

Encouraged by Post-disaster Prayers and Aid from Abroad

By Kishita Nobuyo, Tokyo District moderator
Pastor, Nishi Chiba Church,
Chiba Subdistrict, Tokyo District

At 2:46 p.m. on March 11, 2011, I was getting off the elevator on the fifth floor of the Japan Christian Center on my way to a meeting of Tokyo District officers. Suddenly I felt a strong tremor, and it was all I could do to balance myself against the wall with my hand until the movement stopped. Somewhere I heard the sound of a steel door slamming shut.

FEAR AND SHOCK

After awhile, the tremors weakened, so I opened the door and went into the district office where the moderator, secretary, and office staff were all standing with shocked expressions. Papers were strewn all over the floor. When the moderator at that time said, "Let's get outside," we all scrambled down the stairs and out of the building. A number of people had already gathered in the Waseda Service Garden. Subsequently, there were two or three more strong tremors. I am not sure how much time passed, but finally the tremors subsided, and everyone went back to their offices.

When we returned, we heard a voice calling to us from the Kyodan Board of Pensions office across the hall. Opening the door, we saw surreal scenes being shown on a small television screen. Torrents of water were lapping up fields, roads, and buildings. Immediately I realized that we were watching a tsunami that the earthquake had generated. Shudders went through my body. "Is this real? Is this possible?" Along with the shock, these thoughts went through my mind. This was my experience of that time.

ENCOURAGEMENT

On April 4, 2011, as chair of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, I was on the Shinkansen (bullet train) headed for the Osaka-Kyoto area for the commissioning of Pastor Asada Yoko as a missionary, to be held at Kyoto Church. In my hand was a copy of prayers and encouragement that had come from abroad, in response to the earthquake and tsunami. A staff person of the Kyodan Commission on Ecumenical Ministries had sent me the copy about ten days earlier.

When I began reading it, I was amazed, and as I continued to read I was extremely moved and filled with emotion. There were over 50 messages from around the world. Many more arrived that day alone. Churches all over the world were sending us words of encouragement and consolation. Among those messages, one that stood out was from General Secretary Bae, Tae-Jin of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea. He began with words of encouragement from Psalm 46.

I opened my Bible and read these words: "Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with

their surging"...I felt as if these words were depicting the tsunami I had witnessed. However, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." I was encouraged by these words. I also felt that my faith had been challenged.

SOLIDARITY

On Feb. 20, 2012, along with other committee members, I flew to Taiwan to attend a conference held biennially with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT). The Kyodan was continuing its relief work following the Great East Japan Disaster, and the PCT had continued its efforts in recovery work following the floods of August 2009. The main purpose of that year's conference was to share together our experiences and to encourage one another in prayer. I was impressed by the positive energy and efforts of the PCT, and I learned much from the experience.

Moreover, I learned that while the PCT is continuing its restoration efforts in its own country, it has also contributed 80 million yen for relief work related to the Great East Japan Disaster. When I heard this, I was shaken. Had the Japanese church ever made this kind of effort to aid churches abroad? Not only that, I learned that the PCT had sent 100 volunteers last summer. I could only marvel at what I was told. Our church is being supported not only in prayer but also in multiple other ways by churches from around the world. We must not forget this.

RESPONSE

Such prayer and aid from abroad compels a response from us. If other people are remembering our churches and communities in such generous ways, certainly we here in Japan should be moved by their prayers and commit ourselves even more to pray and give aid. The Kyodan has set a relief fund goal of 1 billion yen. I pray that we can be united in our efforts to meet this goal.

At our Tokyo District Annual Assembly in May 2011, we set a goal of 500 million yen. In order to accomplish this goal, we formed a committee to organize our efforts. Presently, under the direction of the committee chair, each subdistrict has its own committee actively working to meet our goal.

At our local church, we have responded by setting a goal of 10 million yen over a five-year period. Of course, we do not consider this sufficient, but we feel that we must make every effort to insure that the Kyodan meets its goal. Moved by the solidarity shown through the prayers and support of churches abroad, we must bring all of our own energy to the task of raising support. (Tr. JS)

From *Kyodan Shinpo (The Kyodan Times)*, No.4768

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan Moderator Visits Japan

*“If one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26)**

Rev. Pusin Tali, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan arrived in Japan on Saturday, March 9, 2013 to express PCT's solidarity with the Kyodan and the people of Japan on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Great East Japan Disaster. On the day of his arrival, he attended a charity concert at Asagaya Church, sponsored by the Kyodan's West Tokyo District, where he gave greetings from the PCT. He then went to Sendai, where on Sunday he preached at the Sendai Kita-Sanbancho Church and spent some time visiting the disaster area. On Monday morning, the day of the anniversary, he visited both Asian Rural Institute in Tochigi Prefecture and Utsunomiya Church in Gunma Prefecture. Later in the afternoon, he gave a speech to a gathering held by the Kyodan's Kanto District at Utsunomiya Uwamachi Church. It was a very full schedule, with little time for Moderator Tali to relax.

