

The First Christmas in Japan

Christianity in Japan began with the arrival of Francis Xavier and Cosme de Torrès in 1549, when they landed at Kagoshima, the southernmost area of Kyushu. Xavier left Japan after two years, whereas Torres engaged in mission work for over 20 years until his death. According to newsletters from Japan published by the Jesuits, the first Christmas in Japan was celebrated in Yamaguchi in 1552. On Christmas Eve, at a church built with the permission of Daimyo (Lord) Ouchi Yoshitaka in the compound of Daido Temple, a crowd of believers gathered for an all-night mass, sharing a meal together and overflowing the venue. The hymns sang at the mass were the first-ever European music played in Japan. Participants gave offerings for the meal, with some non-Christians joining in the feast as well. There is record of steamed rice with beef being served at Shimabara, where the first seminary was built after ships began arriving from Portugal. People must have been surprised to be served beef, as beef was not customarily eaten in Japan at that time. During the Sengoku Era, Christians greeted each other by saying “Natala”, which comes from the Latin word *natal* for “birth,” instead of “Merry Christmas.”

Biblical dramas served an important role in the mission effort, with the first drama based on a story from the Bible being performed by Japanese believers in Kyushu in 1560. Its title was “Adam and Eve.” An apple tree was placed on center stage, and stables were also built as part of the stage setting. Through active efforts in evangelism, there were 600,000 believers by the 1580s.



An artist's depiction of early Japanese believers observing Mass, with three nails drawn at the top left to represent suffering

Iemitsu, the third Shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate, closed the country to the outside world and banned Christianity. That ban continued until it was lifted more than 200 years later in 1873, during the Meiji Era. At that time, Protestant missionaries were already in Japan, having established the first Protestant church in Yokohama. Hara Taneaki, who had been an official at the Minami-machi magistrate's office, organized a Christmas party at the First Presbyterian Church in Tsukiji. The people were surprised when they beheld a Christmas tree decorated with various kinds of fruit, which appeared suddenly when the curtain was opened, and Santa was a samurai wearing a samurai-hairstyle wig and carrying a sword. (Tr. YY)

—Kato Makoto, pastor
Shizuoka Ichibancho church, Tokai District
KNL Editorial Committee chair
Based on article in *Shinto no Tomo* (*Believers' Friend*)

Executive Council Notes Progress on Current Church Concerns

The 3rd Executive Council session of the 36th (2008) General Assembly Period met Oct.19-20. From the very beginning there was a lively interaction concerning whether to recognize calls for allowing observers to sit in attendance. Moderator Yamakita Nobuhisa explained, "At the first council meeting of this assembly period, we decided on a policy of allowing a moderate number of observers to attend." The vote to permit the attendance of observers was 19 in favor out of the 28 delegates in attendance (with 2 absences). Likewise, questions concerning the focus of the debate at the previous meeting, namely the appointment of the executive secretaries, continued. Strong opinions were voiced concerning the need to avoid repeating the problems caused by the timing of the appointments and the voting on them individually as opposed to a block vote. General Secretary Naito Tomeyuki reported the decision of the Aug. 31 Executive Committee to appoint Fujimori Yuki, pastor of Fujisawakita Church in Kanagawa District, as the executive secretary of General Affairs and Doke Norikazu, pastor of Igusa Church in Nishi-Tokyo District as the executive secretary of the Commission on the Ministry and the Research Institute on the Mission of the Church. Their terms of office are until March 31, 2010.

Due to the fact that Seiwa College has decided to end its program of training students as Directors of Christian Education from this school year, it was decided to form a committee to look into the issue of the examination for the position of Director of Christian Education and how such personnel are to be trained in the future. Executive Council member Kishita Nobuyo was selected as chairperson of the committee, along with four other members of the Executive Council.

