

Post-earthquake Relief Issues Focus of Executive Council Meeting

The 3rd Executive Council meeting of the 2010-11 General Assembly was held July 4-5, with all council members in attendance. Following the suggestion proposed at the previous meeting by council member Kita Kiyoshi, the meeting began with a brief worship service led by Kita, in which he gave a short sermon. There is no record of any previous Executive Council meeting beginning with such a worship service, so this was probably the first time.

Moderator Ishibashi Hideo began the proceedings with greetings to “set the stage,” reporting on the visitations to each district assembly by one of the four Executive Council officers. He also reported on the efforts of each district to help with the relief operations surrounding the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and announced that the moderators of each of the 17 districts would gather sometime in November for a special meeting.

After each committee gave its respective report, Vice-moderator Okamoto Tomoyuki gave a short presentation entitled, “Evaluation of the Present Situation Surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant.” He gave examples of the radiation pollution and its effects, sounding the alarm, as it were, and providing a basis for deliberation on the issues the Kyodan needs to address concerning this.

The evening session of the first day and the morning session of the second were spent discussing the reports of the Disaster Relief Planning Committee and the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters. As an initial response to the disaster, the Disaster Relief Planning Committee was established the following day, March 12, and the operational headquarters of the effort was established following the decision of the special Executive Council meeting held on April 18. The report covered the specific activities of the operational headquarters and the decisions made.

Moderator Ishibashi Hideo has served as the head of the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters, and along with the other members and the related executive secretary, he reported on the policies being followed concerning the relief operations and what the future plans are. First, budgets for the reconstruction and repairs needed for the affected churches are to be calculated, and then an equitable system of fundraising is to be implemented.

The moderators from the three districts that were severely affected each gave a report on the issues being faced and the needs that exist. Ou District indicated that it decided

not to establish a support center per se in the district but instead to deal with support issues via the district management committee and the district emergency support committee. Tohoku District made the following request: “We would like to work with the Kyodan to have a coordinated response from both the national and district levels. When it came to the issue of relief support for Haramachi Church and Haramachi Seiai Nursery School, there was disagreement within the district because there was no time for the development of a coordinated understanding. While gratitude for the relief support was, of course, expressed, the lack of coordination was a problem.” Similarly, Kanto District requested that basic policies be put into place as to how to deal with the radiation problems and, likewise, that guidelines be established for support to be given to Asian Rural Institute and also the rebuilding of facilities related to local churches.

Based on these requests, a section concerning “response to radiation pollution” was added to the basic policies, and specific goals for relief contributions based on the realities of each district were instituted.

With respect to fundraising, a nationwide goal of 1 billion yen (\$13 million) was established. There was no opposition to this plan and, in fact quite the opposite, as numerous participants expressed their strong intent to see the goal accomplished. In response to the question as to whether the direct support already being made by individual districts should be included in this amount, Moderator Ishibashi stated that he “strongly desired” that such relief support be included in those figures.

As to the relationship between the Executive Council and the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters, the explanation given was that the Executive Council would deliberate on and then make decisions concerning the broad outlines of relief support and other important items, including any adjustments to the basic policies. As to what specific measures would be taken to implement basic policies, those would be determined and carried out by the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters. These actions would all be reported on to the Executive Committee or the Executive Council as a whole for acknowledgement.

All of these agenda items were dealt with and passed.

(Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary

Tohoku District's Disaster Victims' Relief Center

—Noda Taku, director*
Student Christian Fellowship

The activities of the Tohoku District's Disaster Victims' Relief Center are mainly focused in the Arahama and Ishinomaki areas of the Wakabayashi Ward in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture. Our desire is to see the restoration of the homes and lives of the people living there. Arahama is the area closest to the center of Sendai that was damaged by the tsunami, and very soon after the disaster, news reporters were saying that 200 to 300 dead bodies had been found there. We decided very early on that we were going to work in this area, alongside the people living there, and we began our support with prayer and countless visits to Shichigo Elementary School, which was being used as a refuge center. I would like to tell you about the important guiding principles of our work.

