

2007 Missional Planning Conference Held in Tokyo

The 2007 Missional Planning Conference was held on March 10-11 at Fujimicho Church. The main topic was "Kyodan's Evangelism and Cooperative Efforts in that Endeavor" and the subtitle was "150 Years Since the Beginning of Protestant Evangelism in Japan." The 72 participants were able to delve deeply into the topic at hand and significant insight and learning were achieved as they fellowshipped together.

Takahashi Jun, chairperson of the Commission on Ecumenical Ministries, stated that "although the question has been raised as to whether it is even possible to have a missional planning conference without a plan, we all agreed that without the delegates coming together to deliberate, there would be no progress." In his greeting the host said, "It is important to have representatives from all the districts gather together to reach a mutual understanding of the present circumstances unique to the various Kyodan districts and churches and to learn lessons from history as we plan for the future." Korean Christian Church in Japan General Secretary Park Sookil expressed his prayer that a fruitful harvest would come out of this conference as he shared greetings filled with humor.

Three lecturers made presentations. In his presentation entitled "Reflecting on the History of the Kyodan," General Secretary Naito Tomeyuki stated that the 150-year history of the Protestant Church in Japan can be divided into three 50-year periods. The first period focused on ecumenism. There was a great emphasis on church unity as opposed to the sectarianism and denominationalism that was prevalent in Europe and America. The second period was a time of militarism and war. It must be acknowledged that the church was unable to escape this influence while attempting to protect its confessional beliefs. At the same time, although political and military pressure cannot be denied, it was this conviction of the ideal of ecumenism that played an important role in the formation of the Kyodan.

In his discussion of the third period, Naito shared vivid recollections from his own experience of the Kyodan General Assembly and other events and examined them through the paradigm of the ecumenism of the church. Given his

historical perspective and ecclesiology, Naito was critical of some of the events that have occurred since the 16th (1969) General Assembly. However, he concluded by referring to the hope that lies ahead.

While all three presenters dealt with very deep subjects, Yamaguchi Takayasu particularly did so in his lecture. Just as he promised, he condensed the contents of his book into one hour. The lecture was entitled "Evangelism from the Viewpoint of the (Kyodan's) Confession of Faith and Constitution." Organizationally independent from the government, the Kyodan is founded on its own constitution and confession because ecclesiology is the characteristic of a church and not of an association. Yamaguchi's boldness was persuasive as he went against what is often considered to be common-sense understanding of the meaning of the Kyodan's Constitution and its Confession of Faith.

Tomisato Church Pastor Uchida Hiroshi presented the third lecture, which was entitled "Cooperating in Evangelism." From his background in church planting and cooperative mission, Uchida gave a very practical and well thought-out presentation. His first example was of how Shikoku District is working together cooperatively to do church planting. He emphasized how Shikoku District's cooperative system has created the fellowship that exists between pastors and supporting churches. The second example was "church planting with the cooperation of a parent congregation." The parenting church congregation organized a loose union to found a church located on the Hokuso train line. There are three reasons that were offered for why Chiba Hokusou Church was able to be established: responsible people, trust relationships, and the vision borne out of home gatherings.

Ou District Moderator Ohara Muneo, Tokai District Executive Council Member Nishinosono Michiko and Higashi Chugoku District Vice-moderator Miyakawa Tsunenobu gave their reports. All three seemed to be eagerly working at the task of finding concrete solutions. (Tr. AK)

Takezawa Chiyoshi, chief editor
Shinpo (The Kyodan Times)

Churches Damaged by Chuetsu Earthquake Celebrate Reconstruction

Reconstruction of two churches damaged by the Chuetsu earthquake in October 2004 has been completed. Two related services were held on Jan. 14, 2008: at 11:00 a.m. a service of celebration and thanksgiving for the reconstruction of the Tokamachi Church parsonage and at 3:00 p.m. a dedication service for the parsonage and sanctuary of Mitsuke Church. With the prayers and support of churches throughout the country, these two points of evangelism have been reestablished.