On the afternoon of the first day, the moderator of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, Choi Young-Shin, and its General Secretary, Hong Song-Wan, together with five other new KCCJ officers, paid a visit, being greeted with warm applause. Together, everyone pledged to further deepen cooperation and fellowship. There was also a report on the fundraising campaign to assist the churches that were damaged in the Noto Peninsula Earthquake, with additional efforts pledged to raise the remaining 23 million yen of the goal. Another report related to the various events surrounding the celebrating of the 150th Anniversary of Protestant Mission in Japan and the request for continued offerings in order to meet the complete budget. Also, copies of the "Proclamation of the Commemorative Gathering," (quoted below), were distributed.*

The results of the fall ministerial certification examination, held Sept. 15-16, were reported, and the 56 persons who qualified for the status of ministers in full standing and the 7 who passed the examination for the status of licensed preacher were officially recognized. "The Research Institute on the Mission of the Church: A Progress Report" was presented regarding the development of two documents to be known as the "Basic Theory of Mission" and the "Basic Policies of Mission," the formulation of which was carried over from the previous General Assembly Period. The plan is to present these before the end of this General Assembly Period, which ends in October 2010. Likewise, after a lively discussion following the report on the new "Kyodan Statement of Faith — a New Catechism," the motion to move forward with its development was passed.

The report of the Commission on Finance focused on a draft plan to maintain better oversight of all income and expenses

by linking the accounting for the General Office, the Board of Publications, the Board of Pensions, and the Buraku Liberation Center. There was also considerable discussion on the issue of the Solidarity Fund for Mission in Okinawa, and the proposed budget for 2010 was accepted. (Tr. TB)

—Ishimaru Yasuki, executive secretary
Based on article in *Shinpo* (Kyodan Times)

*Proclamation of the Commemorative Gathering

As we celebrate this 150th Anniversary of Protestant Mission in Japan during the year of 2009, we wish to express our deep sense of gratitude to God for divine mercy and to our forerunners for their dedication.

The roots of mission in Japan that began with the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in 1859 lie in the "Evangelical Alliance/ World Evangelical Fellowship," which was founded in 1846, and the emphasis given to Bible reading, prayer, and evangelism. The chief characteristics of this movement were in its emphasis on orthodox Christian faith based on the Reformation tradition and ecumenism, cooperation in world evangelism, and a spiritual life of worship, Bible reading, and prayer. The expression of this deep faith resulted in the mission outreach into East Asia. That was the beginning point of the church in Japan, as is expressed in the simple faith and the "Kokaishugi" that characterizes it.

The Kyodan is a united church, born through the providence of God at work in history, that carries on the traditions of a simple creed and "Kokaishugi".**

As we commemorate this 150th year of mission in Japan, we as the Kyodan, stand firm in the faith that "Christ is our salvation" and that this salvation is based on the forgiveness of our sins through our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross. We pledge ourselves anew to continue to stand firm in that salvation and to open up new avenues of evangelism.

The Kyodan, as a church whose faith has been tempered through a variety of experiences, stands firm in a faith based on the Cross of Christ, and we declare the following articles of that faith to all for the glory of God.

1. We believe in Jesus Christ.
2. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God.
3. We believe that the church is the Body of Christ.
4. We pledge ourselves, as people who have received the grace of the gospel, to a spiritual life of faith based in worship, Bible reading, and prayer.
5. We pledge ourselves, as people who have received God's salvation, to strive for the evangelization of Japan.

**Kokaishugi: The chief characteristics of this movement were the emphases on orthodox Christian faith based on the Reformation tradition, non-denominationalism, cooperation in world evangelism, and a spiritual life of worship, Bible reading, and prayer. The expression of this deep faith resulted in the mission outreach into East Asia. That was the beginning of the church in Japan, as shown by the simple expression of faith and the freedom from denominationalism that characterize it. The Kyodan is a united church, born through the providence of God at work in history, that carries on biblical and apostolic traditions while being free from the restrictions of established denominations.

Shikoku District Churches Conduct Cooperative Evangelism

“What thoughts arise in your mind when you hear the words ‘cooperative evangelism’?”

