an even larger financial responsibility. However, the missionaries, their churches, and their support groups remain committed to Jesus' command, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." (Matt. 28:19a) (Tr. JS)

Two Kyodan Missionaries Commissioned for Service

The Commissioning Service for missionary Takai-Heller Yuki took place on Feb. 11, 2018 at Ofuna Church under the auspices of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries. Commission Secretary Nishinosono Michiko presided, and commission member Park Heon-Wook gave the sermon. Takai-Heller was sent to Taiwan in March, where she will do research in Tainan until September and then assume a position at the Tainan Theological College and Seminary as a lay missionary. Her field of study is the history of Christianity in Taiwan, specializing in Protestant Christian history during the period when Japan ruled Taiwan. Tainan Theological College and Seminary itself refused to acquiesce to the requirement imposed on it by the Japanese government in July 1940 that all schools must have Japanese leadership and closed its doors instead. As one manifestation of our repentance before God and the world for this grave error during Japanese occupation, the Kyodan has been sending missionaries to this school. As we deepen our mutual connections, we aim towards reconciliation through cooperation and see this as one step in realizing our mutual mission agreement.

—Hironaka Yoshimi, staff
Commission on Ecumenical Ministries

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The Commissioning Service for missionary Ueda Yoko took place on Feb. 25, 2018 at Union Japanese Church of Westchester in the northern suburbs of New York City. Kato Makoto, executive secretary of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, presided over the service, with Akiyama Toru, chair of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, giving the sermon. Normally, such a commissioning service takes place in Japan, but because Ueda was already living in New York, it was decided to do both his commissioning service as well as his installation service as pastor of Union Japanese Church in New York. Union Japanese Church was begun by the Special Ministry to Japanese with only two regular members and two associate members. It meets in space provided by Hitchcock Presbyterian Church and is also supported by the UMC and RCA denominations at the local district level. As a part of its outreach, Hitchcock Church provides English language classes for non-native speakers of English, and many Japanese are included among the 70 participants in the weekly classes. Ueda takes advantage of this opportunity by participating in the class and, through this and the website he set up, publicizes the new Japanese church among the Japanese people living in the area. If you are ever in the vicinity, please stop by. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

My Second Post-disaster Visit to Sendai: A Call to Action

by Shimozono Hitomi, second-year student at Tokyo Metropolitan University,
Member, Tsurukawa Church, Nishi Tokyo District

In 2017, I participated in the Student Christian Fellowship's Sendai Camp with 15 fellow SCF members. It was my second visit to Sendai since the disaster. The first time was in May 2013, when I was in ninth grade. Seeking to know how Sendai (a city I had enjoyed visiting while on vacation as a five-year-old) had changed after the 2011 quake, I traveled with my father and visited Sendai and Ishinomaki. Throughout the city the atmosphere was sad and, indeed, very little reconstruction had been completed. A vast area of land, from which everything had been washed away, spread out in one direction, though when I looked in another direction, I saw a mountain of rubble so huge that I had to look up to see the top of it. The feeling of my heart being torn apart, after witnessing the aftermath of the quake with my own eyes, is something I remember vividly to this day.

When I visited Sendai in March 2017, six years after the disaster, I expected the city still to be overwhelmed with sadness. It was just one day prior to the March 11 anniversary. However, to my surprise, when I arrived at Sendai Station, the bustling atmosphere resembled that of Tokyo. Though, on the one hand, I was relieved that the people of Sendai seemed to be looking ahead, I also felt a bit distressed that the atmosphere now being created in Sendai seemed to convey the impression that “nothing had happened.”

I met five Sendai Student Youth Center (SSC) members at this year's camp. I heard that, previously, camp participants numbered in the dozens, but that following the disaster, the number of participants decreased dramatically. Furthermore, those participating this year did not talk much about the earthquake but rather about problems we were experiencing in looking for jobs, going to college—topics similar to those we usually talked about at SCF meetings. On March 11, during our walk from Arai Station to Arahama beach after taking the train from Sendai Station to Arai Station, we stopped to visit both the Sendai March 11 Memorial Community Center, (a place dedicated to educating people about the Great East Japan Disaster) and the Arahama Elementary School (which has been preserved as a historical monument).