Tokamachi Church's steel-frame parsonage, capable of



Mitsuke Church's octagonal sanctuary, with good

Tokamachi Church's Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving. The snow that had been falling all night stopped as the service started. Tokamachi Church Pastor Arai Jun began his sermon by saying, "There was a moment I cannot forget," then spoke about the annual assemblies of Niigata Subdistrict and Kanto District. "A motion that Kanto District raise 75 million yen, half of the total nationwide goal, was presented. When, after a tense moment of silence, it was overwhelmingly approved..." His voice broke; then, after a few minutes he continued: "...the feelings I had been holding back just overflowed. When everyone offered their blessings and encouragement after the assembly, I could only prayerfully give thanks. I cannot tell you how much we were comforted and encouraged by the fact that members of churches far away were accepting our damage as their own pain. We were not alone. I felt clearly that we were not isolated. Many episodes since the earthquake have borne witness that the Lord is with us and living in our midst."

In his congratulatory message, Kanto District Moderator Hikita Kunimaro commented, "Rebuilding a church is not just reconstructing a building; this building embodies power and courage from nationwide prayers and support. I hope Kanto District will be a district that continues to stand with all those who may suffer any kind of damage in the future."

When structural evaluation of the former parsonage was officially changed from "partial destruction" to "virtually complete destruction," it was decided to rebuild. Work that was begun on the light-steel frame, two-story parsonage in September 2007 has been completed. The cost of the 131 square meter building was 40 million yen, 30 million of which was aid raised by the Kyodan and 10 million raised locally. The building was used as a center for volunteer workers immediately after the earthquake.

Mitsuke Church's Dedication Service: A sudden change of weather in the afternoon brought biting cold and heavy snow. In his greetings, Mitsuke Church Pastor Yanagida Takeyuki said, "Rebuilding this church has been a heavy task for parishioners whose homes also suffered earthquake damage and flooding along with the church. But with the Lord's guidance to change a pinch to a chance, and supported by the

prayers of people throughout the country, we have been given a new vision." Then he continued: "We have felt that God is alive and at work. Now I am struck with fear and trembling. I want to speak about two points. The first is the meaning of a service of dedication. We give back to God what is God's. I think this is the meaning of a service of dedication. Today we give this church building back to God, and then we ask to borrow it again. The second is the purpose of a service of dedication. It begins with saving the soul of just one person of the 43,000 citizens of Mitsuke. Through repentance, a loser is resurrected. Today is the beginning of losers being resurrected through evangelism. In his words of congratulation after the service, Kyodan Vice-moderator Kobayashi Makoto stated: "As I rejoice with you in the service of dedication, accomplished despite numerous difficulties, there is one more thing I want to say. As reflected in the words 'holy catholic church' in the Apostles' Creed, the church is not just a building but the object of faith. There is confusion and lack of faith within the Kyodan, but the present offering of more than 170 million yen from people throughout the country who believe in the church has great meaning." Kumae Hidekazu, moderator of Kanto District's Niigata Subdistrict, remarked: "Standing here in this new church building 40 months after the earthquake is like a dream, but it is not a dream. Our vision of communicating the gospel to all people takes shape here. This new church building is a witness to the solidarity of our subdistrict, district, and the Kyodan as a whole. This day witnesses to the fact that the church truly is alive and working together." Mitsuke Church suffered flood damage in 2004 and three months later the Chuetsu Earthquake caused a liquefaction phenomenon that caused the foundation to disintegrate, so rebuilding on that location was abandoned and a site was purchased in the Hanamizuki (Dogwood) housing development, about a five-minute walk from the former building.

The phrases "God is alive," "One church," and "Witness to solidarity" were weighty and filled with deep meaning. The face of every person there radiated with gratitude and joy. We would like to convey the blessings of that day to churches throughout the country. (Tr. WE)

Shinpo (The Kyodan Times)

First Christian Education Seminar Held in Kochi

The first Christian Education Seminar sponsored by the Kyodan Committee on Education was held March 3 at Nankoku Church in Kochi Prefecture. The purpose for which the committee planned this seminar was to learn and pray together with pastors and church school teachers who are engaged in Christian education. These days, the number of children attending church schools is decreasing. Therefore, the committee thought that this kind of seminar would be helpful. The theme of the seminar was "The Joy of Being Called to His Ministry." Kishi Norihide, pastor of Chiba Honcho Church and chair of the Committee on Education, led the opening worship service, using Mark 3:13-19 as his text. A conference of leaders of Christian education in the districts was held both before and after the seminar.