Holding an evangelistic meeting in cooperation with a nearby church and supporting a church operating on a small scale, or a church in crisis due to a disaster, are all examples of ‘cooperative evangelism.’ However, as the church is fundamentally one in the Lord Jesus Christ, of which each and every local church is a part, bearing each other’s burdens and supporting one another are themselves examples of ‘cooperative evangelism. In the various areas of Japan many churches are in a crisis situation, with other churches supporting them. Let us try to understand the various churches’ struggles to evangelize and the work of the churches that are bearing these struggles together with them. Furthermore, in order to have a part in the grace of that “cooperative evangelism,” let us pray for other churches and take steps toward forming friendships through standing together. That we might know how abundant God’s grace is in this regard, I want to give one example of ‘cooperative evangelism’ that has given encouragement to new faith.”

With this introduction, the editor of the Kyodan monthly periodical *Shinto no Tomo (Believers’ Friend)*, presented the following report by Kuroda Wakao, pastor of Susaki Church in Kochi about cooperative evangelism in Shikoku District.

One of the neighboring churches of Susaki Church is Chikanaga Church. The borderline between Kochi Prefecture and Ehime Prefecture, as well as the borderline between Kochi Subdistrict and Nan’yo Subdistrict, run between these two churches, which are about 90 kilometers (55.8 miles) apart. There is not even one church between them. Presently, Susaki Church is cooperating with Chikanaga Church and conducting evangelism in the mountain area by renting a home in the village of Yusuhara in Kochi Prefecture (approximate population 4,000 persons), which is about midpoint between the two churches, and holding evening worship services twice monthly. Seven persons attend the worship services, and two of those attending are seekers from Yusuhara Village.

Susaki Church had no pastor 20 years ago, which is how this mission cooperation started. Up to that time, Susaki Church had had two worship services a month in Higashitsuno Village, next to Yusuhara Village, but since

the church had no full-time pastor, holding a worship service once a month in Higashitsuno Village was all it could manage. However, Sasaki Michio, the pastor then serving as Susaki Church’s legal guardian and presently as the pastor of Aki Church, said: “Particularly in a time of crisis, we must move forward.” With this word of guidance, the administrative board decided to continue the twice monthly worship services, and for that reason Chikanaga Church was requested to send someone to give the sermon at the monthly worship service in Higashitsuno.

Not only was there a request for someone to preach but also it was mentioned that from that point on, Susaki Church wanted to work with Chikanaga Church to evangelize the mountain area between them. In response to that request, Chikanaga Church sent Pastor Ashina Hiromichi to preach at Susaki Church. A change of circumstances caused the place of worship to be moved from Higashitsuno to Yusuhara Village, but this mission cooperation is still continuing, with the church pastors reciprocally in charge of preaching at the worship service.

Susaki Church was shown many things through this cooperative evangelism, and I would like to mention two of them. First of all, the meaning of evangelism in Yusuhara was set forth in a new way. With Chikanaga Church being located in a different prefecture and subdistrict, it had been outside the consciousness of Susaki Church. The opportunity to cooperate together to evangelize the mountain area showed it to be a neighboring church. That is to say, the point of evangelism prepared in Yusuhara Village has become the line of relationship in evangelism between Susaki and Chikanaga. Furthermore, the six churches in Shikoku’s Southwest Subdistrict have recognized it as an aspect of cooperative evangelism in the churches in the subdistrict, and from a wider perspective, this has brought about a reevaluation of the meaning of evangelism in Yusuhara.

Second, God provided a means of engaging in cooperative evangelism through the situation of a church not having a full-time pastor. Through this kind of development, we have rediscovered that the real core of the work of evangelism is God, and from the awareness of protecting the extinction of the flame of evangelism in the mountain areas has come a changed consciousness of seeing God’s work there.

