

11th Kyodan-PCT Conference Held in Taiwan

The 11th Interchurch Conference of the Kyodan and the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan was held Nov. 8-10 at Fongsan Church in Son-Shan Presbytery of southern Taiwan. It was attended by 17 participants from the United Church of Christ in Japan (hereafter Kyodan) and 24 from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (hereafter PCT).

James Ching-Chang Pan, a pastor and the moderator of the PCT's 52nd General Assembly, led the opening worship on the evening of the first day. His sermon entitled "Living with Shalom and Love for my Neighbor" reflected the theme of the conference. He spoke about his desire for the churches of Taiwan and Japan to join hands as neighbors and build a relationship of cooperation. Further, he expressed PCT's special desire to relate actively to movements aimed at Taiwan's attainment of status as an independent nation and recognition by the United Nations. He also spoke of the need for support of PCT's outlying churches.

The second and third days (Nov. 9 and 10) began with Bible study at 8:30 a.m. Takayanagi Ryuji, moderator of Kanagawa District and pastor of Honmoku Megumi Church, led the first study, using a text from Isaiah 11:1-11. Fu Hong-Chi, a member of the World Mission Committee and pastor of Sen-Wan Church in Taipei Presbytery, led the second study, using Matthew 5: 9 as his text. He emphasized that under the present world situation, war is the most frightening thing for human beings who seek peace, the true basis of which is God's justice and peace. His powerful conclusion stated that idols, which point to an illusory peace, must be revealed and removed.

After the morning Bible study on the second day, representatives of the PCT and Kyodan were allotted equal time for keynote lectures. PCT General Secretary Andrew T. G. Chang reminded all that viewing things entrusted to us by God as our own possessions leads to error. He stressed that peace involves sharing as well as receiving. As a concrete example, he suggested that at the end of every year each church give its balance carried forward to another church. In the midst of realities like the overemphasis on economics and the gap between rich and poor, and in areas where communities of faith and life are formed through life-education for all generations, the burden of social concerns is taken seriously, and a place for mission exists.



Conference participants in front of Fongsan Church

From the Kyodan, Vice-moderator Kobayashi Makoto lectured on "Japan's Constitution with special emphasis on Article 9." He began by speaking about individual participation in local movements for the protection of the constitution. Then he explained the origin of Japan's Constitution, its distinctive character, the present-day reasons for concern, the relationship between the constitution and the basic education law, etc. He concluded that he will oppose the revision of the constitution and strive for its protection.

This theme was taken up in answer to the pre-conference request of the PCT, but since opposition to constitutional reform is not unanimous within the Kyodan itself, and in light of Taiwan's situation of facing military threat from China, the discussion was not well focused. Moreover, contradictory statements by participants from the Kyodan, voicing approval and disapproval of the acceptance of the Self-Defense Forces, confused the PCT participants. In response to these remarks, Kyodan General Secretary Naito stated that acceptance of the Self-Defense Forces is a personal opinion, not the opinion of the Kyodan.

After these keynote lectures there were three periods of general discussion. Ideas stimulated by the lectures and the joint statement of the former conference were exchanged.

A mutual exchange of missionaries is already taking place. A statement was made by Hokkai District Secretary Yamamoto Koichi that Hokkai District has learned much about the PCT's activities through the work of Divan Suqluman, the PCT missionary sent to Hokkaido. Yamamoto also reported that a request for an extension of her term is being prepared.

From Taiwan to Hokkaido: A Missionary's Story

by Divan Suqluman, missionary

Coming to Hokkaido I found everything very different from Taiwan where I was born and raised. In Hokkaido, I had to start from zero. I still feel uncomfortable living in an environment where I don't speak the language but the pastors of the Hokkai District are always very helpful. I am thankful for their friendship and support. Winters in Hokkaido are very cold and so some church members, worried about how I would cope, presented me with an overcoat and a pair of winter boots. Other church members helped to create opportunities for me to study Japanese so that my skills would improve more rapidly. Thanks to the help of so many people, I started preaching in district churches once a month as of September 2006. Since April 2007, I have been preaching in churches that are without fulltime pastors, as well as taking my turn preaching at the Thursday worship service offered by the Sapporo Subdistrict. The support I have received has enabled me to adjust to life here in a short time and has kept me from being overcome by loneliness and isolation.