The response to the March 11, 2011 disaster has served to deepen the bonds between the PCT and the Kyodan. One manifestation of this was the response of the PCT general secretary to Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo's statement at the beginning of the third year after the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Facility. The result is that the PCT and the Kyodan are walking hand-in-hand as together they work to bring about the termination of operation and decommissioning of nuclear power plants in

both countries. Another demonstration of these deepening ties was Moderator Tali's visit to Japan and Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi's visit to Taiwan in March, where he attended anniversary services of the disaster in Taipei, Hsinchu, and Changhua. A third example is the number of local congregations throughout the PCT that have held special offering campaigns to raise funds for disaster relief in Japan. At present over 80 million yen has been received by the Kyodan from Taiwan, which makes up more than one-third of the total funds from overseas for the disaster relief. Now there are even plans to initiate new fundraising for the relief effort. (Tr. AKO)

—Iijima Makoto, executive secretary
Kyodan Great East Japan Disaster
Relief Planning Headquarters

The subtitle of this article comes from the greetings of newly appointed PCT General Secretary Lyim Hong-Tiong to the Kyodan General Assembly in October 2012: “‘If one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer with it.’ In its continued solidarity with the Kyodan, the PCT has translated these words from First Corinthians into tangible actions.

Addresses Given at Japan Disaster Commemorative Events in Taiwan

by Ishibashi Hideo, Kyodan moderator

“If one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer with it.” (1 Cor. 12:26) These words inspired the 1,400 churches of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) to pray for and give generous financial support for the Great East Japan Disaster relief work. Of the 230 million yen contributed by all foreign sources to the Kyodan for relief work, 82 million of that came from these Taiwanese churches. During the month of March this year, near the second anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami, the Kyodan held special events around the nation to commemorate the disaster, and Rev. Pusin Tali, the PCT moderator, came to Japan to deliver a message at one of those events. The PCT also invited the Kyodan moderator to give the message at special events held in Taiwan to commemorate the second anniversary of the disaster.

Three separate events were held: the first in Taipei on March 24, the second in Hsinchu on March 25, and the third in Taiochung on March 26. There are 17 PCT-related hospitals in Taiwan, and most of those are quite large operations. I was really impressed by both the scale of the operations and how they begin their days with a morning worship service and witness to the gospel through their medical services. The meeting in Hsinchu was held in a church and the other two others in the chapels of the hospitals. I was also deeply moved by the wonderful praise music of various choirs, including those made up of hospital staff, church members, a women's chorus, and

the Amin tribe choir wearing their traditional costumes. I was really surprised to hear “Sen no kaze ni natte” (English title: “Do not stand at my grave and weep”), a hit song in Japan, sung in Japanese by the women's chorus. Thus, in each of these gatherings, the people expressed their heartfelt sincerity to comfort Japan in the midst of the pain caused by the Great East Japan Disaster. One of the PCT staff persons guiding me around even presented me with a gift of a flag sold in an ordinary shop that had printed on it, “NO NUKES, NO more Fukushima.”

There are four nuclear power plants in Taiwan, located 30 to 40 km. away from Taipei. Therefore, if an accident similar to the one in Fukushima ever occurred, the seriousness of the situation would threaten the very existence of the country. Thus, there is real sympathy with the description of negative effects on children's health caused by the nuclear plant accident in Japan. At the Easter services of all PCT churches, collection envelopes were passed out to all in attendance, asking everyone to make a contribution for relief work for the Great East Japan Disaster.

On behalf of Kyodan, I repeatedly expressed my deepest appreciation to the PCT for its prayers and financial assistance, as it empathized with our deep sorrow and pain. I used the Taiwanese word, “Chin-to-sia,” which expresses the highest form of gratitude. (Tr. KY)

The Early Work of Women Missionaries in Japan and the Founding of Shoei Junior College in Kobe

Shoei Hoiku (childcare) Gakuin began in October 1889 as Shoei Hobo Denshusho (Childcare Worker Training School). Shoei Kindergarten was founded in November of that year. While the name of the training school has changed over the years, first to Shoei Hoiku Senko Gakko (Shoei Childcare Specialty School) and then to Shoei Junior College, it has continued to this day, as has the kindergarten. It is the oldest existing training center for childcare in Japan.