About 70 persons, including participants from 14 districts, gathered for the seminar from 7 p.m. Some participants came to the seminar by car after more than a four-hour drive from neighboring Ehime Prefecture. Hirata Kazuko, director of Christian Education at Handago Church and a member of the Commission on Education, was the lecturer. The lecture began with her self-introduction. She studied Christian education at Seiwa College in Nishinomiya, Hyogo Prefecture. Then, she was called as a director of Christian education, a status authorized by the Kyodan as a special ministry of Christian Education. Under the Lord's guidance, she was sent to several churches as a director of Christian education. Handago Church is located close to Mt. Kongo near Yoshino, which is famous for its cherry trees. She said that the Handago area was once called Handago Village, and the scenery of Handago is still like an agricultural village. Nevertheless, about 35 children are coming to the church every Sunday morning.



Hirata Kazuko lecturing about the joys of church education

Hirata stressed two points. First, God desires children to be invited to our church schools. Second, church school education contributes to the building up of the church. She said that without giving up and without getting impatient, we should expect God's blessing on the church school each Sunday. She finished her lecture with a reading of Mark 4:30-32. Her lecture was based on the situation of not only Handago Church but also the other churches that had sent representatives, so it gave great encouragement to the participants. She passionately related how happy she was to be called to Christian education by Jesus.

The second day, after the closing worship service, we were given an optional tour of Seiwa Junior and Senior Girls' High School and Geisei Church. Seiwa is located at the eastern edge of Kochi City. Seiwa is the smallest private junior and senior high school in Kochi, as it has only 120 students. The 20 teachers, including of course the principal, are all Christians. We learned that they had been called to Christian education at the school. Their honest attitude about education gave us hope and encouragement.

Kato Makoto, secretary
Committee on Education

Church's Monthly Birthday Party Celebrates God's Gift of Life

Every third Sunday, our pastor introduces persons who have birthdays that month. He presents birthday cards he has made, then offers prayers of blessings. Afterwards, a birthday party is held under the theme "Let us celebrate together!"

"When we were very young, we used to have very happy birthdays, but people close to us do not celebrate our birthdays anymore, and we have forgotten the joy of these days." "I wish I could celebrate my birthday with joy and gratitude because it is 'the anniversary day' of the life God has given me." These sentiments expressed by members of the congregation prompted the organization of the monthly birthday party project. Each person shares how it feels to have a birthday, and we all sing each one's favorite hymn together.

Our worship service every Sunday is observed by people of all ages together, including kindergarten children, teachers, and mothers. We come to worship "as children who are like adults and as adults who are like children." Since our motto is to do every activity together, we celebrate our birthdays together, and everyone is invited to come to the party table, too. "We are all God's family!" (Tr. HL)

Iizuka Takuya, pastor
Ryugasaki Church, Kanto District
Shinto no Tomo (Believer's Friend)

Catholic-Protestant Fellowship Addresses Educational Issues

by Hanajima Mitsuo, general secretary

Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan

The Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan, an organization consisting of about 100 Protestant schools, has in recent years strengthened its cooperative ties with the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools. In 2002, the president of the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools' Board of Trustees made a presentation at the General Assembly of the Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan. Subsequently, an official of the Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan gave a presentation at a meeting of the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools. Fellowship between the two organizations progressed, and as some people wished to continue the fellowship on a regular basis, the Christian Schools' Educational Fellowship was formed.

The first thing that the Christian Schools' Educational Fellowship Committee did was to plan a lecture and a symposium. Participants realized anew that both Catholic and Protestant schools are facing the same issues and challenges. However, there are differences in the ways that Catholic schools and Protestant schools perceive and deal with these issues. It is very meaningful that both parties are exchanging ideas with each other, and when both parties understand and are concerned about each other, this plays a part in the development of each. At the beginning, the theme of the lecture and symposium was "Women's Education." The first lecture was held in 2004 and featured Tokyo Woman's Christian University President Minato Akiko, who spoke on "Why Women's Education Now?" In 2005, University of the Sacred Heart President Yamagata Kiyoko presented a lecture entitled "Is Women's Education Behind the Times?" At the symposium, teachers and graduates of women's schools shared their own experiences, gave reports about their employment in the field of education, and talked about the meaning and importance of women's education.