Suqluman (right) and teacher of Ainu language (center)

When I first came to Japan I had little opportunity to be in contact with the Ainu people because of my limited language skills. However, in 2007, though still studying Japanese, I set myself the goal of participating in various events and activities related to the Ainu people. Attending these events, I would introduce myself as "Divan Suqluman, a member of the Bunun people, one of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan." The room would echo with the sound of loud applause and the warmth of welcoming voices. However, when I went on to say that I am a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan working as a missionary in the Hokkai District of the Kyodan, the atmosphere would change completely. Everything would suddenly become quiet and I could feel a distance opening between us. However, as I continued to attend events, people gradually began to accept me. My Japanese is still inadequate, but after every event or activity there is always a time of sharing together. Although it is difficult for me to express my thoughts and opinions, I have received a lot of help and encouragement from the Ainu



In front of Ainu memorial park

people I have met and now have many Ainu friends. As we have more opportunities to share and converse, we grow closer to one another. Building these relationships is one of the most important things I do. I want to deepen further the sense of solidarity with the Ainu people. Now, whenever an event or activity is being planned, the Ainu people themselves send me the information and invite me to attend. That is the greatest harvest for me this last year.

When I agreed to become a missionary, I thought about the importance of my work for the district. I felt the most important thing for me would be to give my best effort to become a bridge. By becoming a bridge perhaps I can help build a relationship of trust and goodwill between the Ainu people and the church in Japan, the Ainu people and the indigenous churches of Taiwan, and most importantly, a relationship of solidarity in Christ. There are limits to what I as an individual can do, but working together I believe we can build a secure bridge firmly rooted in Japan and Taiwan.

(Tr. RW)



JOCS Articles Feature Overseas Workers

Oe Hiroshi of the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service (JOCS) wrote two articles for the October *Kyodan Shinpo* concerning two workers and the countries they were sent to this year. The first article is about Shimizu Noriko, a registered nurse, mid-wife, and public health worker. She was sent to Tabora in central Tanzania in late September. Of the 35 million people in Tanzania, 30% are christian, 30% are Muslim, and 40% adhere to a traditional folk religion. The life expectancy is 46 years. Because of the constant strife in eight nearby countries, Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in Africa, has had to accept many refugees. To combat the high infant mortality and death rate among pregnant women, Shimizu works to promote mother and child health care.



Catholic children in Tabora, Tanzania

Her work is based in the Tabora Diocese Health Center, which is in an area with a high incidence of malaria and HIV infection. Forty-five percent of the health care facilities there are run by the church and 55% by the government. Community life is centered around the church, which plays an important role in people's lives and education. Because of this, JOCS cooperates in the work of the Tabora Diocese. Nyerere, the late, first president of Tanzania, said "We Tanganyikans are going to set a light on the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro which brightens the lands beyond our borders and gives hope to those in despair, replaces hatred with love, and gives despised people respect. We cannot send a rocket to the moon like other counties, but we can send a rocket of hope and love to people wherever they are." (quoted from the book *Sixty Ways to Know Tanzania* published by Akashi Shoten) While in nursing school, Shimizu was inspired by the work of a former JOCS staff person. Experiencing the light and guidance of God through his word, Shimizu was led to choose this life, also. With Shimizu's dedication, JOCS is launching a rocket of love and hope to the people of Tabora.

The second person reported on is Dr. Aoki Shigeru, a pediatrician who was sent to Pakistan in last October. His work is in Fazarabad in central Pakistan at St. Rafael Catholic Hospital, mainly a maternity hospital. One other Japanese doctor, an internist, Sister Okano, is also working in the



Christian Fellowship Hospital Dr. Aoki's training place

maternity ward. Dr. Aoki works with newborn babies and in pediatrics.