During these visits I realized there is no way that the people here could possibly be living as though nothing had happened. Though the rubble had been removed and the damage was becoming less and less obvious, it was still clearly evident just how high the water level had



Praying together at Arahama Beach on March 11, 2017 at 2:46 p.m., the time the earthquake struck in 2011

risen at the elementary school. When I saw the families mourning and staring offshore with their arms around each other, I realized once again that the survivors were indeed doing their best to carry on with their lives each day while, nevertheless at the same time, seeking to fill what must have felt like a large hole in the heart of each one of them. Furthermore, after seeing the way they were living, it became painfully clear to me how extraordinary a day March 11 had been for them. Six years after the earthquake, two things appeared to be especially evident, viz., on the one hand, the persistence of the survivors' seemingly endless sense of sadness, but on the other, the survivors' determination to live another year to the fullest.

As I look back on that Sendai Camp, I came to realize that I had, in my mind, unwittingly been separating the stricken area (Sendai) from Tokyo. In our daily lives, even when we think about how survivors such as these are doing, if we take no action, it is human nature that we will gradually forget what has happened. At Arahama, we all prayed together, silently asking God, “Please give us the strength to work hard in everything we do, starting tomorrow.” Had I not visited Sendai, my prayer may merely have been, “Please heal the souls of the survivors.”

Although the work of the SSC has been suspended and, for this reason also, the status of the Sendai Camp may also be changed, I hope to continue my visits to Tohoku each year on March 11. (Tr. DM)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend),
February 2018 issue

Feeling the Breath of God through Biotechnology

by Ueno Keiichiro, head of Research Planning
Kagoshima Prefectural Institute for Agricultural Development
Member, Kagoshima Kajiyacho Church, Kyushu District

My parents met each other through the *mukyokai* (non-church) movement's nationwide *aino* (meaning "love agriculture") agricultural activities. So I grew up watching my father engaged in farming, with him sometimes being in tears while at other times singing hymns. Also, my hometown of Fukuoka in Kyushu was rich in natural beauty, and I was fascinated by the beautiful world that God had made, so I chose to study science. My goal was to go to a university in Hokkaido, but the school I was able to get into was down south, in Kagoshima, where I studied agriculture for six years. During that time, I met my wife at an event that was attended by young people from several churches, and then we got married. I put down roots as an agricultural researcher of Kagoshima Prefecture, and I have been here in Kagoshima ever since.

Because I am the eldest son in my family, even after I got married and got a job, I thought about returning to Fukuoka. However, I kept in mind the words of my parents. "What you can save by returning to your hometown is only our household, just one farming family. You must do work in Kagoshima, as that will bring joy to many farming families."

That is how I became engaged in my job as a researcher. For many years, I have been working on using biotechnology to produce improved varieties of chrysanthemums, sweet potatoes, and other types of produce. I think there are many people who, when they hear the word "biotechnology," feel that it is against the laws of nature, or that it infringes on God's domain. However, biotechnology is something that draws out the power that living things originally possess. Whenever we encounter some new knowledge or discovery, we can become more skillful in realizing the depth and splendor of God's creation. And we can feel the breath of God.

To give a concrete example, from autumn until spring, one can see white ring chrysanthemums at flower shops and funeral homes all over Japan. Those chrysanthemums are mostly a variety called *jinme*, (literally "sacred horse.") They are pure white and beautiful, but it is necessary to remove the side sprouts one by one by hand, which is a very time-consuming task. So I began my research by producing thousands of chrysanthemums from the leaves of *jinme* chrysanthemums and then choosing only the best of those. Among the types I chose, two varieties had few side sprouts, making the task of removing them much easier. Then I started to have a little fun with the words. I said, "Now we have a new *jinme*." I took the word "now," which is *ima* in Japanese, and the *jin* of *jinme*, and put them together to make *imajin* (which is how the English word "imagine" is transliterated into Japanese). Then I took the word "new," which is *ara* in Japanese, and the *jin* of *jinme*, and put them together to make *arajin* (which is how "Aladdin" is transliterated). I called the two new varieties "Imagine" and "Aladdin." The flower of Aladdin is big,

and this new type of *jinme* is now being produced all over the country, as if it really did come out of a magic lamp!

Ten years ago, I relocated to Tanegashima Island. At that time, though it was the beginning of the sweet potato boom, the quality and yield size were unstable. Through repeated research, we developed a way to stabilize the yield and provide a steady flow of healthy, excellent seedlings to farming families. Now, moist Anno sweet potatoes are lined up in stores all over Japan. I am so happy that people appreciate the delicious flavor of the authentic Anno sweet potatoes produced in Tanegashima.