In 2006, Tohoku Gakuin Chancellor Kuramatsu Isao's lecture dealt with "Catholic Schools and Christian Schools" (schools related to the Education Association of Christian Schools); in 2007, Koso Toshiaki, president of Sophia University's Board of Trustees, lectured on "The Possibilities of Christian Education"; and in 2008, Rikkyo University Professor Nishihara Renta gave a lecture entitled "Christian Education Living in the Present World." Each lecture was about issues facing all Christian educational institutions. At the symposiums, many teachers from several schools reported on their experiences, but there has been no difference in content yet between the reports of Catholics and Protestants. These events have mostly been attended by school teachers. Many participants were from Catholic schools, many of whom were

nuns dressed in black. The events have been held in Tokyo at Aoyama Gakuin, University of the Sacred Heart, Meiji Gakuin, the Shirokane campus of Sacred Heart Girls' School, and Rikkyo Junior and Senior High School in Ikebukuro. The contents of the lectures and symposiums are printed in a booklet each year and published by the Don Bosco Publishing Company.

At the planning meetings of the Christian Schools' Educational Fellowship Committee, the presidents of the boards of trustees and other representatives from both the Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan and the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools have had opportunities to meet together. As a result, participants have actively engaged in many kinds of fellowship. Information about all the educational research gatherings held by the Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan is also sent to the Catholic schools, and teachers from Catholic schools always participate.

All Catholic schools in Japan are founded and run by a religious order. At many of the schools, few teachers are Catholic believers, and the religious education is handled by the priest and the nuns. Recently, fewer people are entering the religious orders, so the number of ordained clergy able to take care of the schools is extremely low. It is said that the shortage of teachers available to run Christian education programs is even more critical in Catholic schools than in Protestant schools. Because the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools sponsors few activities of any kind, many Catholic teachers rely on the educational research gatherings of the Education Association of Christian Schools in Japan. In turn, schools related to the Education Association get a lot of fresh stimulation from the participation of the Catholic schools, so both parties learn much from each other. This year, the regulations of the Education Association are expected to be revised, and a new provision has been added about continuing cooperative relationships with the Japan Federation of Catholic Schools.

The Christian Schools' Educational Fellowship Committee consists of the following members: Kuze Satoru (Meiji Gakuin), Tanaka Hiroshi (Joshi Gakuin), Fukamachi Masanobu (Aoyama Gakuin), Nonomura Noboru (Kwassui Gakuin), Hiratsuka Keiichi (St. Margaret's College), and Ruth M. Grubel (Kwansei Gakuin). The Japan Federation of Catholic Schools is composed of Kawai Tsuneo, president of the Salesian Boys' Home Board of Trustees, and six other members. (Tr. KT)

New Telephone System Enables Worship Participation from Home

Today in many churches, aging of the membership has become a matter of concern. Especially noticeable is the absence of church members who cannot attend worship services due to age or sickness. Various ways are being attempted to provide care for members who earnestly desire to attend but cannot.

Until recently, the simplest means of providing access to sermons and church information has been the use of printed matter and recording tapes. But these methods have not enabled everyone to worship at the same time. The least expensive way to enable simultaneous participation in the Sunday worship service is use of the Internet; but adoption of its use for the elderly is difficult because many older adults are not accustomed to computers and bedridden persons are unable to sit in front of the apparatus. A simpler method that enables participation in worship and is adaptable by older people is use of a telephone circuit, and several churches have adopted this.

Takacom Corporation's "service-phone" (a multiple-circuit voice-receiving device) provides multiple receive-only circuits. The basic monthly cost of 2,700 yen (under \$30) is less than that of usual telephone circuits. Because it is designed only for reception, there is no call fee for the church to pay. Having decided that the system's ability to receive several calls at once is advantageous for ministry, a number of churches have adopted this system.

Nakashibuya Church introduced the system in 1993, starting with five circuits. Feeling that some provision should be made for elderly persons who were unable to come to church, it was decided to install adequate speakers and amplifier equipment and to introduce the service-phone. The original cost, including microphone and amplifiers, was 660,000 yen (about \$6,400). In 2006, due to an increase in the number of users, the order was changed from five to nine circuits. When

an application is received from someone for whom coming to church has become difficult, the pastor gives the applicant the telephone number. The person in his or her own home can take part in the worship services being held in the church sanctuary. It is reported that offerings from the users are adequate for covering the telephone fees.