Before going to Pakistan, Aoki received two and a half months of training at the Christian Fellowship Hospital in India. During this time he had the experience of treating three newborn babies with respiratory problems who were transferred from another hospital. One regained its strength in a few days but the other two remained in critical condition. However, there was only one respirator and the more seriously ill baby, 31 weeks old, was put on it. Fortunately, that baby could be taken off the respirator in three days and released in ten days. Although this was an occasion for joy, the other 35-week-old baby experienced breathing difficulties and died during this time. Dr. Aoki couldn't help thinking that if they had had another respirator this child too might have lived. In the midst of these feelings of regret and sadness, a verse from the Gospel of John came to his mind. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Aoki wrote, "One might object by saying that a newborn infant could not have such a will, but the net result was that for one to be saved, the other had to be sacrificed."

Eleven million children in this world die before they are five years old, one every three seconds: 30,000 every day. Most of these could be saved, but instead, this is the stark reality of the silent crisis in these lands. Although we cannot see this crisis in Japan, every day children from around the world are sending their SOS to us. The workers who are sent by organizations such as JOCS face these cries for help daily, and the reality, no doubt, wears them down as they face many difficulties and experience feelings of helplessness. These workers are the salt of the earth for such children, and they need our prayers of support. (Tr. JT)

Kawakami Yoshiko, pastor
Okubo Church, Tokyo District
(KNL Committee member)

Memorial Fund Aids Filipino Students

KNL Editorial Committee member, Tadao Akuzawa



Fujisaki Rutsuki (1958-1983)

Last fall, I was on a trip and since it was Sunday, I went to the local church where I happened to be, which was in Hitachi, Ibaraki. As the service concluded, the worship leader went through the announcements in the bulletin, which included an announcement that the following Sunday they would have a special event surrounding the 25th anniversary of the founding of "the Rutsuki Fujisaki Memorial Fund." It was to feature a "testimony" by one of the scholarship recipients, Anne Palmes.

This brought to my memory having read the book "Rutsuki's Farewell," which was published in 1984, at the suggestion of the pastor at my church. I recall having read through it in just one day, and I also recall hearing my friend, Kitakubo Etsuko, an English teacher at Toyo Eiwa Girl's High School, give a message at morning chapel about Rutsuki's loving sacrifice in which he quoted the verse from John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." It had a great impact on the students there. I was very impressed that the influence of this memorial fund was continuing to grow after more than 20 years.

The fund was officially begun in 1984 to commemorate the death of Rutsuki on April 2, 1983, when she drowned on a beach in the Philippines while trying to save two others who were in danger of drowning. She had expressed her desire to "serve the Asian people," and so Prof. Otani Yoshiharu, her teacher at the Japan Lutheran College, together with the people at the Hitachi church, where her father was minister, joined together to create this memorial fund. Together with the gifts and prayers of numerous Christians from around Japan, they were able to raise the necessary funds to pay for the college education of first recipient, Juliet Tumbado, who got her degree in education. Ever year a new recipient was added, and then from 1987, two new recipients were chosen. This was increased to 3 in 1993 and this year it was all the way up to 16 new recipients. Anne Palmes was the 8th recipient, beginning her study in psychology in 1991.

Shimada Susumu, the present pastor at Hitachi Church, gave me the following statistics, showing just how many lives have been affected and how many of these people are now serving society in many places.

Scholarship Recipients as of November 2007

	Males	Females	Total
Presently in college	7	9	16
Graduated	7	24	31
Dropped out of program	2	5	7
Total	16	38	54

Employment after graduation:

In social welfare and education positions 20

In government and industry, etc. 11

Total scholarship money for the year 2007: 820,000 yen

The following is a brief synopsis of the speech that Anne Palmes gave at her welcoming party at Hitachi Church.

"I am presently working at the Catholic Tokyo International Center, where I help people from the Philippines and other countries who live in Japan. I have discovered that helping others is not simply something that you can do in your limited locality, but even in a place like this, so far from your home, you have many opportunities to serve. It was through your efforts that I was able to become who I am now. The scholarship you provided allowed me to get a college education and because of that to pursue my dream. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the support you gave me. I speak on behalf of my fellow recipients in the Philippines in extending our thanks to you all."