The school's founder, Annie Lyon Howe, was born on Jan. 12, 1852 in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her father Charles, a typical frontiersman, moved his family to Clifton, Illinois to develop and operate a large farm. Her mother Mary, a woman of strong faith with great artistic ability, served as organist at the Bethany Union Church, where her husband was head of the Sunday school. After the worship service, they opened their home on Sunday afternoons for times of fellowship and thus were central to the life of that farming community.

Annie's education consisted of attending a public primary school in Clifton and a private secondary school in New Hampshire, Illinois; then in 1867, she entered Rockford Women's Seminary (now Rockford College) to study music. This was, incidentally, the same school that Julia Elizabeth Dudley, founder of Kobe Women's Seminary (now Kobe Jogakuin), attended. After graduating, Howe entered Dearborn Women's Seminary to continue her studies in music.

Later, the Howe family moved to Longwood, in the suburbs of Chicago, where Annie became deeply interested in the kindergarten curriculum of her younger sister Mary. She then decided to enter Chicago Froebel* Association Training School, founded in 1874 by Alice H. Putnam, where she earned her credentials as a childcare specialist. In 1878, with the encouragement of Mrs. E.W. Blatchford, senior secretary of the Congregational Church's Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, both Annie and her sister Mary began working at a kindergarten set up for the children of poor families.

Meanwhile, the Kobe Women's Society, mainly women from Settsu Daiichi Kokai (now Kobe Church, Kyodan), founded in 1874, began to pray for and seek the establishment of a kindergarten. They sent a request to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to send someone to train early childhood educators. After a missionary named J. Davis lost his beloved wife, he returned temporarily to the U.S., where he spoke at the annual meeting of the Woman's Board of Missions of the Interior, held Oct. 27-28, 1886 at Oak Park Church, outside Chicago. There, he described the great need for kindergarten teachers in Kobe. Annie Howe was deeply moved by his appeal and sensed that this would be her calling in life. She came to Japan in 1887 and two years later established Shoei. This, then, was the unique way in which Shoei came into being.

Soon after her arrival in Kobe, Annie began teaching English at a school jointly founded by the YMCA and the American Board, and meanwhile also studied the Japanese language. In addition, she responded to requests to teach piano, organ, and Bible classes while she made preparations for the establishment of a kindergarten. There were already three kindergartens in Kobe, which she visited and also taught about Froebel playground equipment, et



Annie Lyon Howe, founder of the school

cetera. Together with the members of the Kobe Women's Society, whose request had prompted her response of coming to Japan, she began planning the building of the kindergarten and training school for teachers as well such matters as curriculum and the translation of children's songs, in order to prepare for the opening of Shoei. While her purpose for coming to Japan was to establish a kindergarten, the training of teachers was a critical part of that, so this was the first order of business. Only two weeks after the establishment of the teacher training school, the kindergarten itself was also opened. Within Japanese society at that time, there was very little interest in or knowledge of childhood education, but through her patience and dedication, the kindergarten soon had a full enrolment, and that has continued to this very day.

Annie Howe contributed greatly to childhood education in Japan during a time when no textbooks on the subject existed in Japan. She helped compile the following list of such works in Japanese: *A Collection of Kindergarten Songs* (Howe, editor, 1892), *First Steps for Childcare Studies* (Howe, 1893), *Christmas Songs* (Howe, editor, 1894), *Seven Little Sisters* (Ann Amelia Andrew, 1894), *A Collection of Kindergarten Songs, Vol. 2* (Howe, editor, 1896), *Childhood Songs and Games for Mothers, Vol. 1 & 2* (Fröbel, translated by Howe, 1897), and *The Education of a Person* (Fröbel, translated by Howe, 1898). As is apparent from the list, she endeavored to create a new textbook each year, and especially with *First Steps for Childcare Studies*, she not only prepared lecture notes as a book but also made it easier for Japanese people to relate to Froebel's theory and teaching methods by redrawing the pictures of mothers and children in Japanese style. Thus, Annie Howe's contribution to early childhood education in Japan cannot be overstated. During this period when the field was just beginning to open up, she was a pioneer, contributing greatly to the publication of necessary textbooks and training methods for nurturing childcare specialists in Japan.

Annie resigned from her position at Shoei on Oct. 17, 1927 and returned to the U.S.. She died in Rochester, New York on Oct. 25, 1943, at the age of 91. In 1940, her contributions to the field of education were recognized in Japan, and she was awarded a medal of honor by the emperor. The fact that this was just one year before the outbreak of war between the U.S. and Japan likewise testifies to the greatness of her contributions. (Tr. TB)

—Abe Megumi, principal

*Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel - German educator who founded the kindergarten system (1782-1852)

Book Review:

Fifty Years of Directors of Christian Education (Kirisutokyo Kyoiku Shuji no Gojunen)

(National Association of Directors of Christian Education, 2012)

The year 2012 was the 50th year since the Kyodan instituted a certification system for the position of Director of Christian Education as a formal vocation for lay persons. To commemorate this jubilee year, on Christmas Day, the National Association of Directors of Christian Education published this book.