In prayer times during the worship service, these participants are remembered through the use of such expressions as "for those coming to worship by telephone." Also during the worship service, a committee member checks a counter so that the number of persons taking part by telephone that day can be included in the attendance report. Thus, a ministry not just for those who gather in the sanctuary was born. Pastor Oikawa Shin says, "When I came to Nakashibuya Church, it was so good to have this equipment. Really, it would be good for any church to have. It would be good even now to get it. It would greatly strengthen a church."

Chitose Funabashi Church introduced the system in 1996, beginning with three circuits. At one time, the number of users decreased, and the order was reduced to one circuit; but now there are two as there are always one or two pregnant women or elderly persons to use them. In order to improve the sound absorption, the number of microphones was increased and special ones installed for the worship leader, the preacher, and the organist. It is possible to listen by telephone not only to the weekly worship services but also to special Christmas music worship and organ concerts.

The worshipers too appreciate these opportunities as "times of blessing." Above all, the ability for everyone to take part in worship at the same time has become a major element of the church's fellowship. Many of the telephone users say simply, "Changing to the system for joining in worship was most suitable for 'me as I was at that time.'" A woman who died recently had switched from usual worship attendance to worship via the telephone and is an example of one person who was able to take part in worship even after becoming bedridden.

Other problems remain, such as the difficulty of churches with limited financial resources being unable to meet the initial cost and being unable to use the service-phone in places like hospitals. However, it is true that with this system, there are people who can be blessed by joining with others in worship. (Tr. RB)



A "service-phone" (a multiple-circuit voice-receiving device)

Tsuji Junko, pastor of Shitaya Church
East Subdistrict, Tokyo District

Reflection on Our Years in Japan

by Carol Hastings, missionary
Presbyterian Church (USA)

A raw egg ready to be cracked into a small bowl to accompany the *sukiyaki*; a beautiful and exotic name: *Shizuka*; a Japanese stone lantern to enhance the small church garden; miso soup with no spoon; green tea-flavored ice cream; a tube of wasabi, platters of soy sauce, freshly caught and prepared fish, and a cooperative party to share the feast. My first impressions of Japan, perhaps? Yes, but all before ever arriving in Japan. It seems that Japan had been working its way into my life since I was a young girl in Yonkers, New York where two Japanese families were involved in my parents' church.

The last memory listed above, the *sashimi* feast, took place in Western Samoa in 1978. My husband Tom and I, newlyweds, were spending the year there with the Peace Corps. Sharing similar values and goals, we naturally bonded with the group of young Japanese JOCV volunteers also working in Samoa. This was where we tasted our first *sashimi*, probably the freshest that we have ever had. Our new friends urged us to visit Japan. We too were intrigued, and also impressed with the trusting, family-like relationships between the Japanese volunteers, so after returning to the U.S., we applied for jobs and fortuitously ended up as English teachers at the Yamanashi YMCA, led by a wonderful and deeply committed Christian couple, Eiji and Sachiko Osawa. Their truly international outlook created an unusually open and accepting environment in the small, countryside city of Kofu. We were truly blessed to be hired and nurtured by them.

Our two years in Kofu held surprising new changes for us. Our first daughter Rose was born there, where her blue eyes and pink skin created quite a sensation. Tom and I also experienced a kind of rebirth in the Christian faith of our childhoods. After the tumultuous years of the 1960s and 70s, when we were both questioning everything we had been taught, we had strayed away from the church and had been looking for a spiritual home—even trying out Zen Buddhism. It never ceases to amaze us that God chose to draw us back to Him during our time in Kofu, Japan. In gratitude, we pledged to return to Japan after receiving more theological training in the U.S.

Our return to Japan in 1987 brought us to another beautiful city, Kanazawa, where Tom was hired to teach English and Bible at Hokuriku Gakuin. We first heard about this school in Wheaton, Illinois where we met the nephew of Virginia Deter, a PCUSA missionary, during a church fire drill, of all places. While standing around outside the church, he told us all about his dear aunt who had devoted her life to Japan at Hokuriku Gakuin. He said that she was always on the lookout for new English teachers and recommended that we contact her, which we did. We were fortunate to work together with her in Kanazawa for four-and-a-half years and also pleased to be officially appointed as missionaries by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1988.



