

Executive Council Votes to Revitalize Kyodan's Evangelistic Efforts

The 5th Executive Council meeting of the 37th General Assembly biennium (2011-12) met Feb. 13-14 at the Kyodan headquarters. The opening worship service was led by Executive Council member Okamura Hisashi, who expounded on Romans 8:26-30. He talked about his experiences prior to entering the ministry: how God spoke to him through the sharing of Holy Communion with a brother in the faith on the verge of death, who taught him that this was truly the table of God's Kingdom. Likewise, he shared his experience of living with his mother, as she fought pancreatic cancer during the last few months of her life, and how that experience confirmed for him that God alone is the only firm basis we have for salvation. His concluding remarks were that it is not we who search out God and thereby find salvation, but it is God who searches us out and saves us through his grace.

In his report, General Secretary Naito Tomeyuki first announced the decision of the National Christian Council in Japan to elect both a new moderator and a new general secretary who are members of the Kyodan. Next, he reported the establishment of the Japan Ecumenical Disaster Response Office (JEDRO) as an emergency measure and the Kyodan's full cooperation with the NCCJ in that endeavor. He then reported on the meeting of the National Christian Liaison Committee on the issue of the Basic Law for Foreign Residents in Japan, held Jan. 26-28 at the Korean YMCA. General Secretary Naito was in attendance, and he reported that the official name of the organization was changed to The National Christian Liaison Committee on the Establishment of the Basic Law for Foreign Residents in Japan.

The chairperson of the Subcommittee on the Clarification of Christian Center Issues, Takahashi Jun, reported on the proposed bylaws for Kyodan-related Christian Centers. His report included bylaws for the establishment of such centers, a model for center regulations, and bylaws for both financial standards and auditing.

At this Executive Council meeting, a significant amount of time was devoted to the report of the Committee on Strategies for Evangelism. Council members viewed detailed statistics of local churches, focusing particularly on the numbers of baptisms as a function of the numbers of resident communicant members and how that has changed through the years. In order to stay even over time, the number of baptisms in a year needs to average 3% of the number of resident communicant membership. The national average, however, is only 1.55%, and thus over the past ten years, the resident communicant membership has declined by 10%. Based on this data, the following nine items were proposed:

1. Establishing an Office of Evangelistic Support as a stepping-stone towards the establishment of a Board of Evangelism;
2. Strengthening of the process of calling local pastors: more Kyodan involvement designed to revitalize strategically central churches in local areas to strengthen growth regionally;
3. Developing a support structure for church-related kindergartens and child-care centers, especially as

it relates to the government's push to implement "Integration of Kindergartens and Daycare: A New System"—a development that bears watching as we develop a multifaceted response;

4. Revitalizing autonomous evangelism-oriented organizations within the Kyodan;
5. Strengthening ties with other organizations, including schools and social welfare organizations;
6. Promoting evangelism on the Internet;
7. Developing lay movements across the nation as a response to the prayers of the laity to fulfill the Great Commission;
8. Reinvigorating ministerial development: employing the means necessary to develop spiritually devout ministers who can preach clearly a message of the forgiveness of sin; and
9. A reconsideration and reinvigoration of the activities of the various subcommittees.

During the discussion of these proposals, a variety of opinions were expressed, including 1) that the reports on the data were too negative, 2) that there was insufficient data concerning those we are trying to reach through evangelistic efforts, and 3) that there was no mention of church school ministries and women's activities. However, there was general approval of these proposals, and they were ratified.

Secretary Kumoshikari Toshimi gave a report on the Relief Task Force. In addition to publishing its task force newsletter and a report on the emergency symposium, the task force elected Nagasaki Tetsuo as its general secretary. He will participate on the subcommittee for the Overseas Donations Project to assist Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo. He will also interview and recommend candidates for on-site positions in the earthquake/tsunami relief effort, as well as prepare proposals on how best to disburse relief funds to churches damaged in the disaster.

Kato Makoto, the executive secretary in charge of the effort, reported that a special camp for children from Fukushima, called the *Kohitsuji* (Lamb) Camp, would be held March 9-11 at the Myoko Kogen YMCA campgrounds in an effort to help protect the children from radiation. The plan is for the camp to become a regular event. He also reported that representatives of affected kindergartens and daycare centers gathered in February to exchange information and to help insure fair and effective relief.

The Ou, Tohoku, Kanto and Tokyo districts each gave reports as to their situations and the Secretary reported that the total damages to churches and manses is now estimated to be 1,545,000,000 yen (about \$19.3 million).