As there were DCEs who expressed their desire to see a history of their movement put together, a project to do just that was launched in 1999 and resource materials were gathered together for later reference. Abe Aiko, Takatera Yukiko, and Fujimaki Tomoko formed the editorial committee and dedicated many hours to gathering together information. Then, with the help of 16 authors, they published a 153-page book with the Japanese title *Kirisutokyo Kyoiku Shuji no Gojunen*, which means “Fifty Years of the Vocation of Directors of Christian Education,” as a record of this movement from the point of view of DCEs.

The book consists of four sections, with Chapter 1 being about the setting up of the certification system. Chapter 2 then gives a chronology, which is followed by a description of the vocation of DCEs. The final chapter delineates the various issues that this vocation entails. The book includes lots of pictures and illustrations, together with samples of various articles from the early years, and is presented in a compelling way.

Following World War II, Seiwa Women’s Junior College for Christian Workers revived its theology department and, believing in the importance of education as mission, worked towards the raising up of Directors of Christian Education as a new way to meet the needs of the age through the work of dedicated lay people.

Thus, in 1950, the school began a department of religious education. This further developed into a four-year college course for Christian education in 1964, which was made coeducational from 1981. The person who really spearheaded this effort was the college president at the time, U.S. missionary Mabel Whitehead of the Methodist Church.

The efforts of Seiwa spurred the Kyodan into taking a look at creating a system of certification, and after several years of discussions, the Director of Christian Education Certification System was formally adopted by the Kyodan General Assembly in October 1962.

In 1961, in order to facilitate the training of DCEs, Aoyama Gakuin University also established a “B Course” in its theology department, with emphasis on Christian education. (The theology department was disbanded in 1977.) Reading through Chapter 1, I was struck by how many people dedicated themselves through their enthusiasm, prayers, and hard work to bring about the institution of this new certification system for non-ordained Christian workers.

According to the Kyodan Bylaws, “A director of Christian education is a layperson of the Kyodan who feels called

to the task of Christian education, has completed certain specified subjects of study, has passed the examination for directors of Christian education specified by the Kyodan,” and is called to serve in a church or a Kyodan-related school or other institution. As of March 2012, 228 persons had been certified, and of those, 111 were serving in a total of 134 churches and schools.

How these certified directors served and what they accomplished is spelled out with specific examples covering a wide range of ministries in Chapter 3. They used their skills and leadership abilities not only at church or at school but also on subdistrict, district, and national levels. If, for instance, you look at the list of various Kyodan-related ministries, you find that many DCEs served on the Kyodan Education Committee as well as on the editorial committees of *Kyoshi no Tomo (Teachers’ Friend)* and *Seito no Tomo (Students’ Friend)*, issued by the Kyodan Board of Publication. They contributed articles for these publications, too. They also fulfilled other roles related to education at the subdistrict and district levels, such as serving as presenters at seminars on developing leadership. Certified DCEs that were not formally on the staff of some institution also served in a variety of ways.

The National Association of DCEs is a tight-knit group that holds yearly retreats for fellowship, where they share their issues as well as their joys in education. It also publishes, on a non-regular basis, the *DCE Magazine* in which various materials and articles on Christian education are shared. Thus, it can certainly be said that DCEs have had a major influence on those who are associated in some way with Christian education.

These 50 years of history have certainly not been a smooth path all the way. DCEs have had to work in an environment within which this new position had little understanding and recognition, but working together with a sense of solidarity, they have opened up the way, overcoming numerous obstacles and faithfully fulfilling their roles. This process is laid out in chapter 4, and the “Litany: For the Time When You Are Sent Out” testifies to the trials and joys of walking daily with Jesus at their side these past 50 years.