The Hastings family: (from left to right) Paul, Rose, Sarah, Katie, Carol and Tom

Our family had expanded by then and included our son Paul and second daughter, Sarah. I became immersed in the worlds of *yochien* and elementary school. It was quite a bewildering experience to find the required *yochien* bags and school supplies. Every item had to be 'just so!' After the variety and freedom we had experienced in the U.S., this was quite a job. Thankfully, our children's new schoolteachers at Wakakusa Kyokai Kindergarten and Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School, really helped us out. I studied Japanese, taught in our church school, taught our children English reading and writing at home and helped them with their Japanese homework, and was involved in many community groups. Those were busy but happy years. As Kanazawa was rather isolated from the foreign community, our children especially looked forward to the annual Presbyterian missionaries' retreat held at Amagi Sanso. In those days, this retreat involved nearly 100 people. Nowadays, with the decrease of PCUSA missionaries sent to Japan, there are only ten full-time PCUSA mission workers.

After a home assignment in Princeton, New Jersey, we returned to Kobe so that our children could attend an international school, Canadian Academy. Tom taught Christian Education at Seiwa College, and I had many private piano students at school and volunteered in various capacities at Kobe Union Church. Our third daughter, Katie, was born in Kobe, making our family complete. Soon after settling in Kobe, Tom was surprised to receive a call to join the faculty of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. After much prayer, we decided to accept the invitation. Our older children were rather upset to be moving again so soon, but the devastating earthquake in 1995, which ruined our house, actually hastened our departure. Our children were shocked and distraught, as were my parents who pleaded with us to spend a few months with them in Cape May, New Jersey before our planned move to Tokyo. Seven months later, on a very hot August day, we arrived in Tokyo. We sure were grateful for the air conditioners in the guesthouse on the seminary campus. Tom launched into his work at the seminary where he was thrilled to help prepare students for ministry in the church throughout Japan. I was also very happy to teach English to the seminary students over the past year.

(con'd. on p.8)

Career Missionaries Retire

Robert (Bob) and Hazel Terhune, United Methodist missionaries, have completed 40 years of service and in March 2008 returned to the United States. Both had received the Lord's call to mission service while they were young: Hazel at age 9 and Bob at age 14. In God's mysterious plan they met and were married while studying at the same seminary, then joined their paths in preparation for pastoral and Christian educational ministries.

In 1968 they responded to the United Methodist Church's call for missionaries, and they were sent to Japan. After one-and-a-half years of language study, their first assignment was to Tottori Prefecture, where they worked hard doing evangelism for 14 years. At first they struggled with the language and with various local challenges, such as shoveling snow and cleaning ditches. Through their struggles, they met many people with whom they connected and made deep, abiding relationships. Later Bob even served as pastor of Aoya Church. They now recollect, "We became who we are through those 14 years in Tottori, which gave us a strong foundation for our mission service in Japan."

Subsequently, they served for almost nine years in evangelism at Nishi Arai Church in Tokyo, preaching sermons, leading Bible studies, and sharing with the youth and young adult groups. From 1993, Bob served as a missionary professor at Aoyama Women's Junior College teaching Christian studies. Through religious activities, Bob was able to strengthen and realize the purpose of the school, which is "a life based on the Christian faith." During those 15 years, the Terhunes also served at Tokyo Ikebukuro Church, preaching, helping with the children's ministry, guiding youth, and supporting the evangelistic outreach of the church.



Bob and Hazel Terhune displaying strings of folded paper

From 1988 Hazel served as the English secretary at the Kyodan General Office in Tokyo and for 15 years as the Kyodan Newsletter's editor and chair of the KNL Editorial Committee. Bob was also a committee member and translator for the newsletter. Later Hazel additionally served as the Mission Personnel Secretary of the Council on Cooperative Mission (CoC). Then, from 2004 until the end of their term in 2008, she served as treasurer and representative of the United Methodist Mission Office in Japan.