This kind of achievement is greatly influenced by the presence of the members who worked together with us. It is not just about research and technology. When many people—including municipalities, agricultural cooperatives, and producers—combine their efforts, they can create something new. In the same way, my life was greatly influenced by getting to know my research companions. Thirty years ago I made some friends from all over the country when I went to Tsukuba for training to learn biotechnology, and this experience resulted in me going to America 20 years ago to study for one year. It was my first time to live overseas in an unfamiliar place, and I was so anxious. However, when I found out that it was the same city as Amherst College, where William Smith Clark had served as president, and where Uchimura Kanzo and Nijima Jo (also known as Joseph Hardy Neeshima) had studied as international students, it impacted me greatly. I felt that God was telling me this about my life: "You did not choose me, but I chose you." (John 15:16) I realized that God's plan, though it may start out as just a point, the point becomes a line, the line becomes a plane, the plane becomes a solid, and God's plan transcends the dimensions and comes close to us. God said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." As for me, I left my household in Fukuoka, and now I can finally accept that these words are also about myself.

The church I belong to, Kagoshima Kajiyacho Church, operates a kindergarten called Keiai Yochien on the same property. My wife was a teacher there, so I also got involved in the events at both the church and the kindergarten. Again this year (2017), I am on the committee in charge of the Christmas events. The candlelight service, complete with the sound of the pipe organ playing hymns, has been held on Dec. 24 in the evening, every year. This event has a 40-year history. Including visitors, more than 250 people attend this event, which is more than three times as many as attend our normal worship service. The sanctuary is overflowing with God's blessings! Christmas is a time to wait expectantly for the Lord of reconciliation, blessing, and peace. This year's theme is "Joyful News From Heaven." We want to prepare to spread the joyful news to as many people as possible! (Tr. KT)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), December 2017 issue

500th Reformation Anniversary Celebrated by Tokyo District

On Oct. 9, 2017, the Tokyo District 500th Year Reformation Commemoration and Gospel Evangelism Convention was held in Goucher Memorial Chapel at Aoyama Gakuin University. Sponsored jointly by Tokyo District and the Tokyo Association of Laypersons, the convention was planned as an event to commemorate the Reformation, calling together not only churches in Tokyo but also the various churches in the suburbs. It was a half-day meeting, structured in three parts.

For the first part, "Commemorative Worship," Yamakita Nobuhisa, chair of the Kyodan Board of Publication's Board of Directors, gave the message. He informed us that looking back at the amazement and love revealed in the meeting of Jesus with the paralyzed man and his four friends can be seen as the basis of what occurs in the midst of present-day progress and not just what occurred during the Reformation in the past.

"The Commemorative Concert," the second part, was performed by the Japan Bach Collegium. Suzuki Masato led the group with their four soloists, accompanied

by organ, as they presented Bach compositions. With the guidance of Suzuki's commentary between the compositions, we were able to trace the praise of the churches born during the Reformation. At the end of the concert, the performers and concert attendees united their voices in praise, singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

In the third part, the "Sharing Time," reports were presented by Kyodan youth participants in both the Japan/Germany and Japan/Taiwan Youth Mission programs, and an appeal was made for the Kyodan Young Adult Convention to be held in the spring of 2018.

It was a large gathering, even for the Tokyo District, as there were 150 churches represented among the 822 participants. There were 126 participants who did not register a church affiliation, so there were probably many seekers and future believers among them. This not only will bring encouragement to pastors and believers but also appropriately relates to Gospel evangelism! (Tr. RT)

—From *Kyodan Shinpo* (*The Kyodan Times*) No.4872

Tokyo Youth Plan First Ecumenical Program (EcuPro) in 2017

by Sugino Nozomi, member of Tokyo Kiyose Catholic Church Representative, Ecumenical Project Executive Committee

The youth of the Tokyo area—Catholic, Japan Evangelical Lutheran, and Kyodan—have had some connection with each other by attending each other's events over the years. In that connection, we (the youth of the Tokyo area churches) decided to do something together on this 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

It was this initiative that became the genesis of "EcuPro" (short for Ecumenical Program, which is an inter-denominational gathering of young people). The first official EcuPro event was held at Seijo Catholic Church in Tokyo on Aug. 19, 2017 with over 120 people in attendance, and we were able to schedule a meeting for 2018.

We realized that we probably have not known enough about each other, including our faith. As one of the founders of EcuPro, I realize that this became part of our motivation. In an era when there is violence and repression in the name of religion, we considered that perhaps it is important for our generation to understand our religion correctly and to try to understand each other. We felt it necessary, especially at this historic milestone, for the young people to come together.

The Ecumenical Project Executive Committee was established in February 2017. We planned "joint worship" and "conversation sessions" as the two pillars of this effort.