The only college that maintained this specific training course, Seiwa College, merged with nearby Kwansai Gakuin University in 2009, and so no longer fulfills that role as it once did. Nevertheless, the Kyodan “highly values the role of DCEs, who have greatly contributed to Christian education these past 50 years, and intends to continue developing such leadership.” I too pray that the next 50 years will be a period in which more DCEs will be raised up to continue down the path opened up by the DCE pioneers and further the work of Christian education in leaving a lasting impact on Christian mission in Japan. (Tr. TB)

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

Motomachi Church Pilgrimage 2012: Experiencing Church Roots and Music

During the afternoon of Sept. 29, 2012, in West Ward's Motomachi neighborhood in Hakodate City, Hokkaido, a joint project of several denominations of Christian churches took place. Through music, the traditions and characteristics of the various churches were experienced. This was the second such experience, following one held the year before. According to the treaty of 1858, five ports in Japan were opened to foreign nations. Hakodate was one of these, the others being Niigata, Kanagawa, Kobe, and Nagasaki. In the period between the end of the Edo Era and the beginning of the Meiji Era, several Christian denominations began to build church buildings and to conduct evangelistic activities in Hakodate. Those churches still stand in an area less than 300 meters wide at the foot of Mt. Hakodate, facing the harbor. Taking advantage of this historical and geographical background, those of us participating visited each of the churches, spending about 30 minutes in each church, enjoying the traditional music of each, which was the purpose of the project.

Motomachi Ward had been Hakodate's portal since the latter part of the Edo Era. The administrative office and various foreign consulates were located there. It was a protected zone for missionaries, and so churches were concentrated there. In 1858, the Russian Orthodox Hieromonk Filaret began work there, and the following year a Catholic Priest, Eugene-Emmanuel Mermet-Cachon, arrived to begin work. In 1874, Bishop Merriman Colbert Harris of the American Methodist Episcopal Church was followed by Pastor Walter Denning of the Church of England. The Christian traditions, literally from north, west, and east, came together in Hakodate. The four churches, following their various traditions, have buildings of distinctive architecture. The Orthodox Church, rebuilt in 1916, is listed as an important cultural property by the Japanese government.

The hand-carved wooden altar in Motomachi Roman Catholic Church was given to it by Pope Benedict the 15th. It was a unique and unprecedented gift when the church was rebuilt in 1923, after a large fire. The Kyodan's Hakodate Church building was erected in 1931 and has been designated as a historical-site structure by Hakodate City.

However, in spite of the foreign atmosphere and the value for tourism, we often hear comments from local residents, such as: "There is little chance to go inside these churches." "Is it all right to go inside? When can we enter?" "I have never once peeked inside." So the stimulus for this joint project has been the desire to invite local people to come in, not just tourists.

We began at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon at the Kyodan's Hakodate Church, located at the bottom of the slope. There were 170 people in the group; adding these to the ones waiting inside the churches, there were about 250 people who participated. At Hakodate Church the theme was, "Hearing the composer's prayer in the hymn." The purpose was to engage famous composers' works through the melodies of the hymns they composed. After a short description of the church's founding, we listened



Lft.-rt.: Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, Russian Orthodox Church, Hakodate Church, Kyodan

to a hymn by German composer Johann Crüger (1649) 's hymn *Schmüke dich* and one from Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words, Opus 30 No. 3*: "Still, still with Thee." As an introduction to the origin of hymn melodies, we heard Brahms' Choral Prelude No. 5 and Johann Crüger's hymn melody played on the pipe organ. Next, Mendelssohn's music was played on the piano. The meaning of the first piece was explained, as it related to the communion service. Following that, the words of the hymn related to the Mendelssohn hymn, which were written by Harriet Beecher Stowe* to describe the faith handed down to her from her grandmother, was likewise introduced. We tried to provide a broad explanation for a wide range of people, not only for music lovers but also for people with an interest in the history of their local area as well as people who were only curious to look inside.

At the second place, Motomachi Roman Catholic Church, about 200 meters up the slope, the church's St. Cecilia mixed chorus performed a Gregorian Chant, a French hymn, and Japanese liturgical music. Continuing 50 meters further up the slope, we entered St. John's Anglican Church, where Anglican vespers were chanted directly from the liturgy. Then for the last stop, we crossed the road to the Russian Orthodox Church, where we joined in Russian Byzantine vespers.

All of these churches, with the exception of the Kyodan's Hakodate Church, are ethnic churches with their own traditions. Since they are state churches in their countries of origin, there is a tendency to think that they do not evangelize. However, the missionaries who came to the mission field of Japan left a legacy by their life commitment to evangelism. Through faith-based education, medicine, social welfare of various kinds, the benefits of an awareness of human rights, the development of personality and character, and the development of public opinion, they made a great contribution to the culture of Japan. Because of the extreme swing to individualism, we have lost things of value, such as the passing on of faith to our families, which they are even now maintaining. The stimulation we received from direct contact with believers and clergy of other Christian traditions has been great. (Tr. GM)

—Matsumoto Shinichiro, pastor
Hakodate Church, Hokkai District
From *Kyodan Shinpo (The Kyodan Times)*, No.4767