In preparations for the 38th General Assembly, a committee for organizing agenda items was selected. With respect to the Commission on Finance, a revised budget for fiscal year 2011 was approved. Also, the budget contribution to the NCCJ for 2012 was increased from 3.5 to 9 million yen. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

Volunteer Work Facilitated by the Tohoku District Disaster Relief Center

The Tohoku Disaster Relief Center was established soon after the earthquake that occurred on March 11, 2011 and has operated out of the Tohoku District Center, which is known as the Emmaus Center. As of Nov. 14, 2011, there were 1,405 volunteers who had registered at the Emmaus Center to help with relief work. Initially, the relief efforts were focused on helping the survivors in Shichigo in the Wakabayashi Ward of Sendai City with mud removal, cleaning houses, and clearing debris from the fields. As the volunteers involved themselves in this work, they showed that while they were weak in the face of such destruction, they were not powerless to bring restoration. Likewise, they were there not merely to labor with the victims but also “to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” Thanks to the “Rebuilding Strategy” announced by Sendai City, many residents have now decided to return to their homes, and there has been an increase in the number of requests for our volunteers to help.

Ishinomaki City, on the other hand, is one area where the realities are still grim, and the recovery process is lagging far behind. It takes approximately two hours by car to go from Sendai to Ishinomaki. We needed to establish a base of operations in the city, and one of our primary commitments during the summer was to establish a center there. The Kyodan Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters was able to buy a house from one of the survivors from Ishinomaki, and we quickly renovated the house to serve as the “Emmaus Center in Ishinomaki.” Since the summer of 2011, we have been able to carry on volunteer activities from this base of operations.

From the beginning, the Emmaus Center used the Internet to call on people nationwide to join in the relief efforts. The Center registered numerous volunteers, irrespective

of whether the individuals themselves were Christians, and so approximately 70% of the volunteers who come to the Emmaus Center are not themselves Christians. The Emmaus Center has made a point of praying each morning before going to work and in the evening after coming back from work, as a way of expressing gratitude to God. In this way the volunteers are exposed to Christianity, which is at the heart of our relief efforts. Volunteers are housed in the local churches. For many volunteers, it is their first time to enter a church. Some even make a point of attending the Sunday morning worship services. The churches that have opened their doors to the Emmaus Center volunteers have hosted up to 150 persons as of November 2011. One church lost its parsonage and yet showed its gracious spirit by offering lodging to the volunteers.

During the summer, the number of volunteers was high, due to the fact that many of the volunteers were college students. Since schools are now in session, the numbers have decreased, but our efforts are being sustained by committed churches, schools, and organizations, as well as by individuals who repeatedly come back to join in the relief efforts. As we look ahead to a long and sustained relief process, our church-based relief efforts will become even more necessary. As the recovery process continues, the content of our work and the quality of our relatedness to the survivors will change. But despite the changes ahead of us, we will need to continue to “love our neighbor.” We will always continue to need “people” at the heart of our effort to walk alongside and to serve the survivors. (Tr. JM)

—Maekita Mio, Staff member
Kyodan Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters

Christmas Parties in the Shichigo Area of Sendai

On Dec. 23, 2011, the Kyodan’s Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters dispatched to Sendai Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo; Kato Makoto, the executive secretary responsible for the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters; and Maekita Mio, Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters secretary and assistant to Executive Secretary Noda Taku. The four joined in Christmas parties for boys’ baseball teams and their parents in Wakabayashi Ward, the area of Sendai that had experienced the worst tsunami damage on March 11, 2011. This was based on a project begun in August 2011 for the Tohoku District Center in Sendai [known as the Emmaus Center] to support victims of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami by sending out volunteers. The project was brought to fruition through the efforts of local boys’ baseball coach, carpenter, and volunteer leader Sugawara Tadao. The area around the site of the morning party, the Shichigo Elementary School, has been without a church for some time. This situation is not unrelated to the fact that the area was largely settled during the early to mid-Edo Period when Christianity was harshly suppressed and Christians did not officially exist. For that reason, no traces of Christian evangelism can be found in the area.

With a car full of presents, Secretary Maekita dressed as a snowman, and the Assistant to Executive Secretary Noda in a Santa suit, the four of us set out for the Shichigo Elementary School grounds, the site of the morning’s activities. We were welcomed by about 60 members of two baseball teams and their parents. Executive Secretary Kato acted as master of ceremonies, and Moderator Ishibashi appeared with his ventriloquist’s dummy partner Haru. It was the first time the children had ever seen a ventriloquist or heard the biblical

story of Jesus Christ. In his performances, Moderator Ishibashi has been given permission to use the name Harukaze Shiro by the professional Christian ventriloquist Harukaze Ichiro. From beginning to end, the audience’s attention was riveted on Moderator Ishibashi and his partner Haru as they used the words of the Bible and a sprinkling of jokes to tell the story of Jesus’ birth.