Considering only the situation, it is difficult to have a bright outlook, but we want to keep walking forward in hope, knowing that the work of God, who has led us this far, will be revealed in some way through the program of evangelism in Yusuhara Village. (Tr. RT)

—Anderson Reiko, member
Saidaidori Church, Kanto District
KNL Editorial Committee member
Based on article in *Shinto no Tomo (Believers’ Friend)*

Education for Girls and Deliverance of the Poor in the Meiji Era

Learning from the Canadian Methodist Church and its Zealous Evangelical Attitude

I saw in port
A little girl
With red shoes on.
Taken by a foreign person,
She went overseas.

At Yokohama
She went on board
Ship at the pier.
Taken by a foreign person,

By this time the girl,
Like the people there
Has blue eyes, I'm sure.
She is in the land
Where that foreign person lives.

Every time I see
Pairs of red shoes,
The girl comes to mind,
When I see a foreign person,
She comes to mind.

—Noguchi Ujo
Translated by Yanagisawa Yoshitoshi

Sano Kimi, the subject of this Japanese children's song, was an orphan who was under the care of Nagasaka Kojoin, an orphanage for girls that was established in 1908. Since there was no charitable person in Japan to take her in and raise her at that time, a missionary couple decided to take her in as a foster child and planned to take her back to their country when they left Japan. Although the lyrics of the famous song includes the words, "she was taken by a foreigner," in actuality, she died of an illness and was called to her heavenly home before departing for a foreign land. The famous poet, Ujo Noguchi, who had heard this sad story, rewrote it as a song in a form that would give people a bit of hope that she must still be living happily in a foreign country.

It was I.S. Blackmore, a woman missionary sent by the Canadian Methodist Church, and the third principal of Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin, who established the orphanage where Kimi lived. Moreover, the female students who cared for the orphans were Christians from Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin, which was located close to the orphanage. They were the gentle-hearted members of the King's Daughter's Society (which later became the YWCA), who practiced the school motto, "Honoring God through service." Members of the King's Daughters' Society also built Keifu Gakko, an educational institution with a strong spirit for evangelical work and education, which served the poor children of the Azabu area. We can imagine how difficult it must have been to nurture a spirit of service in Japanese society, which was deeply rooted in Buddhism and Daoism. However the Canadian missionaries successfully raised the



Martha Julia Cartmell, first principal of Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin

girls to embrace the Christian faith strongly. We should not forget that because the King's Daughters' Society could not provide enough funds to maintain this social service, many Christians in Canada gave their precious offerings as well as their heartfelt prayers toward the project.

According to records from 1873, the Canadian Methodist Church then numbered 682 clergy and 70,682 members. Although it was not a large denomination, they had a passionate heart for spreading the gospel by sending missionaries not only domestically but also to foreign countries. We Japanese Christians need to learn from their passion.

Two missionary pastors, George L. Cochran and Davidson McDonald, who was also a doctor, came to Japan in 1873 and worked in the Tokyo, Shizuoka, and Kofu areas. They realized that Japanese girls had no opportunity for education at that time, so they put much energy into building a boarding school. They were determined to reach out to girls through education. In 1882 the first woman missionary, Martha Julia Cartmell, who was then a principal of a public school in Canada, was sent to Japan. The missionaries established Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin in 1884 and positioned Cartmell as the first principal of the school.

More women missionaries were sent, one after another, who helped establish other mission schools, such as Shizuoka Eiwa and Yamanashi Eiwa. We believe that those missionaries were spirit-filled people with gifted abilities. However, what made their strong walk possible, in addition to God's blessings and guidance, was their careful planning based on their sense of mission and the zealous prayers of the Methodist Church. During this commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Protestant missions in Japan, we need to learn from the legacy of the Canadian Methodist Church and make it our own. That legacy is their firm faith and their two pillars of mission in Japan, which are education and social service. (Tr. NB)

—Akuzawa Tadao, former vice-principal
Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin
KNL Editorial Committee member

The “German East Asia Mission” in Japan — Past and Present

by Mira Sonntag, ecumenical co-worker of EMS
Tomisaka Christian Center (Tokyo)
KNL Editorial Committee member

For the final issue of this year, which was marked by the 150th anniversary of Protestant mission in Japan, I have been asked to summarize the contributions of German missionaries, who are hardly known today due to the overwhelming influence of North American Protestantism. Although there have been a number of German missionary societies, I will focus on the first German missionary society to send staff to Japan, the General Evangelical Protestant Missionary Society (AEPMV, later OAM, now DOAM as a member of EMS and BMW) for two simple reasons. First, this is the only German missionary society affiliated with the Kyodan through a partnership contract; and second, my own service in Japan is based on this partnership relation.