*The author of Uncle Tom's Cabin

Higashi Chugoku District Gathering Held as a Spiritual Retreat

Higashi Chugoku District held its 7th District Gathering, Oct. 7-8, 2012, at the Central Education Center, Fraternity Hill, in Okayama City, in the form of a retreat.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, the sin that had separated humankind from God was taken away so that we might live with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, is our life of faith not hungering and thirsting at the most vital point of our relationship with God? Our confession of faith and baptism are the starting points for us as Christians. As Christians, our journey with Christ begins from there. The God who unceasingly loves us also talks to us and joyfully fellowships with us. However, we are busy and at a loss about what to do and spend little time being with God. We therefore continue on our journey without knowing real joy as Christians. As an entire district, the aim of our plan at this time was to experience jointly the joy of fellowship with God. I think this was the project team's basic concern in proposing as the title of the retreat "Each Church Becoming Healthy."

First we had a time of praise and prayer, during which each person had a private devotional time. Following that, we separated into groups and shared together. We did this on both days. In order to become quiet and to focus on the retreat, we did not hold our usual bazaar.

"I really felt that we human beings receive life from God and live because of God."

"I really had a valuable experience. You could say that I regained myself. It feels like I can finally breathe."

"It was two days of learning the importance of the Word."

"I especially appreciated sharing with others from the Fountain of Tranquility,* without words, only shedding tears."

"I sang hymns with large numbers of people, and in groups we shared and talked, and the time passed quickly, as I was having a good time. I was grateful for the child care."

At the general meeting, Rev. Hattori Osamu said: "I think that during the time of meditation, those things that were painful became things for which to be grateful. The faith of Joseph can also become ours. He said, "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." (Genesis 45:5)

Also invited to the gathering were parents and children from eastern Japan who had experienced the March 2011 Great East Japan Disaster and are now living in "Share House Fountain of Tranquility" in the town of Wake, Okayama in western Japan. The seven adults and ten children who attended from there were charged no participation fees. (Tr. RT)

—Nobuto Yoshihide, pastor

Wake Church, Higashi Chugoku District
From *Higashi Chugoku Kyoku News No.148*

*"Share House Fountain of Tranquility" is a housing facility for families affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the resultant nuclear accident. It is operated jointly by a volunteer group called "Oidense Okayama" (Come to Okayama) and the Kyodan's Wake Church to serve people from the disaster zone. It is a large, two-story structure designed to house up to four families for periods of one to three months.

The Organization and Work of the NCCJ

—Aminaka Shoko, general secretary, National Christian Council in Japan

The NCCJ is composed of 14 member as well as 16 associate member denominations and organizations and is supported by their contributions and membership fees. Positions are assumed after the National Christian Council in Japan's General Assembly confirms nominations made by NCCJ officers and the general secretary. At the beginning of this general assembly triennium (2012-2015), the Kyodan's nominated Rev. Kobashi Koichi as moderator and myself, Rev. Aminaka Shoko, as general secretary.

The NCCJ's Japan Ecumenical Disaster Response Office, which was established at the encouragement of overseas churches after the 2011 Great East Japan Disaster, continues its important work. Kyodan pastors support JEDRO by serving in the positions of executive director (NCCJ Moderator Kobashi), executive assistant (Rev. Tonosaki Takashi), and steering committee chair (Rev. Omura Sakae). We are extremely grateful for the number of responses we receive from overseas to the steering committee's continuing requests for donations to project needs in the disaster-stricken area. We have been blessed to work together through the pain of this disaster with Church World Service, a member of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance.

The Division of Christian Education, Christian Literature Publishing Society, and Center for the Study of Japanese Religions each are responsible for these specific areas. Organizations send delegates to 15 committees as they see fit, and then once the number of members on a particular committee is set, if it is deemed desirable that additional members be added from non-member organizations, that can be done up to a maximum of the original number of

committee members. This is a feature of a council based on trust. Each committee is uniformly allotted 73,000 yen, and if that sum is insufficient, sending organizations and committee members give of their own time, energy, and finances. The issuing of statements and other actions taken are largely done under the name of the committee chair.

The general secretary is employed through a delegation agreement, and the only full-time employee receiving NCCJ-provided benefits is the office manager. NCCJ is otherwise administered by part-time staff: one accountant (3 days a week), one assistant accountant (2 days/ a week), one communications officer (1.5 days a week), and one volunteer.

In December 2012, "The Inter-religious Conference on Nuclear Issues" was held in the northeastern cities of Kōriyama and Aizu-wakamatsu, with 87 delegates from 11 countries and numerous regions within Japan. The "Faith Declaration from Fukushima 2012" was issued, and a petition was presented to the government and various organizations. A form of ecumenicalism, this conference was based on "The Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9*," a gathering of Catholics, Buddhists, and other religious organizations.