Is this disaster an opportunity for evangelism?

My own answer to this question is that it is not appropriate to become involved with such a hidden agenda. We are looking to see how we can share others' burdens by coming alongside them and suffering with them. Such a blessing is the only aim of our work.

Because of this stance, we have made it a rule that none of our clothes, cars, or bicycles carry any kind of logo advertising our group. We do not all wear the same clothes or have identification badges or any other kind of mark or symbol. While on site, the group leaders are, of course, carrying identification or business cards, but these are kept out of sight. This reflects our feeling that each of us has a personal involvement as an individual believer. The only information that we see as important is our own names, and to display these we write in felt-tip pen on sticky labels. We are proud to be involved not as an organization, but personally, as individual believers, and selling our organization is of no use either to ourselves or to the people we are working with.

The Biblical approach to service: "Rejoice together, weep together"

The policy for our work was decided on very simply, as it is shown to us through the Bible and prayer. It is, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep." It is important to us to follow the approach to service and walking with others that we see in the life of Christ.

"Slow work"—the importance of inefficiency. Another policy for our activities is the idea of "slow work," meaning that we attach more importance to the actual person we are dealing with than to any achievements or results. When we first started our work in March, we would spend all day clearing away rubble and mud, only to see how much could be cleared away by heavy machinery in just a few minutes. Faced with such a scene, we felt extremely helpless, and realized just how exhausted we were both mentally and physically. Such experiences made us aware that for us it was to be people that was important, not efficiency or results. We came to want to engage with this disaster slowly and carefully, knowing the emotion of a sharing that involves getting down on our knees and getting dirty.

We travel by bicycle. We use bicycles as the means of transportation for our work. At first this was for practical reasons, as bicycles can maneuver in and out of the debris and park in gaps between the rubble, and are not affected by gasoline shortages. However, what we think is most important is that we are exerting ourselves to make the visit. As a result, this approach has brought us rich rewards. Our bicycles running around the streets pulling trailers full of spades and other tools have become a well-known sight. Everyone greets us, and people have been known to put soft drinks or other gifts in our baskets when we are stopped at traffic lights, so that we feel their recognition and love. Also, because we use bicycles in the area struck by the tsunami, the atmosphere and the smells are close and very real to us. When participants first go, they become unable to see the road ahead for their tears, and so need mental preparation for becoming involved in the relief work. From the center of Sendai, we have a 14 km bicycle ride each way, but it doesn't feel like a long way.

Don't predetermine or impose needs. We want to take care in responding to what the individuals we are dealing with see as their own needs, whether these are for things or for actions. If we ourselves are not able to do anything, then we add our voices to the cry, "Please help us!" And if there is no response, then we also grieve. To someone facing a house with everything deep in mud and despairing of ever being able to live in it again, we offer the words "We'll help," as encouragement. To someone who is losing hope when faced with fields that have been damaged by salt, we simply say, "We'll help." As examples of things that have actually happened, we met one elderly person suffering from a backache, and so we gave her a back rub while we were talking. When we met someone who really liked to talk, we all stopped what we were doing and listened. When talking at the front door of a house that had a heap of the area's rubble piled up in front of it, we said, "Isn't this terrible! May we plant some flowers for you?" And they let us plant flowers. We see all of these things as "needs," and as a way of serving people as individuals who matter.

(Cont'd on p.3)



Tohoku Relief Center volunteers praying for victims of the disaster at 2:46 p.m. on June 11, as they do on the 11th of every month (here in the Arahama area of Wakabayashi-ku in Sendai)

The Church as the Vessel of God's Mercy

by Kawano Shinji, missionary
Juni Shito Church (Church of the Twelve Apostles), Hokkai District

(The sermon, based on Rom. 9:19-24, delivered at the September 2010 Conference on "The Church That Walks with People with Disabilities," organized by the Hokkai District Mission Committee)