As a matter of fact, the Germans were latecomers to the evangelization field of Japan, arriving as the 30th missionary society with a delay of 26 years after the first North American missionaries. Also, they started without any experience (AEPMV was founded just one year earlier in the German city Weimar) and suffered a constant shortage of staff. Missionaries would hardly stay in Japan longer than five years (often as lone warriors), which was good for a fast feedback to the homeland community but raised many problems in Japan itself.

German mission to Japan meant German-speaking mission of mostly male, ordained pastors from Switzerland, Germany, and Alsace-Lorraine, financed by supporters from a number of European countries and even North America. As an internationally-minded body, AEPMV (and later OAM) sought to free itself from historically grown denominational boundaries and return to the original gospel of Christ's times (“the heavenly seed” that gives birth to a new “tree” in every new location). Thus, it resembled in its ecumenism the first North American missionaries, only that it arrived in a time when this ecumenism had long been lost. However, the ecumenism of AEPMV was founded on the new approach of liberal theology (“new theology”). Learning from the methodology of the Moravian Church, Winfried Spinner, the first AEPMV missionary to Japan, started to gather German residents into a “mission church” (German Cross Church Tokyo), which should then foster evangelization among the Japanese and support Japanese churches where they were founded. Fortunately, he was soon joined by Otto Schmiedel. The first Japanese church (now Kyodan Kami-Tomisaka Church) was also founded in 1887. As of 1934, the organization was supporting ten churches in eastern and western Japan, with a total of 63 Japanese service employees. The emphasis lay on urban areas, with a new focus on the Korean minority in Japan from 1929. While concentrating their service on the German-speaking communities, the German and Swiss pastors would give advice but try not to interfere with decisions of their Japanese colleagues.

Such progress was possible mainly because the AEPMV had actively dealt with its staff shortage through the establishment of a theological seminary in Tomisaka in

1887. This seminary was, actually, the most important transmitting station of liberal theology to the Japanese churches at the time. And it was through the influence of liberal theology that Japanese Christianity could survive the anti-Christian propaganda of the 1890s, following the Uchimura incident of *lèse-majesty*. By the end of the 19th century, liberal theology was further strengthened by North American Unitarians and subsequently led to Japan's first major theological debate: the Uemura-Ebina-Debate about the divinity of Christ. The theological seminary in Tomisaka continued until 1908. But even after it closed, AEPMV missionaries continued to teach at theological seminaries, e.g. of Aoyama Gakuin University.

As the above shows, AEPMV combined community building with theological training on a high academic level that had to be based on a proper understanding of the traditional religious and philosophic landscape of Japan. As a result of this approach, missionaries also contributed to the growing discipline of religious studies in Germany. Besides, liberal theology was the strongest proponent of public welfare activities. AEPMV engaged in child care, tuberculosis treatment, and student housing.

With the outbreak of World War I, however, the internationality of AEPMV (OAM) was increasingly difficult to maintain. After Hitler came into power, the German communities abroad mostly followed the nationalist movement. These developments were hard to tolerate for the Swiss members of the mission society as well as for Germans like Egon Hessel, who had joined the anti-Hitler emergency union of pastors (Pfarrernotbund). The events of World War II finally led to a break-up of OAM into a German (DOAM) and Swiss (SOAM) mission society. In order to reduce relational difficulties as much as possible, both agreed to regional distribution of responsibilities: DOAM would continue work in East Japan (Tokyo); SOAM would focus on Western Japan (Kyoto). But the end of the war also led to the founding of Christian East Asia Mission Foundation (CEAM), which united the physical heritage of DOAM and SOAM in Japan into one legal body under Japanese law during the whole postwar period.