The NCCJ General Assembly's theme of "Keep on Walking Together" represents our walk with Christ and our walk with others. There are various views concerning evangelism and social activism. We are all sinners and are only able to act through repentance and faith in the forgiveness given by our crucified Lord. We hope to fulfill our mission while praying that not our thoughts but God's thoughts are revealed.

(Tr.RB)

*Constitution of Japan: Chapter II. RENUNCIATION OF WAR

The Dohoku Subdistrict Exchange Tour with the United Church of Canada

For two weeks, Sept. 3-18, 2012, eight people from Dohoku Subdistrict went to Canada to visit people and churches of the United Church of Canada. This was in response to an invitation from Calling Lakes Centre, a United Church lay training centre in Canada that is in partnership with the Dohoku Christian Center in northern Hokkaido. The suggestion to respond to this invitation came from the International Exchange Committee of the Subdistrict and was approved at the annual meeting of the Subdistrict. Participants in the exchange came from Wakkanai Church, Nayoro Church, Rumoi Miyazono Church, Asahikawa Toyooka Church, Asahikawa Rokujo Church, and Dohoku Center. Three ministers and five laypeople made up the group of eight.

Similarities between Hokkai District and UCC

The first week of the exchange was spent in the London Conference, the home Conference of Robert Witmer (Dohoku Christian Center). We visited a number of small rural churches, a former residential school for aboriginal people, and several farms. The second week we moved to the Saskatchewan Conference where we again visited both churches and farms and continued to learn about the situation of aboriginal people. We visited churches that are engaging in new initiatives by working together ecumenically and others that are structured around specific issues and mission concerns.

The UCC has many small churches, involves laypeople in pastoral ministry roles, and is concerned with issues related to rural society and aboriginal people. This is all very similar to the situation of Hokkai District. Laypeople are enthusiastically involved in worship and pastoral care. New initiatives are allowing Lay Worship Leaders and Designated Lay Ministers to work alongside ordained UCC ministers to carry out the mission of the church over a huge geographical area. The Hokkai District has much to learn from that enthusiasm for lay involvement in the work of the church.

Agriculture in Canada

Canada is a country where agriculture is one of the basic industries. Farm fields stretch endlessly through an area much vaster than Hokkaido. We were in Canada at harvest time for wheat, soybeans, tomatoes, corn, grapes, and canola and saw firsthand how enormous and fully computerized combines carried out the harvest. We visited beef and dairy farms and, quite unexpectedly, just happened to be present at the birth of a calf.

Those engaged in farming were generally younger than farmers in Japan, and I could sense the strength and potential of Canadian agriculture. In spite of it being harvest time, farm families were very hospitable and welcomed us warmly. There are limits on the possibilities of expanding the scale of Japanese agriculture. I feel it is better for Japanese agriculture to remain small-scale, rooted in the local community, and promoting the consumption of locally produced food.

Creating a New, Appropriate Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples

The most painful part of our experience was learning the history of how Christians worked hand-in-hand with the Canadian government to assimilate aboriginal people. Assimilation meant learning English and becoming a Christian. There was a long history of land, language,

and traditional music and dance being taken away from aboriginal people. Children were taken from their parents at an early age and transported hundreds of kilometers away, where they were put in residential schools to be assimilated. In the schools many were abused both physically and sexually by Christian ministers and lived in a miserable environment. These schools were started in the early 19th century and continued as late as the 1990s.

In 1986, the UCC recognized its complicity in this history and apologized to aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are still waiting to see if they can really trust the church and its apology as genuine. In order to build a new relationship with aboriginal people, the church is making an effort to learn about past history and to walk together with aboriginal people. The work of Hokkai District with the Ainu people could learn much from this attitude.

Land is to be Shared

While in Fort Qu'Appelle in Saskatchewan, it was a moving experience to participate in the parade and special events commemorating the signing of Treaty #4 by aboriginal people in 1874. The treaty was signed not with the intention of handing land over to the government of Canada but with the intention of sharing it. The government did not keep the treaty, but in order to clarify its original intent, aboriginal people have recently put much effort into carrying out special ceremonies and events to commemorate the signing of the treaty. After the parade through the town, a powwow with lots of singing and dancing continued for three days. From young children to elderly adults, people danced and raised their voices to the pulsating beat and rhythm of the drum, wearing fancy ceremonial dress that indicated their respective bands. It was a time filled with light and pride, and a time when we could deeply sense the spirit of these people and know that they remain very much alive.