I was further inspired when I read through the pamphlet published at the 20th anniversary of the founding of the memorial fund. Entitled, "Courage, Hope, Challenge," it described how previous scholarship recipients who had graduated from college and were now working had banded together to form their own scholarship fund for needy high school students. Thus, the love shown by Rutsuki in giving her life for her friends, which was the impetus for the formation of the Rutsuki Fujisaki Memorial Fund, is now being passed on by the many lives that have been transformed by her actions, and so the circle of love is ever expanding.

Shimada, of Hitachi Church, said this concerning the history of the fund, "It is love and the sharing of love that has greater power than all of the weapons of the world to bring about peace, and it is this that is the basis for nurturing life." The all-to-short life of service and dedication shown by this young woman has been an illustration of that power. I felt very fortunate to have been on this late fall trip and to have just happened on that church service where I discovered anew the circle of God's love as it continuously spread. (Tr. TB)

Akuzawa Tadao, member
Angyo Church, Kanto District
(KNL Committee member)

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Note: The names of Japanese person are listed in traditional; last names first.

 Book Review

Marina and a Thousand Picture Books

Hara Hiroko. Tokyo: Word of Life Press Ministries, 2007



In the monthly magazine *Shinto no Tomo* (the Believer's Friend) published by the United Church of Christ in Japan, there is a corner for literary contributions submitted by Christian readers. There are three types of traditional poems in Japanese: "haiku," with 17 syllables; "tanka," with 31 syllables; and "free verse," which has no fixed rhythm. A regular contributor to the free-verse column is Hara Hiroko. These poems are born out of her family life, which centers on her brain-damaged daughter, Marina.

Marina, the Hara's fourth child, is now 21 years old. Two weeks after she was born, she contracted bacterial meningitis, and although she survived, her brain was badly damaged, which left her with extremely severe physical and mental limitations. Breathing difficulties accompanied by violent convulsions were a daily occurrence. At the age of two she was still unable to speak, sit up or crawl, and her face showed no signs of emotion. Since Hara had to stay inside for long periods of time holding Marina still, as she was repeatedly seized with convulsions, the three older children lost their smiles, too. However, when Marina was three, the family heard of the Doman Method, a rehabilitation training method for restoring damaged brain function. One aspect of this training is to read picture books to the patient. Hara had noticed that although Marina made no response to what she could see around her, she did react to loud noises, leading her mother to suspect that Marina was able to hear, and so she began the practice of reading 20 picture books to her every day. Her husband also suggested they talk to Marina more.

Until then they had not talked to Marina much when looking after her, since she never responded. After about a year and a half, Marina began to smile when she caught a glimpse of a picture book. By the time she was a second grader she had some understanding of everyday vocabulary. At the age of 12 years and one month she answered to her own name for the first time. The rigorous training of the Doman Method, together with the help of many people, brought various improvements, and after about five years it was judged to be time to discontinue this intensive training. Nevertheless, the practice of reading picture books aloud to Marina has continued, to a total now of more than a thousand books. Today Marina is still unable to hold a conversation, but she can understand simple words and has become able to express her likes and dislikes regarding picture books and food. Now she is full of smiles.

Throughout the years, as their four children were growing up, the Hara family experienced many difficulties but the children and parents were able to talk things over and make the necessary adjustments. There were times when Hara felt closed in as though she was walking alone down a long dark tunnel, carrying Marina. Gradually opening her ears to her family's feelings and words as well as her own, she has created her poems. It is in this way that Hara was able to write about gathering up little bits and pieces of happiness in the midst of daily life. What's more, in the process of bringing up Marina, Hara came into contact with a number of Christians, reawakening the teachings of Christ that she had encountered in her students days at a Christian school. She started to read the Bible, and when Marina was ten years old they were both baptized. Hara was able to lay down her burdens at the feet of Christ, knowing that she no longer had to suffer alone.

The following is one of Hara Hiroko's poems.

"Bits and Pieces of Happiness."