After lunch, a second Christmas party with the same content was held for another baseball team and their parents on the grounds of the Rokugo Civic Center. There were approximately 50 in attendance there, but including the children who could not attend either party that day, we were able to distribute all of the 300 presents we had brought. When both the morning and midday Christmas parties were finished, our host, Sugawara, said a few words to all the participants. He told those gathered: “I am not a Christian, but because of the earthquake disaster I was able to meet the people from the Emmaus Center. From now on, Jesus will be a part of my life.” In fact, the only volunteers who were accepted by the Shichigo area were those sent by the Emmaus Center. The biggest reason they were accepted was that the Emmaus Center volunteers were completely committed to being with and supporting the people of the Shichigo area. These volunteers gained the trust of the people of this area by observing the rules of the community, by never intruding on their privacy, and by working in silence with sweat dripping from their brows. Half a year of accumulated volunteer work and being able to realize the first Christmas parties—for these reasons alone, Sugawara’s words brought us joy and impressed us like nothing else could have. (Tr. DB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

First *Kohitsuji* Camp Held for Families from Fukushima

The first *Kohitsuji* (lambs) Camp, a short-term program designed to provide rest and recreation for families living in Fukushima Prefecture, was held at the Tokyo YMCA's Yamanakako Center, Jan. 13 (Friday)-15 (Sunday). This program was planned by Okamoto Tomoyuki, assistant director of the Kyodan's Relief Planning Headquarters, as a project for protecting children from radioactivity.

The camp was carried out under the joint sponsorship of the Relief Planning Headquarters and the Aizu Radioactivity Information Center, in cooperation with the Tokyo YMCA. Although 24 participants from seven families applied, two families had to cancel, so the final number of participants was 17. Matsumoto Takehiro, director of the Tokyo YMCA's South Community Center, took the role of camp leader; three people with rich experience, along with myself as representative of the Relief Planning Headquarters, also took part. On the third day, Honda Shinya, assistant general secretary of the Tokyo YMCA and director of its head office, came to join us.

For this inaugural event, we aimed at creating a program that caused no inconvenience related to school attendance. We departed from the Aizu Radioactive Information Center at 4 p.m. on Friday and then met with participants from Koriyama Church. There, with Pastor Niwa, we joined together in a prayer for their safety at the camp. We had arrived a little later than expected due to bad weather and poor road conditions between Aizu and Koriyama. However, those waiting had a good time singing camp songs with YMCA leaders in the Koriyama Church sanctuary while waiting for our arrival. Also, as many of the participants had never been in a church before, it was a good opportunity for them to visit one in their own neighborhood, for which we were all thankful.

The following morning we arrived at Yamanakako Center, after taking an all-night bus, but because the children were so tired from the trip, the scheduled morning assembly was cancelled so that they could rest. One of the main features of the *Kohitsuji* Camp is that small children who cannot participate in other rest-camps as well as children with severe allergies can feel comfortable taking part in this camp experience because of the YMCA's expertise in dealing with these issues.

Nevertheless, the main drawing card of the camp was scheduled for that first day, when the families would be able to choose from a number of activities that had been prepared. Some families chose to go fishing for small lake fish called "smelt" in English, while others went ice-skating or took an easy walk along the shoreline of Lake Yamanaka. Some children simply spent time doing their homework. Our aim was that they would be able to spend time feeling free and easy at the health resort, with all of them doing whatever they liked.

A family from the city of Koriyama decided to go fishing, and in order to get out to the fishing boat, went in a small paddleboat they propelled by foot pedals. The children were in awe of the scene, with the magnificence of Mt Fuji towering over the lake. Putting live bait on the hook took a bit of getting used to, but when they caught their first

fish, they soon became engrossed and thoroughly enjoyed themselves for those three hours.

Likewise, a mother and her daughter from the town of Date, who had never been ice-skating before, decided to take the challenge. Just getting the skates on was a struggle, but as they envisioned their favorite skater, they kept at it. What struck me most was how the child repeated over and over how much fun she was having. The afternoon program involved a similar set of choices, including crafts, such as making tops, playing card games, playing outside, and going hiking. Participants had roasted marshmallows in the fireplace and baked apples for a snack at three o'clock. Quite a few parents and children participated in programs separately, and those parents no doubt had some time to be refreshed by being able to leave their children in the care of others.

At night, everyone went on the Lake Yamanaka Art Illumination tour, which was held at the Lake Yamanaka Hana-no-miyako Park. Although it was cold, the spacious site was gleaming with LED decorative lighting, and the children were so excited that they lost their sense of time and were not bothered by the cold. They said it was like being in a dream, and they all enjoyed being in this dreamlike space.

On the third day, they started from the morning assembly (noncompulsory participation), with a constant smile on their faces, doing fun morning exercises led by Tokyo YMCA leaders. They took commemorative photographs, with Mount Fuji in the background. The signal for taking a picture was "Yamanakako (click)!" They became wonderful photos, as not many children had seen Mt. Fuji before this camp.