Affirming Congregations

In an effort to be an open and welcoming church to all people, churches may go through a study process to be designated an affirming congregation. Through this process they seek to become a church that provides an open and non-threatening environment to sexual minorities and others experiencing various kinds of discrimination. I think the church in Japan still lacks adequate awareness of these issues, and I felt the church in Canada was very forward-looking in terms of listening to the voices of minorities and trying to build the church together.

A Vision for Mission

The UCC has sent many missionaries to Japan. Alfred Stone, who died in 1954 during the typhoon that sunk the Toya-maru ferry,* grew up in a rural community close to Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes, and we were actually able to visit the house where he was raised. When I thought of all the missionaries who had a vision of mission and were sent so far away—not only to Japan, but to China, Taiwan, and Korea — I could feel a burning in my heart.

The Dohoku Presentation

Our group introduced the work of Dohoku Subdistrict on four different occasions. Our work supporting small churches like Bibaushi Church and Wassamu Church seemed to move people deeply. The churches of the

(Cont'd on p.8)

A Message From General Secretary

Recently, there has been a rapid increase in the circle of friendship and exchange between the Kyodan and churches overseas. The cause for this dramatic increase in prayers and support from abroad is clearly rooted in the Great East Japan Disaster of March 11, 2011.

Many foreign churches organized volunteer groups to assist in disaster relief and established a regional support project to put the donations received completely toward churches, parsonages, and the areas in which the affected churches are.

At present, the “diaspora” of the churches and people created by the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant meltdowns as well as the churches affected by the huge tsunami are seeing very slow progress in reconstruction. In response to this, the Kyodan is endeavoring to show its appreciation to the overseas churches for their support by promoting exchanges, particularly with young people.

With a spirit of gratitude, two female pastors attended the German Protestant Kirchentag in Hamburg, Germany, May 1-5. Also, from June 29 to July 13, youth from the Kyodan plan to attend “I Love Taiwan Mission 2013,” a retreat sponsored by the Youth Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, which will meet at Aletheia University in New Taipei City, various local churches, and the Hsueh Wei Memorial Retreat Center in Nantou.

Also, participants are being recruited for the Presbyterian Youth Triennium of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which will meet at Purdue University, July 16 to July 22. We are also recruiting youth leaders for the Church Youth Mission gathering of the United Methodist Church to be held July 21-28 at Cedar Park First United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas. In March 2012, this church sent ten high school students with six chaperons to the disaster zones in Sendai and Ishinomaki for disaster relief.

(Cont'd from p.7)

London Conference continue to support the work of the Ainu Peoples Resource Center, missionary Divan Suqluman, and the Bibaushi Gospel church.

Canada has become a country of great diversity. In such a situation, the UCC is dedicating its efforts to becoming a welcoming and inclusive church that is not afraid to tackle social issues and to seek justice. When the dignity of life is threatened, there is no right or left, no conservative or liberal. I felt that the people in the churches had made the mission stance of the UCC their own and that they responded in a very natural way to God's call to mission.
(Tr. RW)

—Nishioka Shoichiro, pastor
Asahikawa Rokujo Church, Hokkai District
From *Hokkai Kyoku Tsushin No.186*

*Editor's note: The Toya Maru ferry, which transferred passengers and cargo between Hokkaido and Honshu, sank in a typhoon on Sept. 26, 1954 off the coast of Hakodate with a loss of 1,155 lives, making it the worst disaster in Japanese maritime history.

The Action Committee of the Kyodan is also considering an invitation to participate in the Japan-Germany Youth Exchange; Youth Mission 2013. This gathering will be held Aug. 20-29 at the Wittstock-Ruppin Parish of the Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Church. The program is for youth aged 15 to 22 who will be offered homestay opportunities in the host country and will participate in worship and a joint camp. They will also visit local churches and historic heritage sites. In the future, the Kyodan is further looking into the possibility of participating jointly with churches in Korea in the Youth Mission Program for the Church of South India.

In this way, the Kyodan is sensing that the time is right to move ahead with a positive attitude towards a future international church through first providing exchanges for youth. As I mentioned above, the Kyodan has been awakened to the blessings of mutual prayer support through of the terrible events of March 11, 2011. Many churches from abroad graciously supported us through numerous donations and sending of volunteers for relief work. We are most of all thankful for the fervent prayers of the churches in all parts of the world.

Though the events of March 11, 2011 were disastrous, we were blessed in the midst of it. Japanese churches have a tendency to isolate themselves from the world, but due to the blessings we experienced, for the first time in December 2012, the Kyodan Executive Council established a fund to assist churches in other countries experiencing disasters. Because of the 2011 disaster, we were able to consider something we had never been able to consider before. That was recalling what our resurrected Lord said: “... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20) (Tr. WJ)

—Nagasaki Tetsuo, 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/>