Pastoral care is certainly involved in forming the church, for the church is a community of people who are called by God. Yet, it is difficult to define what pastoral care is. Pastoral care, for me, is identical with pastoral relationship. First, it takes place in an existentialistic encounter between a care giver and a care recipient, whoever they may be. We are not exclusively a giver or a recipient but have elements of both. It is, indeed, a relational matter of how much we can keep truthful and faithful relationships with each other. For it is to center around Christian consciousness that God calls and invites us to exist in such a caring relationship. It is not whether we are a pastoral-care giver or a pastoral-care recipient. Neither is it what we are doing to each other. But it is what we are to each other. It is a faith community matter, thus challenging ourselves as to how we exist for each other. The church is called to be such a model community for the world God has made. Furthermore, God is faithful and truthful to us as God's people.

Today, our scripture reading is from Rom. 9:19-24. It refers to our transformation. We were the object of God's wrath due to our sin, yet have become the object of God's mercy. It lies in God's freedom. We become the vessel of God's mercy, furthermore, aiming at becoming the vessel of God's glory. God gives mercy to whomever God wants to give it. It implies the profound theological issue of election. God's mercy by election is purposeful to serve God's glory.

The word "mercy," especially the Japanese term we use in our daily life, is often sentimental, elusive, and negative even when we feel sorry for someone with whom we sympathize. But God's mercy is not. It is positive and constructive, for it gives the meaning of life. It is constructive, even messianic. It is God's mercy that gives meaningfulness to any existence, and it is God's mercy that transforms each to be one who would live to glorify God.

It is God's mercy that is the foundation of the covenant between God and us. God's mercy is in the relationship based upon God's faithfulness and truthfulness to us. The church into which we are called is founded on this mercy. Thus we are called to be faithful and truthful to each other. The church lies in such a covenantal relationship, thus being God's partner and requiring God's mercy to reflect God's glory.

The theme of this conference says, "How can we form an inclusive church that includes people with disabilities?" or "How can we form a church for everyone?" But we should not forget that as a vessel of God's mercy, the church is to include those with disabilities. This inclusiveness does not, however, mean that able-bodied people show pity on those with disabilities. It is not simply a matter of sympathy.

Almost 20 percent of the members of my congregation are mentally handicapped people—those with bipolar syndrome, schizophrenia, depression, panic syndrome and so on. I am having a bit of difficulty with pastoral care, not due to such mentally handicapped people themselves but due to the fact that able-bodied people find it hard to receive them as part of the congregation. The reason that they are hesitant is that they lack understanding. Care is not just dealing with the disability like a patient on a doctor's list but also with the whole personhood of the person with a disability.

Whether or not a person has a disability, each has already been given the meaning of life as a partner of God. As a partner of God, the church includes all people even before it is formed. All are partners with each other as much as God is a partner with us. We are the vessels of God's mercy to glorify God, for God so loves us.

From Hokkai Kyoku Tsushin (Hokkai District News)

(Cont'd from p.2)

In addition, the life of the church has been enriched in many ways. Our day starts with us holding hands in a circle for prayer. We go by bicycle to wherever we are working, and when we return we offer prayers of thanks for our safety during the day. The volunteers who come from all over Japan (more than 100 of them a day during the Golden Week holidays at the beginning of May) have stayed in the local churches. The women's groups of the churches render their services by providing hot meals at the end of the workday. The work of our center is basically made possible with money donated by churches. Of course, for the people who are sent from the churches of other areas—but especially for the many participating volunteers who did not know anything

about the church—it has been an important experience to be enveloped in church life. So it turns out that before returning home many people, without being pressured into it at all, have attended Sunday worship at the churches in which they have been staying. Through the work of the church, they have had the experience of taking part in relief activities based on the words of the Bible, and I believe that this will lead to abundant fruit in their future lives.

*Noda Taku is the assistant to the Kyodan executive secretary responsible for the Kyodan's Disaster Relief Program, and was formerly the on-site coordinator. He is also the director of Kyodan's Student Christian Fellowship in Tokyo. (Tr. SN)

Nannie B. Gaines—Teacher, Educator, Missionary, and Founder of Hiroshima Jogakuin

Although the MECS (Methodist Episcopal Church, South) was one of the last denominations to begin work in Japan, starting in 1886, it has influenced the education and the spiritual life of hundreds of thousands of young people since then. Much of the inspiration that touched the lives of students was the result of the lives of dedicated missionaries who left the safety and comfort of their homes to travel to a distant country to work in the field of education.