Tokyo YMCA leaders showed their true ability during the final program, which involved a series of games. Each of the families enjoyed themselves to the full in the friendly atmosphere and also enjoyed eating the fish some children had caught the previous day, deep-fat fried as tempura; and those who had actually caught the fish displayed a triumphant look.

Finally, they had only a little time left before boarding on the bus, but for the children, it was a precious time to play before departure. Some joined in a jump-rope contest, while some of the girls played soccer, and they all spent a fulfilling time at the camp until the very end. Several issues remain to be solved, such as the aspect of publicity. However, I am grateful that we could spend these three days together safely, carefully focusing on each participant's feelings. One mother expressed her sentiments by saying, "I couldn't help but shed tears at the closing ceremony. Thank you for such a delightful memory." If I can help to protect children's precious lives even a little and help share the pain of the victims of the nuclear power plant disaster by continuing this program of rest and recreation, I will be very happy. (Tr. SM)

—Maekita Mio, staff member
Kyodan Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters

Mary Hesser, Founder of Hokuriku Gakuin, and Francina Porter, Founder of Japan's oldest Kindergarten

Along the coast of the Japan Sea on the main island of Honshu are the prefectures of Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui, which make up the Hokuriku Region. In the early Meiji Period, this region was greatly impacted by the missionaries sent to Kanazawa from the Northern Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.: Thomas C. Winn and his wife Eliza C. Winn.

Mary K. Hesser

Along with church planting, Thomas taught at a private boys' junior high school, which he had established. Along with opening an orphanage, Eliza was the first person in the area with the idea of establishing a school for women.

Through their request to the Presbyterian mission board, Mary Hesser, known as the "German wind," was also sent to Kanazawa. Mary was born in Erie, Pennsylvania in 1853. As her parents were from a German Catholic background, she attended both Catholic parochial schools and free schools, and following graduation, became a seamstress. However, at the age of 25, Mary entered Western Female Seminary, and upon her graduation in 1882, on the recommendation of the seminary president, was sent to Kanazawa as a missionary. In April 1885, she founded Kanazawa Girls' School, which began as place for advanced education with 23 students. Gradually its reputation grew, and Kanazawa Girls' School found itself in need of expanding its facility and became a fully developed school.

Mary Hesser persevered through various hardships in her administration of the school. Increased state control of education created difficulty in obtaining teachers, and the use of the Bible in education was forbidden as well. In addition, there was the lack of understanding and the jealousy of ordinary people. However, as a convert to Protestantism from Roman Catholicism, she was "a person of faith, a person of prayer."

Endeavoring to usher in a new era of women's education, she designated Psalm 111:10 as the school's motto: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." She had two younger seminary graduates from her alma mater sent to help revise the institution, its curriculum, and even its name. In this way, Mary Hesser became the founder of Hokuriku Gakuin University, but it took a heavy toll on her body. In 1894, she passed away in California at the age of 41.

Francina C. Porter

Inspired by the above-mentioned Mary Hesser's women's school in Kanazawa, Francina C. Porter founded the oldest kindergarten and a private elementary school in the Hokuriku district.

Born in Riceville, Tennessee in 1859, she attended Merrillville College in Tennessee, majoring in English. Upon graduation in 1882, she was sent as a Presbyterian missionary to teach English in Kanazawa at a school whose president was her older brother, who had come to Japan one year earlier as a Presbyterian missionary.

At first, the Children's School she opened was intended to have both a kindergarten and an elementary school. At that



Left: Mary K. Hesser, founder of Kanazawa Girls' School
Right: Francina C. Porter, founder of Eiwa Kindergarten

time, there were no kindergartens or private elementary schools in Hokuriku. Through the introduction of Thomas Winn, she met with Maria True at the Sakurai Women's School in Tokyo and asked for her assistance. Upon True's return to the United States, she found Elizabeth Milliken, a preschool educational expert, who came to Japan to head up the department of preschool education at Sakurai Women's School. Francina also met a woman in Nagoya named Yoshida Etsu, and after having her study childhood education for a year, had her come to be a teacher at Eiwa Kindergarten, which she founded in 1886. She established the Eiwa Elementary School the same year, bringing in a teacher from Kanazawa Church.

At the time, theories of childhood education in Japan were very underdeveloped, and there was a great scarcity of Christian educators. Added to this was the need to renovate the buildings. These factors made it a very difficult time. Furthermore, the kindergarten and elementary school found themselves in the middle of the "storm of crisis in Christian education."

With strong will and determination, Francina endeavored to develop childhood education, of which there were few examples in Japan. Despite the central government's many obstacles, she was able to keep the Eiwa Elementary School in continued operation until it was forced to close in 1903. It is said that Francina, who was hospitalized in California, cried through the night when she heard of this.