The postwar period also brought about a reform movement in the understanding of mission and its relation to church structures. In Germany, mission societies that had traditionally existed outside of church structures voluntarily reintegrated into the churches, forming new regional mission boards. Due to the division of Germany into East and West, DOAM became a member of the Association of Churches and Mission in South Western Germany (EMS) and Berlin Mission Board (BMW) in 1972. Abroad, the application of the principles of New Delhi (1961) concerning “partnership in obedience” ushered in a new age of cooperation in mission. “Missionaries” were first re-framed into “fraternal workers,” later into “ecumenical co-workers,” and an appointment by the Kyodan became the precondition for dispatch. Although

(Cont'd. on p6, Col.1)

The General Secretary's Diary

"One Sunny Afternoon"

The other day, seven students from the Catholic Theological Academy were brought to my office by a professor, who is a priest. The visit was organized in order for the students to learn more about other Christian churches, especially the structure of the Kyodan, the major Protestant denomination, and to learn about the evangelistic work of the Kyodan. With somewhat nervous expressions on their faces, the seminarians diligently asked many questions about issues within the Kyodan as well as about the organization of the Kyodan. Perhaps they were quite aware that in a few months they would graduate and move from wearing seminarians' hats to receiving ordination and becoming priests. So I explained the Kyodan's organization concisely, as follows.

The Kyodan nurtures ministers to serve the church, which involves two important aspects. One aspect is training in the seminary established by the Kyodan or in another approved seminary. The other aspect is certification by the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications, which is made up of ministers who are elected as commission members at the General Assembly. In accordance with the Kyodan's constitutional bylaws, the commission approves as ministerial candidates persons who have successfully passed the ministerial qualification examination that is based on the Kyodan's Confession of Faith. Following approval, the candidates are commissioned and ordained by one of the 17 district assemblies, and the qualified ministers are received by local churches.

The seminarians nodded as they listened. Perhaps they understood one organizational part of the Kyodan. It was a short time, but also a tranquil one. However, later I was surprised to learn that three of the students were foreigners from three different countries (Vietnam, the Philippines, Korea). The seminary professor said, "The number of men sensing a calling to become priests has declined drastically." I could not hear his words as if they were only someone else's business. Presently, I am very concerned about the decreasing number of people being called into the ministry in the Kyodan. (Tr. WJ)

—Naito Tomeyuki
Kyodan General Secretary

German East Asia Mission *(Cont'd from p.5)*

DOAM still held considerable responsibility and means of influence through its right to assign half of the board members of CEAM foundation, it always tried to listen carefully to the wishes and visions of its partners in Japan. Together they founded Tomisaka Christian Center in Tokyo (TCC) for interdisciplinary research on urgent issues in social ethics. In 2009 an existing housing facility was re-launched as an ecumenical dormitory (Uphill International House of Studies). Currently, the supporting body of CEAM is investigating new ways for welfare activities to complement the already existing mission work in Tomisaka.

Finally, on October 19, 2009, the Swiss and German parent organizations (SOAM and DOAM) agreed on CEAM's wish to apply for state approval as a public welfare organization and on the necessary changes to its constitution. The new constitution brings two new forms of freedom to CEAM: freedom from possible outside intrusion, and freedom to engage in *pari passu* international cooperation. Interestingly, while DOAM and SOAM are dispensing their legal rights to child organizations in Japan, EMS is now preparing to extend the rights of its African and Asian partner churches in order to reorganize itself into a truly ecumenical (international) body of common witness. These developments make me very optimistic about the possibility of a truly post-colonial future of church cooperation between Japan and Germany.

KNL Corner

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



MERRY CHRISTMAS
&
HAPPY NEW YEAR
to all
KNL READERS