Walter Russell Lambuth came to Japan from China in 1886 with his father, James William Lambuth, who had been there as a medical missionary. Shortly after their arrival, they received a request from Sunamoto Teikichi, a young Japanese minister, who requested a missionary from the U.S. to help him teach at the school he had begun for young women in his hometown of Hiroshima. Bishop Lambuth's call to the MECS Mission Board resulted in the arrival of 27-year-old Nannie B. Gaines in 1887. For the next 45 years, as principal and principal emeritus, Gaines dedicated her life to Hiroshima Jogakuin, transforming it from a storefront school for girls to the first government-approved teacher training school for women in Hiroshima. Except for the years during World War II, Hiroshima Jogakuin would have an unbroken line of 73 missionaries, who would serve the school for more than 100 years.

Gaines captured the excitement and anxiety of arriving in a new country and embarking on a new mission: "I am sorry that every missionary cannot be the first recruit to a new and small mission. There is something inspiring in the fact that faith and trust in God are the only means, and it remains to be proven whether the work is to succeed or not." She arrived late one evening and began teaching the next morning. Sunamoto and the Lambuths had assembled about 30 students for the young teacher—not just young girls, but women married to government officials, army officers, and professional men. This was to be the first attempt at "higher" education for women in Hiroshima.

Gaines' early years at Eiwa Jogakko were filled with enormous challenges. Teachers had to be found; buildings had to be built; and the anti-Christian attitude among the conservative Hiroshima residents had to be overcome. When Gaines arrived, she not only brought a trunk with her personal things but also a piano, and one of the first things she did was to set up a music department within the school. By 1890, the first school building was up and operating. She was then approached by government officials, asking if she would start a kindergarten as well. She agreed and quickly built a new kindergarten building.

Unfortunately, in late 1891, a double tragedy struck. First the new kindergarten building was irreparably damaged by a late-summer typhoon, which was followed by a late-night fire that destroyed the main school building. However, Gaines was not to be easily defeated, and she continued classes in rented buildings and living rooms of supporters until new buildings could be constructed. Urgent appeals to the MECS Mission Board brought the permission to rebuild, and the girls' school and kindergarten reopened in 1892. An elementary school was added in 1893.

In 1895, the school changed its name to Hiroshima Jogakko to attract a broader range of students and to come into line



with the Japanese curriculum without losing its missionary foundation. By then, the Japanese government had come to realize the importance of establishing schools for young women and looked to Gaines' school as a model. In 1906, the school required an enlargement of its facilities and took on the status of koto jogakko (girls' higher school), in accordance with government requirements. The school continued to grow in numbers and influence, with most of the city's prominent citizens sending their daughters there, which insured financial support and status.

In 1916, Nannie B. Gaines was joined in Hiroshima by her younger sister, Rachel C. Gaines—which must have given her great comfort and support. Although not formally a missionary when she arrived, Rachel took on the teaching and outreach activities performed by other missionaries. In order to provide for her younger sister's eventual retirement, Gaines put aside part of her own pension to take care of her sister. However, when money was required for the purchase of additional land for another building, as required by the Ministry of Education, Gaines did not hesitate to withdraw the entire amount of \$10,000 for the purchase. Turning aside offers of private housing, the Gaines sisters insisted on living in the school dormitory building. Eventually, when a new dormitory was built, a private apartment was designed in the east wing for them. This is where Nannie B. Gaines spent the last part of her life. Rachel C. Gaines was a pillar of Hiroshima Jogakuin for 26 years, staying on even after her sister died. Her dedication to the school was such that it became her life's work.