In planning a joint worship service, the most difficult thing was the matter of the sacrament of communion, which the Catholic Church calls the Eucharist. We recognize that it might have seemed reckless for us as immature young people to tackle this question of communal sacrament, which has been a challenge all around the world. But this is precisely why we came to consider this a most appropriate theme for working toward a mutual understanding of the contours of our faith.

Our long discussion resulted in the decision not to hold the sacrament together during worship but to share bread together. However, when we sat at table together, it was indeed a precious time. We would learn about the differences between us. We could make something together, and we could experience at least in some small scale what is so hoped for in ecumenical work.

The 2017 program consisted of a joint worship service, "sharing bread" (the huge loaf we had all baked together), and a conversation session. On the platform at the service were Kyodan pastors, Catholic priests and sisters, and Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church pastors. Together we deepened our understanding of our various denominations and shared our common challenges and hints for Christian living. (Tr. NB)

—From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), December 2017 issue

Ways to Bring Churches Together: Three Examples

The following examples of efforts to bring churches together were shared by a city church, a church in the far-reaching Hokkaido region, and a church inviting the participation of its local community. These appeared in three separate *Shinto no Tomo* articles that were condensed by the KNL Editorial Committee.

I. Children of Churches Deepen Friendship

by Oshio Hikaru, pastor
Kamata Shinsei Church, Tokyo District

For the past 50 years, Tokyo District’s Minami (southern) Subdistrict has held an annual "Sports Day" to promote friendship among members of local church schools. One extant record shows that in 1977, 442 children from 12 churches gathered for this event. As this event was held outdoors until 2000, there were times when inclement weather caused cancellations. Since 2001, however, we have been using the gymnasium of Tamagawa Seigakuin, making weather irrelevant. Of the 160 participants from nine churches who attended the Sept. 24, 2017 event, about 100 were children, ranging from toddlers to high school students. We played six games, including charades, *tamaokuri* (using spoons to pass a ping pong ball along a line), *tamaire* (throwing balls or beanbags into a basket on a high pole), and so on. Then we separated into “children’s relay” for elementary and younger children and “adults’ relay” for middle school and older participants. Each person had to run once around the gym. All did their best.

In earlier days, we awarded points to competing churches, but the opinion surfaced that competition is not in line with deepening fellowship, and so each church divides its members into white and red teams, with the only competition now being in relay races. So this year, most events included all members with no



A participant's card
Lft:
Playing *tamaire* (piling up treasures in heaven)

competition between churches, and the relay race was divided into red and white teams. In this way, even if there is only one participant from a particular church, that person will not be competing alone. Through this way of holding our Sports Day, children are made aware of the vertical relationship with God and the lateral relationship with other friends under God.

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), December 2017 issue

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II. Stamp Rally*

by Han, Soohyeon, pastor
Asahikawa Tomioka Church, Hokkai District

Hokkai District’s Dohoku (northern) Subdistrict is made up of ten churches and the Dohoku Mission Support Christian Center. Three churches are located within seven kilometers of Asahikawa City’s center. The other churches are 30 to 80 kilometers away from Asahikawa, and the northernmost, Wakkanai Church, is 160 kilometers away. In such a broad area—especially one that experiences harsh winters—it is particularly important for churches to have a sense of connection. It was suggested at our November 2015 subdistrict meeting that we “hold a Stamp Rally as a fun way of connecting churches with each other.” So we took up



Asahikawa Toyooka Church's stamp

Lft:
A full Stamp Rally Card, showing that all churches were visited

the challenge and passed out Stamp Rally cards from May to gather stamps from the 16 places named in the "Dohoku Subdistrict Stamp Rally."

On the Stamp Rally card are the ten churches, the Christian Center, the Ainu Information Center that is located inside one of the small churches, and the names of gatherings in Dohoku Subdistrict. People can get their cards stamped for participating in worship services or gatherings at the locations listed. As we wish to strengthen our ties with distant churches, participants got two blanks stamped for going to distant churches.

We prepared rubber stamps for each church. For example, the Asahikawa Tomioka Church stamp was created from a combination of its children's drawings of their own faces. Various prizes were given according to the number of stamp impressions acquired, and participants were recognized at the Dohoku Subdistrict Gathering in October. Goda Mitsuyuki was recognized for completing the card in four months. Goda lives next door to one of the small churches without a pastor and attends worship without fail at its once-a-month worship service, even though he has not yet received baptism. However, Goda was so excited about the stamp race that he was willing to pay for a hotel room in order to be able to attend Wakkanai Church.

There were even some participants from outside Dohoku Subdistrict, which was very encouraging to us. In order for churches to know and support each other, we wish to hold this event in coming years as well.