Nothing / special happens every day / and days go by with
no meaning / but I have come to see every single day as
important / because of you. / ... / Whenever you manage to
do something / I want to shout / "Look at that!" / Something
very ordinary / seems for the moment like a miracle. / Joy
wells up from the bottom of my heart / and I have to give
thanks. / Because of you / your mother / has become an
expert at picking up bits and pieces of happiness.

Marina likes all kinds of books by both Japanese and foreign authors, such as "Little Gorilla" by Ruth Bornstein, with the message "I always love you," and "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak. Picture books have helped to develop Marina's emotions and deepen the family bonds. This year a book entitled *Marina and a Thousand Picture Books* has been published, containing Hara's poems and the story of her journey with Marina so far. These poems, which are born out of the daily life of the Hara family express deep truths behind their simple words, and have touched the hearts of many people and given them encouragement. (Tr.NS)

Kawakami Yoshiko, pastor
Okubo Church, Tokyo District
(KNL Committee member)

The General Secretary's Diary

"The Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration of 150 Years of Evangelism in Japan" was formed and has begun its work. The committee is composed of five members, including two lay members, the chairperson of the Commission on Mission, the chairperson of the Committee on Evangelism, and one person from a church historically related to the "Yokohama Band." This committee is not an executive committee; rather its function will be to examine the events the Kyodan will hold and report to the Executive Council.

At the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee on Dec. 10, primarily two issues were considered:

I. Why will we be commemorating 150 years of evangelism in Japan in 2009?

- (1) In "A Brief History of the Kyodan," a Kyodan policy statement, 1859 is established as the inaugural year of evangelism in Japan.
- (2) Bernard J. Bettelheim's evangelism was done in the Ryukyu Islands; it was not evangelism in Japan. Therefore, when considering Bettelheim's evangelism from this perspective, his work predates evangelism in Japan.
- (3) The Kyodan has already celebrated the 50th and 100th year anniversaries based on the 1859 date established by "A Brief History of the Kyodan."
- (4) While in this statement the term "mission" is used, at the 50th anniversary "ministry" (kaikyo), and at the 100th anniversary "mission" (senkyo) were used. At that time the terms were used from a "foreign missions" perspective. This time, however, we have used the term "evangelism" (dendo), with the meaning of independent evangelism by Japanese people, to distinguish it from the earlier cases.

II. What kind of events and activities will we hold as a Kyodan?

- (1) A "Worship Service Commemorating the Establishment of the Kyodan" will be held on June 24, 2009.
- (2) Commemorative events will be held on Nov. 22 and 23, 2009. These will include worship services at each Kyodan church on Sunday, Nov. 22. On Monday, 23, a national holiday, an anniversary ceremony will be held in the morning, with large assemblies for lay people, women's groups, etc., to be held both before and after the service.
- (3) Two books will be published to help clarify the modern significance of 150 years of evangelism in Japan.
 - (a) An overview of the past 150 years
 - (b) The journey of the last 50 years (the period from the 100th to the 150th anniversary)

As we continue to develop these plans (with further consideration of matters like cooperation with other denominations, etc.) and as we begin to put them into action, we continue to pray that they will bear much fruit. (Tr. TVB)

Naito Tomeyuki

(Cont'd. on p. 8)

Kyodan-PCT Conference *(Cont'd. from p. 1)*

A difference of understanding between the church relationship of the Yusan Theological Seminary and that of the Rural Evangelism Seminary in Tsurukawa became apparent in relation to the exchange and mutual training of seminary students. While the PCT's participation is carried out under its General Assembly, the Kyodan considers the program as that of individual seminaries. The PCT requested that the Kyodan also formally promote this exchange.

It was also reported that a "mutual agreement on cooperative mission and exchange" has been made by the Kyodan's Hyogo District and the PCT's Kaohsiung Presbytery and that a further deepening of this cooperation in mission, including the continuation of youth exchange, is expected.

Having examined the many elements that constitute the basis of cooperation, strong demands were presented to this conference to deal with several concerns common to both churches, such as aging, the declining birthrate, economic inequality, protection of the environment, immigration, foreign laborers. It was decided that these concerns should be dealt with in the next conference or through individual consultations. A joint declaration reflecting these issues was