By 1919, the school had 700 students and Gaines was considering retirement. However, just then, she was asked by the prefectural and city authorities to create a teacher training program for middle school and high school teachers of English, music, and domestic science. This meant that the school could be upgraded to junior college status, which she was happy to do. But it also required additional buildings and another round of grueling fundraising among friends and acquaintances on both sides of the Pacific Ocean. Miraculously, yet again, the money came in little by little, and once the funding was secured, Gaines could relax once more.

Finally, the time was right for Gaines to hand over the running of her school to someone else. Upon the recommendation of Bishop Lambuth, Rev. Stephen A. Stewart became Hiroshima Jogakuin's second principal, with Gaines taking the title of

(Cont'd on p.5)

Unification Association Concerns Aired at the Vatican

Members of Association of Japanese Churches on Unification Association Issues visited the Vatican, Feb. 21 -26, to exchange information and opinions on the Unification Association and other religious cults.

There were 12 members of the delegation, including Kito Masaki, a lawyer working with the National Council of Lawyers Against the "Spiritual Sell" Scam. Also included was one representative each from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, the Japan Baptist League, and the Episcopal Church of Japan. The other 8 members of the delegation were all Kyodan members, including Rev. Koide Nozomu, chair of the Commission on Mission of the 36th General Assembly period (2009-10) and head of the Kyodan Committee on Unification Association Issues; Rev. Iwasaki Takashi, former chair of the Commission on Mission and presently moderator of Kanagawa District; and Rev. Yoshida Yoshisato, chair of the Kyodan Committee on Unification Association Issues.

Arrangements for this meeting with Vatican representatives of the Roman Catholic Church have been in process for four years. From the Catholic side, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, (represented by its secretary Bishop Brian Farrell of Abitinae and one other), the Council for Inter-religious Dialog (represented by Undersecretary Monsignor Andrew Thanya-Ana Vissanu and one other) met with us at the office of the chair of the Governor of Vatican City, Cardinal Giovanni Layola, to discuss these issues for an extended time.

Needless to say, the Vatican does not recognize the Unification Association as a Christian church; neither is it in dialog with that organization. The same is true of the Mormon Church and the Jehovah's Witnesses. We were able to share much information and exchange views on the destructive nature of cults that use brainwashing techniques and damage people's personalities. While religion normally leads people into happiness, it's regrettable that sometimes the opposite is true as cults, such as the Unification Association, bring



The delegation from Japan in front of the Vatican

grief to many. Likewise, in Europe the cult "Scientologia" (Scientology) is also becoming a big problem.

The Vatican representatives expressed their support for and appreciation of the efforts of the Association of Japanese Churches on Unification Association Issues, and expressed its desire to see a worldwide conference on the problems posed by cults and sects. They emphasized the need for education and mission outreach.

Likewise, they told us that a similar delegation from Korea had visited them about a month prior to our visit to discuss the same issues. There certainly is a need for more public awareness of the proper roles of religion in society.

We owe much to the efforts of Father Kushi Ritsuo in helping make the arrangements, and we are grateful for the warm welcome we received from all of the various departments in the Vatican and for the opportunity to have an audience with the Pope. We also wish to express our gratitude to Father Wada Makoto, who has worked at the Vatican for 30 years, for his efforts on our behalf and for his translation services.

From *Kyodan Shinpo* (*Kyodan Times*)

—Harita Makoto, pastor, Toriizaka Church
Southwest Subdistrict, Tokyo

(Cont'd from p.4)

Principal Emeritus. This freed her to devote the rest of her life to evangelical work in Japan as well as in Korea and Taiwan, then in the Japanese colonies. She requested an automobile for her work and received what was termed the first "missionary Ford," which took her to villages around western Japan. She also became active in the Y.W.C.A. movement and became good friends with Kawai Michi and Tsuda Umeko, who were also influential Christian educators for women.

Gaines received several commendations from the Japanese government for her service to education, but the most significant official recognition was her audience with the Crown Prince in 1926, during his visit to Hiroshima. Along with other prominent Hiroshima residents, Gaines was also invited to the royal audience. Wearing a borrowed gown and hat, Gaines represented Hiroshima Jogakuin, giving the school even greater status and recognition.