Through the wisdom and perseverance of Francina and her successors at Eiwa Kindergarten, the legacy of country's oldest Christian kindergarten has had a lasting and continuing impact in the field of early education in Japan.

After having recovered from her hospitalization, Francina Porter returned to Japan, where she was able to continue to pursue her passion and opened another kindergarten in Kyoto. Later, in 1939, she passed away in California at the age of 79. (Tr. AKO)

—Umezome Nobuo, head
Historical Archives of Hokuriku Gakuin University
Kanazawa, Chubu District

60 Years in Japan: “I Am Happy”

by Shirley M. Juten, retired United Methodist missionary
Former Professor, Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin Junior College

*The training center of Izumi Church, Tokyo, is located in Kita-Karuizawa of Gunma Prefecture, a place famous as a summer resort. Quite a few members of other churches have probably camped there during the summer. Shirley Juten lives in a little house on the site. After almost 60 years since she was sent to Japan from the U.S., she shared about her dedicated life as follows.**

I was born and grew up in Minnesota, U.S.A. —a cold place where the temperature sometimes goes down to 30 degrees below zero in the wintertime. My parents, who served as officers of the Evangelical Church and principal of the church school, seemed to be proud of my becoming a missionary. I say “seemed,” for I, their daughter, was away in a foreign country and did not stay with them for more than a few weeks at a time, and even then, I only went home once every few years. They must have felt lonely. When I told them of my decision to become a missionary, however, they agreed with me, saying, “It is good to work for others.”

It was at a summer camp of the church when I was ten years old that I decided to be a missionary. Every night, we enjoyed a camp fire and ice cream that we bought at the refreshment stand. On the last night, a special meeting took place, but having missed the announcement of the meeting, I and a friend of mine appeared in rough clothes and with ice cream in hand, while everyone else was dressed up. Unable to hide the ice cream in our pockets, we could only embarrassingly swallow it down as quickly as possible.

At that meeting, the missionary asked the audience after the sermon: “Is there anybody who wants to become a missionary?” Looking around, I saw a few older children I respected holding up their hands. Wishing to erase the shameful feelings I had earlier, I too instinctively held up my hand. Consequently, everything started at that moment. I raised my hand just to be a good girl, but the gesture meant a promise to God. From that time, I prayed and prayed, continuing to ask myself if this was the will of God.

Even though I was still unsure while in high school, I entered a college that emphasized social welfare studies and majored in the Bible and Christian education in order to become a missionary. I got a job after graduating from college, but at last I convinced myself that it was God’s will for me to be a missionary. Immediately, I made contact with the mission board, and my mission in Japan was decided upon within three months. After completing graduate study in child education, I was on board a ship for Japan when I was 25 years old.

For 43 years, I taught Christian education and childcare. For the first five years, I gave lectures in English by way of an interpreter, but after that, being told to “do it myself,” I made the effort to lecture in Japanese. It was hard for me, but probably also hard for the students.



Shirley M. Juten, former missionary professor at Toyo Eiwa in Tokyo

Most people never have the opportunity to enter deeply into a different culture and live there. I feel that I have been blessed with this opportunity, so I have enjoyed myself immensely on the job and in an environment closely connected with the Japanese people. Thus, I gradually became not just someone set apart, but their comrade. Even though I experienced difficulties, such as being forced to cancel the graduation worship during the time of student riots [in the 1970s], when I also served as Director of Christian Activities, I have never thought of going back to the U.S., even after I retired in 1996.

Since my retirement, I have lived in this small house in Kita-Karuizawa on the site of the training center of Izumi Church, Tokyo, with which I became associated when asked to hold a Bible class during my first days in Japan.

There is no church around here, and during the summer when people come to their cabins for vacations, we have held services at the training center these past 19 years. On the other hand, although those who live in my neighborhood and the local farmers are not Christians, I am now closely connected with them, for I have held Christmas celebrations with their children every year.

Because I have no car, many of my friends take me in their cars for shopping. I also often take busses and taxis. Although inconvenient—as well as a little expensive—my no-car policy brings me friendship with various people. A few years ago, when I suddenly felt sick and had to be hospitalized, some bus drivers and taxi drivers, wondering why I did not appear as a passenger, anxiously asked the police to check on my condition.

Because of my health, for a recent few years, I spend a couple of months in the summer in Kita-Karuizawa and the rest of the year in a Christian facility in Gunma Prefecture. I am thankful for the protected life in this facility. Being a foreigner, I stand out anyway, and so I think my presence among these people serves as a testimony of God’s love for them. (Tr. AY)

—*Shinto no Tomo (Believers’ Friend)*
*(A summary by the *Shinto no Tomo*)

Ministry in a Japanese Canadian Community

by Yoko Kihara, Kyodan missionary, Minister of the United Church of Canada
Fraser Valley Japanese United Church
Surrey, British Columbia, Canada

I was appointed as a half-time minister at Fraser Valley Japanese United Church in Surrey, British Columbia in 2005. It was difficult to support the livelihood of my family, so my husband, two daughters, and I have been financially supported by friends in the Kyodan in Japan. The term of the first appointment was three years, but it was renewed, and thankfully our congregation has been receiving a United Church of Canada Home Mission Support Grant since 2010. Although our membership is shrinking, I am still continuing and developing the ministry in the Japanese-Canadian community here.