They mention their gratitude, saying: "For these 40 years God's deep love and guidance, as well as all of your friendship, has sustained us, so that all things worked together for good, and we could share God's Word and do His work here. For this we want to give thanks from the bottom of our hearts." Surely we, the church in Japan, shall never forget Bob and Hazel Terhune, their ever-welcoming smiles and their devotion to the practice of God's love. (Tr. NB)

Nishio Misao, member
KNL Committee

Local Church Program Features Haiku, Sign Language & Finger Braille Classes

On the first Sunday of every other month, a Haiku group named Eagle Society holds a regular meeting after the worship service. We share our compositions and appreciate one another's work as we enjoy a lunch prepared by members of the church women's group. There are seven of us, all over 77 years of age. As members of the same church we are familiar with each other, so we do not hesitate to share our Haiku, even though they are not such excellent ones. We conduct our meeting in a carefree manner, like eagles flying with outstretched wings.

Classes for learning sign-language and finger braille were organized because of our desire to communicate with people among our congregation whose seeing and/or hearing is

impaired. Even with only once-a-month training we are able to use these skills in our communication with them. We also provide translations of the worship service every week in sign-language and finger braille, by taking turns among class members. We translate into Braille the worship order, the sermon, and discussion papers for annual church meeting, as well as papers for the women's group's regular meeting. Some of us do volunteer work to use these skills for people in need outside of our church. (Tr. HL) [Ed. note: Finger braille is a means of communicating by using your fingers to "type" a message as if you were actually typing on a braillewriter.]

Nakagawa Hiroshi, member
Shizuoka Kusabuka Church, Tokai District

The General Secretary's Diary

The season of annual district assemblies begins in late April. The General Affairs Department of the Kyodan General Office has been particularly busy making preparations for the 2008 sessions and has completed the moderator's greetings to each of the districts and the general secretary's report on the business of the Kyodan during the 2007 fiscal year. As general secretary, I have reviewed the charts listing church statistics for 2006, the budgets and financial reports, and distributions of financial support for district activities, etc., and was reminded anew of the severity of the Kyodan's situation. The unfortunate reality is that Kyodan membership and attendance at worship services as a whole is slowly declining, and the same can be said concerning the church's financial status. Thus, each Kyodan church needs to renew its commitment to outreach and evangelism.

Recently, I also found some very interesting data in a report entitled, "50 years of Kyodan data: See the church in graph format." Prepared by a member of the Committee on Finance as an aid to committee planning, it looked at the past 50 years on both the general church and district levels, analyzing a number of relevant statistics, such as communicant membership, worship attendance, number of baptisms, deaths, age distribution of membership, church school attendance, apportionments (amount paid by churches to general church), pastors' salaries. The implications of the various statistics were easy to identify. In addition to these internal church statistics, the analysis included the aspect of the general financial strength of each area or prefecture involved and drew the following conclusions.

-If current church trends are prolonged, the Kyodan will continue to decrease in strength.

-If the Kyodan wishes to grow in the future, its motto must be "#1: evangelism, and #2: evangelism." It must refocus its efforts on evangelism.

-If each church could average one baptism and the reinstatement of two inactive members per year, the Kyodan would maintain a growth pattern.

I think this explanation is easy to understand, and I find it convincing. I pray that as a church that is part of the Body of Christ, the Kyodan at its national and local levels will refocus its efforts on evangelism and make its worship services more meaningful so that this goal of one baptism and the reinstatement of two inactive members per year can be reached. I pray that each church will recommit itself to the principles of an evangelical statement of faith and the following of the bylaws of the church. (Tr. TB)

Naito Tomeyuki
Kyodan General Secretary

Reflection in Japan (Cont'd. from p.6)

Now, after 13 years in Tokyo, we are sorry to be saying goodbye. I had just begun working on the staff of this *Kyodan Newsletter* when we rather suddenly realized that God was calling us again - this time back to the United States. My widowed mother needs us near her, and so we must go. But, we believe that our own country needs help, too. The churches are losing members there, just as they are here. Young people are not interested. The war in Iraq has not only drained our country's resources and Iraq's, but has worsened the conflict between religions and cultures. There will be plenty of opportunities for ministry and learning.

Nevertheless, Japan has become a second home for our family. Our oldest daughter will stay in Tokyo to work at her new job. Our son is involved with Japan through his work in New York at the Japan ICU Foundation. Our second daughter spent this past year working at the American School in Japan. Our youngest daughter, still in school, is already wondering when we can come back to visit. As soon as possible, we tell her.

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