Toward the end of her life, Gaines had already become a beloved and respected institution within Hiroshima. She was

an important influence in the lives of several generations of young women, who would themselves become influential teachers and homemakers. Around this time she wrote, "There is nothing that matters so much to me as the success of this school. It is not simply because my life has gone into it, but because of the work it should do for the women of the Orient."

When Nannie B. Gaines arrived in Hiroshima as the first MESD missionary in 1887, she was the first of 73 missionaries who would follow her. Gaines Hall commemorates her at the junior/senior high school and Gaines Chapel at the university, but her real legacy is the modern 21st century educational institution that Hiroshima Jogakuin has become.

—Ronald Klein, professor
Hiroshima Jogakin

Joint Buraku Liberation, Kanto District Caravan Held June-July 2011

The Buraku Liberation Center (BLC) and the Kyodan's Kanto District jointly sponsored the Buraku Liberation, Kanto District Caravan 2011. Held between June 25 and July 4, the five members of the caravan, including the summer intern at the BLC, visited churches along the 1,177 km (729.74 mile) route in the five prefectures of the district, gave presentations calling for an end to buraku discrimination, and did field work along the way. A total of 1,373 people attended the events at 22 separate locations. Two of the caravan members gave the following reports on their meaningful experiences during that time.

Fieldwork Investigation at the Ashio Copper Mine by Inukai Mitsuhiro

As the schedule included the "Ashio Seminar," I was looking forward to once again studying about Tanaka Shozo, but the seminar turned out to be something very different. What I saw was the remains of the Ashio Copper Mine, the memorial stone commemorating the Korean and Chinese workers who had been forcibly taken there, and a barren mountain that remained in spite of concerted efforts over the years to replant a forest on it.

In the Chikuho District of Kyushu is located the famous Hyuga Cemetery, which contains the graves of Koreans forcibly brought to the area to work in the large Omine Coal Mine operated by the Furukawa Mining Company. The pictures of Chikuho, drawn by Yamamoto Sakubei, have been registered in the UNESCO World Documentary Heritage program, but I was surprised to learn that the application to make Ashio Copper Mine a World Heritage Site is being pursued from the standpoint of something that contributed to the modernization of Japan rather than as a "negative heritage."

As our guide, Hirayama Masamichi (pastor of Yojomachi Church in Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture) pointed to a naturally secluded valley surrounded by mountains on three sides and a river on the other, he said, "This is where there was a settlement of Koreans." Now there are various campsites and seminar houses where lots of children and young people come to study. But I wonder what it is that they actually study.

Unless someone explains the true history of this place, it will—just like Chikuho—disappear into oblivion. It will also be like the nearby Toshogu Shrine area in Nikko, which we had also visited earlier. There, the ancient road leading up to the shrines is lined with cedar trees that have grown to giant size over the centuries. There is, however, a break in the line of trees on both sides of the highway. This is where it went by the area of the discriminated-against buraku. Of the tens of thousands of visitors that go up that road every year, I wonder how many of them even notice it.



Caravan participants inside the Ashio Copper Mine



Caravan participants at the train station in Sayama

Sayama by Koito Kensuke

On July 4, the last day of the Caravan, caravan members along with other interested persons, spent the morning visiting the buraku area in Sayama, where the biggest frame-up in the history of buraku discrimination occurred—the infamous "Sayama Incident." As the result of the incessant pressure put on him by the police, along with their false promises, Ishikawa Kazuo consented to signing the trumped-up confession, in which the details of his alleged crime were written up. But as we followed the supposed route of the crime, looking at the details, it is very obvious that the story cooked up by the investigators is utterly impossible. Following the "confession," as is, certainly drove that point home to me.

Unfortunately, the relevant points along the route have changed rather dramatically over the years, as roads were widened and paved and new buildings built, so that little remains of the situation as it was at the time of the incident almost 50 years ago. I could not help but think that those who want to hide the facts of this incident are more than happy to see these changes in the landscape.