Christian mission began among Japanese people on the west coast of Canada in 1892, and the Japanese Methodist Church in Vancouver and on Vancouver Island were the first to be founded. There were seven Japanese United Churches on the west coast before World War II. When war broke out, Japanese-Canadian people living within 100 miles of the west coast were relocated, and they and their churches lost their property. Rev. William McWilliams, who had served as an overseas missionary in Japan for 21 years before the war, worked very hard to help Japanese-Canadian people in the internment camp during the war. One of his greatest contributions was providing high school education within the internment camp by calling on missionaries who had worked in Japan before the war and by caring for young Japanese-Canadian people spiritually. Thanks to the devotional work of McWilliams and other missionaries, many people were baptized in the internment camp and formed UCC Japanese-Canadian churches all over Canada.

At the end of the war, McWilliams came out of the internment camp with the Japanese-Canadian people and encouraged them to stay and to survive in Canada, since he knew there was starvation and confusion in Japan just after the war. In 1950, the British Columbian government finally permitted Japanese-Canadian people to go back to the coast, and McWilliams also moved to South Surrey, visited struggling Japanese people all over Fraser Valley, and formed four Home Gathering Groups. Thanks to his devotion and passion for ministry, many Japanese-Canadian first- and second-generation people were baptized. Fraser Valley Japanese United Church grew as it provided a community and a sense of home where people could share Japanese food with each other, learn English and the basic knowledge about being a Canadian citizen, and meet a caring pastor who guided them to the Christian faith.

After the 1980s, Canadian immigration policy changed, and as Japan developed economically, the number of immigrants from Japan drastically decreased. Many of the recent immigrants from Japan married non-Japanese people, so they no longer belong to the Japanese community. Therefore, our congregation is shrinking year by year and financially struggles to support even a half-time minister. I think it would have been an easy decision for me just to complete the three-year appointment and go back to Japan. But I felt a sense of calling to serve this tiny faith community, just as God had loved the people of Israel because of their small numbers and weakness (Deuteronomy 7). Also, our two children had adjusted to the Canadian culture of diversity and chose to stay here to complete their post-secondary education. Our family decided to apply for landed immigrant status, and I enrolled in the admission process to become a UCC ordained minister to continue the ministry in Canada. Both processes took about three years. I was accepted by the United Church of Canada as an ordained minister in June 2010, and my whole family was accepted as landed immigrants in November 2010.

During these processes, I met many young Japanese intermarried families in this area and learned that each family was partly isolated; had problems with their children's education; and needed a place to meet, make friends, and hang out. We started an outreach gathering for children once or twice a month from July 2009, and usually 10 to 15 children and their mothers gather together. Those children and their families naturally participated in special services, such as at Easter and Christmas, and in special events, such as summer picnics and festivals.

Since the Fraser Valley Japanese congregation is peaceful and caring, and since its senior members enjoyed the children's participation in services and other events as well as the interaction with young families, gradually the congregation and young families were united in a sense of community. Since the lives of children and young families are very busy today, we cannot expect every child to come every time. However, after the natural disaster in Japan on March 11, 2011, two single-parent families were evacuated from the nuclear disaster area and joined our children's group. I found that everyone needs a sense of belonging and am grateful that our small community is serving others in need beyond our expectation.

We also started a seniors' outreach gathering from July 2010 and invited isolated first-generation Japanese people. We meet once each month, and I lead easy physical exercises and stretches and also lead the singing of Japanese traditional songs and famous hymns. Then we have a potluck lunch, share with each other important information for seniors, and enjoy talking. Seniors living alone, without many opportunities to meet and eat together, look forward to attending the next gathering. About ten people regularly attend.

Seniors are generally losing things, such as good health, house, partner, abilities, so experience a sense of loneliness. I have realized that the loneliness and isolation of immigrant seniors involve much more than just that. Their children speak only English, have internalized Canadian values, and never live together with their parents. Although elderly Japanese-Canadian people somehow keep Japanese traditional values, never complain, and are very patient, they increasingly have trouble adapting to Canadian food, and many of them have difficulty in assisted living and care facilities. I think that how to support the lives of elderly immigrants in Canada will become a serious issue, and I believe that this small outreach ministry will contribute to the creation of a caring and supportive network for isolated Japanese elderly people in our community.