*"Stamp Rally" is a term coined from English in Japan and refers to a card with blank squares, each of which can be marked by a rubber stamp naming a specific place. The resultant collection of marked squares shows that the person holding the card has been to all the places named by the stamps.

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), January 2018 issue

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III. Toy Exchange for Children

by Funabiki Mikio, member
Suzurandai Church, Hyogo District

Suzurandai Church, which is about ten kilometers from the center of Kobe, was founded 53 years ago. We have held a bazaar each year since our founding to provide a good place for people to meet and for church members to work together and fellowship with one another. An



A girl bringing a doll to exchange for points



The auction is very popular among the children.

event we started about ten years ago as part of our annual bazaar is our Toy Exchange for Children, which was designed to include neighborhood children so that they could feel comfortable in church.

At the event, one point is stamped on the children's cards for each toy they bring, and with their points, they can "buy" a toy that another child has brought. Because of this, the more toys a child brings, the more can be bought. Children who do not bring any toys can get points for watching a picture story, painting a picture, or playing with a *taketombo* (a simple helicopter-like bamboo toy that flies when spun by hand) or paper airplane, or by playing with acorn tops (little tops made from acorns that can spin). For toys that are really popular, we hold an auction in which the child who bids the most points gets the toy.

We held our most recent bazaar on Nov. 23, 2017. People who live nearby provided the *taketombo* and acorn tops. Next year, we are considering not only holding the toy exchange but also creating a handicraft corner that these people can help lead as well.

On this day only, the church sanctuary fills with people from the area. Children come every year to this event, but we have yet to have a child participate in the worship service or church school. We pray that evangelizing by sowing this seed will bear fruit. (Tr. WJ)

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), February 2018 issue

—Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko

From the General Secretary's Desk:

Anticipating My New Role and Its Responsibilities

by Akiyama Toru, general secretary

From April 2018, I assumed my responsibilities as Kyodan general secretary. I am writing this manuscript in March, spending my last month in the Lord's church where I have served for 23 years as pastor of Ageo Godo Church and Ageo Fujimi Kindergarten, tying up the work I have done until now. The need to say goodbye to the close church fellowship I have enjoyed for so long while not yet feeling fully prepared for my future work is overwhelming. I will be preaching at Ageo Godo Church until the April 1 Easter Worship Service and from April 2 will begin my work as general secretary. On that day, I will greet the staff, and on April 16, I will leave to attend the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan's General Assembly, so now I am looking forward to whatever kind of days may be awaiting me ahead. I will be beginning a new step in serving the Lord, and I want to answer His call faithfully each day in whatever type of situation the Lord Jesus Christ is calling me.

The position of Kyodan general secretary had been vacant for over a year, and there is a mountain of issues that must be quickly handled with the assumption of office. First of all, the reform of the Kyodan's organizational structure, which has already been raised at Executive Council meetings, and the critical situation of membership and finances are immediate concerns, while considering the future of the Kyodan and how to make needed structural changes. As general secretary, the issues I must deal with thoroughly are the reorganization of the current Executive Council's structure and a broad reform of the Kyodan's structure and procedures, etc. We must wrestle with structural downsizing and proceed to reform the structure in ways that will actually assist evangelism. A revision of the Constitution and Bylaws will accompany this, so I will bear the responsibility of explaining the purpose of restructuring to gain broad consent. I think the days ahead will continue to involve the acrobatics of catching up with and jumping on a train that has already left and immediately explaining the situation to its passengers.

Until now, I have been serving as the chair of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries as well as moderator of Kanto District. I was also involved in the aid to and restoration of the churches damaged during the Great East Japan Disaster. In this work, the damaged churches struggled to their feet in the midst of the unique, painful situations each one faced, and we stood by them in

their efforts to carry out restoration and rebuilding. But at the same time, this also became an opportunity to deepen our connections with churches around the world and to realize how important those connections really are.

In the midst of the fellowship of global ecumenical churches, my work as general secretary will include responding sensitively to the issues of the various churches while not being indifferent to their mission advances and the various pains and struggles they face, thereby widely opening a window to move toward a joint living fellowship. I want to pursue this intentionally.

An urgent issue of our Kyodan is how to develop a kind of evangelism of hope in the midst of an aging society in churches that are even more aged, so that young people will meet the Lord Jesus Christ and discover a place and chance to live vibrantly within the church. Therefore, seeking an evangelism activated in both these directions is what is needed. I would appreciate your prayers for my new work as general secretary.

“Oh, Holy Spirit, who can even revive a mountain of dried out bones into a large crowd of the Lord's flock, come and blow from all directions.” (Tr. RT)

KNL Corner

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