In the midst of that, however, the headquarters of the effort to overturn the Sayama trial is in a small museum-like structure that is a re-creation of Ishikawa's home at the time of the incident. There we met with Ishikawa himself to listen to what he had to say. He finished his talk with a Tanka poem that he had written, which roughly translates as: "The tears resulting from my sufferings, instead of drying up, have become a river. Riding on that torrent, let's break down the walls of the court." As I listened to that poem, I could only long for the day when he would finally get his day in court to prove his innocence.

In the afternoon, we all went to nearby Sayama Church for the final worship service concluding the "Buraku Liberation, Kanto District Caravan 2011." All five caravan members gave reports on their experiences and shared various pictures, along with some songs. Ishikawa Kazuo gave another talk after that, and we all listened intently to his appeal.

Ishikawa's wife also talked to us about their ongoing fight, and we all felt anew the importance of continuing to support them in their struggle. It was a fitting ending to our caravan tour. (Tr. TB)

From *Kyodan Shinpo* (*Kyodan Times*)

Message of Peace Aug. 7, 2011

by Ishibashi Hideo, Kyodan moderator and
Choi Young Shin, Korean Christian Church in Japan moderator

The Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, which resulted in the unprecedented number of nearly 20,000 dead and missing persons, has given those of us living in Japan great sorrow and pain. The tsunami that swallowed 500 kilometers (310 miles) of coastline stretching from the Tohoku region to the Kanto region has particularly shown us the fearful power of nature, which mercilessly destroyed people's lives, and has revealed how weak we are in the midst of such tragedy. In this difficult time, we Christians in Japan who have been given an "incomprehensible hardship" search for meaning, while supporting together the many people who are suffering great pain, and try to understand and bring hope to start down the road to reconstruction. Why? Because we believe that the despairing event of "the death on the cross of God's only Son," made by God to be the vessel for saving all the people of the earth, was God's plan for our incomprehensible conversion to become vessels to bring hope to the world.

We, the Kyodan and the Korean Church of Christ in Japan (KCCJ), through our respective reconstruction plans, have determined to be present with the people who are suffering, not only Christians but also all people affected by the disaster. For this reason, besides emergency support, which is already being provided, we work with people to help them return to a normal lifestyle and to give spiritual support. Along with support to help with the reconstruction of churches, we are creating mid- and long-term support plans. Jesus said: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:40) So we have a great interest in assisting those who are the most vulnerable in devastated areas, such as children, persons who have disabilities or are aging, and foreigners, to return to a normal life. When necessary, within our separate support plans, both the Kyodan and the KCCJ will cooperate and assist each other in accordance with our mission agreement established in 1984.

On the other hand, this tragedy has shown people who live in Japan the mistaken road they have been walking. Because of the power of the earthquake and tsunami, which exceeded anyone's imagination, the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant released a frightening amount of dangerous radiation and continues to endanger many people. Even though Japan is the only country to suffer from nuclear weapons and should know better than any other country the danger of nuclear power, slogans such as "necessity," "safety," "economics", and recently, "environmentalism" have been used to promote nuclear proliferation. Also, even aware of the continued contamination from this terrible accident, the government concealed much of the truth and raised the standard radiation contamination limit, thus creating an emergency situation and disregarding their responsibility for the health and lives of the people. Already, the slogans that have been supporting nuclear energy promotion, "necessity," "safety," "economics", and "environmentalism," have clearly been exposed as falsehood. Through this accident the government has placed the people living in eastern Japan in danger and has polluted the environment of the entire world for the pursuit of convenience and profit, and the people of this country who supported this pursuit caused this "man-made disaster" by getting involved in something they should never have touched. We arrogant human beings have received a warning for our sin.