Although new immigrants to Canada are increasing, the United Church of Canada could not include these people, partly due to its liberal theology and the lack of cultural sensitivity. Many UCC churches share space with ethnic minority faith communities, not to reach out to them but to raise money for the maintenance of the building, and there are many problems and conflicts between two or three cultural groups. In 2006, the UCC General Council approved the proposal of a vision to become an "intercultural" church. To be "intercultural" means being non-judgmental, learning, celebrating, and understanding of different cultures in order to build reciprocal relationships and create a new and rich culture. After the vision was approved, I attended three national Intercultural Conferences and received racial justice training and training for intercultural ministry. Since Fraser Presbytery, to which Fraser Valley Japanese United Church

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The Organized Long-term Sending of Volunteers The West Tokyo District Approach

Over the past year, congregations and districts in the Kyodan, together with their members as individuals, have been searching for the best ways both to give and to organize aid to the stricken areas and churches of the East Japan disaster area. As a part of our continuing coverage of the disaster response, we want to report on the unique approach of West Tokyo District, as detailed in a talk given by Makabe Iwao, pastor of Soai Church and chairman of the West Tokyo District East Japan Disaster Relief Committee.

In the West Tokyo District, a proposal was made by its core leadership immediately after the earthquake and tsunami to form a disaster relief committee, and this was formally enacted at the April 4 meeting of the district's Commission on Mission. In addition to forming the East Japan Disaster Relief Committee, the commission also approved the sending of volunteers and the collection of relief funds.

Makabe pointed out three main reasons for this quick action. The first was that immediately after the disaster, on March 21, at a workshop sponsored by West Tokyo District, a report was presented in words and photos by photographer Momoi Kazuma, the speaker, about his visit to the disaster area just one day before. In addition, Kyodan Executive Secretary on General Affairs Fujimori Yuki, who had been sent to inspect the aftermath of the disaster, gave his report. Both of these reports had a great impact on the congregations.

The second reason for the quick action was the result of the report from Noda Taku, director of the Student Christian Fellowship, located within the district, who had been sent as a district pastor to the Tohoku District Disaster Relief Center ten days after the earthquake. His report on the situation and relief activities already in progress formed the foundation for the district's response.

The third reason was the experience of previous relief efforts organized by West Tokyo District following past

disasters, such as the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995 in Kobe) and the Chuetsu Earthquake (2004 in Niigata). There were still some unused funds collected for those efforts, so these funds were available for immediate use in specific ways in this emergency.

The first team of district volunteers went on April 25, and three additional teams were later sent, so that by the end of November 2011, more than 200 persons served in various ways in the disaster area. The volunteers were comprised of a wide variety of people, including clergy and lay members, along with students from mission schools, and even some with no Christian connection whatever. The funds to send the volunteers were supplied from within the district, and all together more than five million yen has been contributed to this effort. We can say that this shows the consciousness and concern of each individual of the district.

The specific work is being directed by the Center for Disaster Victims of the Tohoku District of the Kyodan. The places of service are in the Arahama area in Wakabayashi Ward in Sendai City. In the beginning, the work was centered on mud removal but has changed with time, as volunteers are now also helping with projects like house repair.

At first, it was not easy to break through the local people's preconceptions of the Christian faith, so they were slow to warm up to the volunteers. But together with Noda's persistent dialog with the people and the volunteers not only providing physical labor but also helping the victims work through their emotions, trust was gradually won. Finally, the main concern now is the long-term continuation of the relief effort. "Nothing is more important than a long-term continuation of the work," says Makabe. (Tr. GM)

Summarized by Nishio Misao, member
Suginami Church, West Tokyo District and
KNL Editorial Committee member

Based on a *Kyodan Shinpo* (*Kyodan Times*) article

(Cont'd from p.6)

belongs, set intercultural ministry and multigenerational ministry as strategic goals for its vision for mission in 2010, I have been expected to lead and enhance the intercultural ministry in Fraser Presbytery as one of the ethnic minority ministers.

In addition, Fraser Valley Japanese United Church has been financially supported by a UCC Home Mission Grant since 2010, so I need to contribute to the wider church in various ways. I visited a local congregation that is intentionally becoming an intercultural church and led intercultural workshops. I also organized a workshop within Fraser Presbytery, inviting a facilitator from Los Angeles, and formed a study group for the ministry. It takes time and energy to understand different cultures and to build a reciprocal and creative relationship, but it is also exciting and inspiring to enhance and to explore the ministry as I deeply know and think about how I was shaped in Japan and in my family, how I accepted the Christian faith, and how I am going to integrate Japanese traditional values and spirituality with North American Christianity through the intercultural conversation.