The Kyodan and the KCCJ sincerely wish to walk together for this cause and to pray for the following items related to this unprecedented disastrous situation:

1. Long-term support and mental health care for the victims of affected communities as well as sufficient support from the government to match the efforts of the victims;
2. Sufficient support and care for foreign victims of the disaster as well as monitoring of abuse or discrimination.
3. Absolute disclosure rather than concealment of the truth concerning radiation contamination and other facts by the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO);
4. Complete security for people in the mandatory evacuation area, emergency evacuation area, and preparedness evacuation area;
5. Explanation of the rationale for why, after the nuclear accident, the radiation contamination limit for TEPCO workers and for children was permitted to be raised and a return of the limits to appropriate numbers; and
6. Ceasing the operation of all nuclear power plants and the removal of all reactors as well as an earnest effort to replace all nuclear power plants with renewable energy sources. (Tr. WJ)

From *Kyodan Shinpo (Kyodan Times)*

The General Secretary's Diary

The executive secretaries' meeting, usually held every Monday morning, is attended by the six executive secretaries under the general secretary—seven members in total. The meeting on July 25 was centered on the reports of each executive secretary.

The Executive Secretary on General Affairs reported on the symposium to be hosted by the Kyodan at Ginza Church, Aug. 29-30, on the theme "Christianity and the Present Crisis in Japan—Issues Raised by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake." Oki Hideo, former president of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, is to be the guest lecturer. Four other speakers (a pastor, a theologian, a Christian educator, and a Christian social worker) are to give presentations. Announcements about the symposium are to be sent to all Kyodan-related churches. A list of Kyodan churches within Ou, Tohoku, and Kanto districts that sustained earthquake damage was also distributed that included details about the extent of the damage at each of the 47 churches as well as at 8 related facilities. A joint meeting between the Kyodan Executive Committee and Kyodan Administrative Officers is scheduled on Aug. 9, and the matters to be discussed there were also reported.

The Executive Secretary on Financial Affairs shared that the Committee for the Examination of Financial Reports had issued its report. Included was an explanation about the decision to reduce the amounts of the annual church apportionments for the 2012 fiscal year (about 6 million yen [\$77,922]), for the three disaster-stricken districts and to compensate for that from a fiscal year 2011 surplus fund. For the next three years after 2012, the other 14 districts will bear this additional burden.

The Executive Secretary for the Commission on Ministry reported on the orientation that was held June 20-22 for ministers newly appointed during this fiscal year, under the theme "Working together as ministers of the Kyodan to accomplish its mission." There were 78 participants in all, including 49 newly appointed ministers and 3 directors of Christian education. It was a good opportunity to enjoy the blessings of new encounters and fellowship, and the participants benefited from reviewing the basics of the Kyodan system. However, the conspicuous decrease in the number of participants in recent years is an issue that needs to be addressed in the coming years. Another item reported on was the discussion of issues involved in disciplinary admonitions.

The Executive Secretary for the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications reported on the fiscal year 2011 fall ministerial qualification examinations to be held Sept. 13-16 at the Osaka Christian Center. There are 58 applicants in the category of ordained minister and 19 in the category of licensed preacher. (There

are more applicants for the spring examination.) Final decisions on those who have passed the examination are to be made on Oct. 14. There has been a gradual decrease in the number of applicants in recent years, which is an indication of the weakening of the Kyodan's evangelistic strength. This is an issue that the Kyodan needs to address immediately, along with the apparent weakening in the sense of calling of those taking the examinations.

The Executive Secretary on Social Concerns reported that the emergency fundraising campaign for the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake was completed at the end of June, with more than 100 million yen being raised. The collected donations have been transferred to the Disaster Relief Planning Headquarters and are being used for relief operations.

The Executive Secretary on Ecumenical Ministries reported that the persons in charge of the United Methodist Church's overseas disaster relief came from the U.S. to visit the Kyodan to review the situation following the great earthquake and tsunami. They were informed about the extent of damage that the Kyodan has been able to determine, especially that caused by the severe tsunami, as well as the state of affairs caused by radioactive contamination from the nuclear accident. The Kyodan-based relief operations to date were also described. Incidentally, the relief donations from various overseas churches and denominations have already reached approximately 150 million yen, and quite a large amount of funds is expected to be sent henceforth through the Kyodan to support reconstruction projects in the stricken areas. (Tr. SM)

—Naito Tomeyuki, general secretary

KNL Corner

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