Today, every UCC Japanese church is aging and shrinking, and some of them are intentionally trying to become an intercultural church by embracing other cultural groups as well as the third- and fourth-generation of Japanese-Canadian people who married non-Japanese people. Although our congregation has few opportunities to join or participate in

exchanges with other cultural people because of the language barrier, the rate of intermarriage of Japanese people is very high, and we try to include non-Japanese spouses and their parents in special occasions by having bilingual services.

Canada is a country that accepts many immigrants and refugees from abroad, and our environment is changing year by year. In former years, each cultural group formed its own communities and tried to avoid the cultural crush by keeping its distance. Now our children are living in a much more diverse situation than before, and we are enjoying various cultural foods and festivals. Some people and groups are intentionally trying to develop an understanding of each other that goes beyond the visible part of culture. In our community in Surrey, multi-faith conversation and interaction happens regularly. For example, people of various faiths gathered and prayed together for the people in Japan right after the disaster there on March 11, 2011. The leader of each faith group prayed for Japan in its own language, and I was deeply touched and felt that our people were being lifted up all over the world by prayers that transcend our differences.

I do not know how long we can continue the ministry in the Japanese-Canadian community here, but I trust God, who guided us and prepared the way for us until today. As Abraham and Sarah traveled in the desert without knowing where they were to go, we will continue our faith journey as a family of God, with hope given by God.

A Message From General Secretary

Reflections on the Great East Japan Earthquake Relief Effort

Nearly a year has passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake devastated Japan. The focus of the Kyodan's efforts began with debris removal but has now shifted to local church sanctuary rebuilding. Even within that, the long-term goal is to rebuild the church. "Rebuilding the church" refers not only to constructing new buildings and repairing damaged ones but also to building a foundation to support reconstruction of the society that has been ravaged by the disaster.

As we look back on the Kyodan's relief effort so far, my hope is that we can utilize that experience to move forward with our continued support efforts.

On March 12, the day following the earthquake, the Kyodan's Relief Planning Committee was established under General Secretary Naito, and relief work was initiated. We were able to make immediate use of the emergency fund approved for such catastrophes on Dec. 20 and 21 at the first Executive Council meeting of the 37th General Assembly biennium.

- 1) From March 13 to 16, Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi and four others were dispatched to evaluate the situation in general.
- 2) A fundraising campaign was started by the Committee on Social Concerns.
- 3) Reporting of information began through Kyodan publications and on our website.
- 4) A total of 10,500,000 yen has been sent to the three most affected districts to begin relief activities.
- 5) Although the Relief Headquarters was organized late, in communication with each of the districts, decisions were made as to how we would support the region through the three hubs of Sendai, Ishinomaki, and Tono.

At the end of June, the Relief Planning Committee became part of the Great East Japan Earthquake Relief Headquarters.

The Great East Japan Earthquake Relief Headquarters was set up on March 22 by the permanent Executive Council members and officially approved by the Executive Council on April 18.

Ten people are at the headquarters: the moderator, vice-moderator, and secretary of the Kyodan, along with five members of the Executive Council and one representative each from the Japan Christian Social Work League and the mission schools. Our policy is to "support rebuilding churches that serve the people of the area in their salvation [restoration]." The entire Kyodan will work to fulfill its responsibility, with the Kyodan moderator serving as director of the headquarters, and moderators of the most devastated districts and the Kyodan general secretary attending meetings as well.

Already there have been nine meetings to decide many important issues.

- 1) Fundraising principles were established, and fundraising

was begun. The goal for domestic contributions is 1 billion yen, and for foreign contributions, 1.2 billion yen.

- 2) Members of the Headquarters Committee have made trips to observe the earthquake disaster zone, and the committee has gradually changed its approach, in accordance with the various needs recognized. Particular attention has been given to children of church kindergartens and nursery schools through our project to protect the lives of children (such as clean air camps, etc.), with the realization that there are many issues.
- 3) Rebuilding Christian social welfare facilities.
- 4) Long-term scholarship support for students of devastated areas.
- 5) Mental healthcare for disaster victims, especially those living in temporary housing units.
- 6) The emergency symposium "Christianity and the Current Crisis in Japan," which was held Aug. 29-30, was a wonderful gathering. Pastors, seminarians, teachers, and social work-related workers were given an opportunity to think and discuss what this great disaster means for us.

As I looked at the relief activities within the districts affected by the disaster, I realized that there were numerous cases in which the aid given was donated directly, without passing through the Kyodan Relief Planning Headquarters.

In this, we can see the individual character of each church and district and how each contributes in a meaningful way to the support of earthquake victims. However, thinking of the long term, I believe it is important that churches recognize the importance of belonging to the Kyodan and hope they will use the Kyodan's relief effort route more extensively when trying to assist churches in need. (Tr. WJ)

—Naito Tomeyuki, general secretary

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◆ *The Kyodan website has a new address* ◆
The new URL of the revamped English page of the Kyodan website is now located at:

<http://uccj-e.org/>

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