

We who are Chosen by the Lord

by Akiyama Toru, pastor, Ageo Godo Church
Moderator, Kanto District

My Soul Doth Magnify the LORD (*Hymnal 21 #178*)

1. **My soul worships the Lord. My heart praises the Lord. For the Lord has chosen this unknown daughter and used her to be the mother of (his) son.**
2. **The Lord seeks out the weak friend. The Lord visits the poor. The Lord of Power pours out his limitless love to take away pain and to raise up the lowly.**

(Note: This is the English translation of the Japanese poetry for this hymn, which is based on Mary's Song in Luke 1:46-55.)

For me, as I look forward to Christmas to celebrate the deep joy of the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world, Mary's Song provides the most appropriate point of reference. Told that she would have a child by the Holy Spirit, Mary was troubled, but the Angel Gabriel said that nothing is impossible with God. So Mary replied that she was the Lord's servant and said, "May it be to me as you have said." Jesus, the Son of Man, learned from his mother to have a clear heart and was unwavering in his obedience to the Lord. Now, as we await the coming of our Lord, we must ask ourselves to what place the Lord is coming; to whom he is coming; how he is coming; and what shall be the focus of our faith.

It has now been two-and-a-half years since the Great East Japan Disaster. Kanto District (Niigata, Ibaragi, Tochigi, Gunma, and Saitama prefectures), in which I am serving, experienced earthquakes of 5.0 to 6.0 on the Japanese scale (which is quite severe), and more than 30 churches, parsonages, and other church related buildings suffered structural damage. We, like Ou and Tohoku districts, were affected by the disaster. But unlike the other disaster areas, although our buildings were damaged, we did not suffer loss of human life and the devastation of whole towns and villages. So our support plans were different from other districts. Both churches receiving support and those able to do their own repairs are in the process of completing the necessary work. However, as the nature of the damage became clearer, it was found that some churches did not have the financial ability or the will to rebuild at first. Since many members' homes were

also damaged, they were at a loss as to how to proceed. Among these, Utsunomiya Church has been able to lay the foundation of its new building; Isezaki Church has framed its building; and Mito Chuo Church, which was slow in getting government approval of its building plans, has finally started construction. This Christmas, these churches will sing "Joy to the World" in the midst of construction as they experience the coming of the Lord close to them. This is not mere rebuilding but the creation of buildings that are fit for the future evangelical mission of the church. Through all of this, we can see the churches changing from ones stricken with grief to ones on fire for evangelism.

I want to give thanks to the churches all over Japan whose prayers and oneness in Christ provided needed financial support. Also, as it says in Corinthians I 12:26, "If one part [of the church] suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." This oneness of the church was vividly demonstrated in the support received from around the world. In light of the volunteers and strong financial support from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, the Korean Churches, the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity in Germany, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in United States of America, and the Reformed Church in America and so on, we have had to reflect on our own response to crises in other parts of the world. Just as the words of Mary's Song say, we feel that we who are chosen by the Lord, as undeserving as we are, have through this become the recipients of God's grace. (Tr. JT)

Executive Council Report

The third Executive Council meeting of the current two-year General Assembly period took place Oct. 21-22 at the Kyodan headquarters, with all 30 members in attendance. General Secretary Nagasaki Tetsuo noted the damage done by Typhoon 26 (named "Typhoon Wipha" by Western media although Japan uses only numbers). The 49 victims included one Kyodan church member. There was also a report on the numerous visits from representatives of overseas churches this past spring.

Regarding the continuing discussion about the degree of earthquake resistance of the Japan Christian Center Building, a meeting of owner representatives was held at the request of the building maintenance union, which in turn was based on the decision of the Kyodan Executive Council, but the owners

were unable to decide what to do. Kitakoji Masashi, the design architect of the Vories Architectural Firm, stated that the earthquake resistance figures for the fourth through sixth floors, as well as the eighth floor, were below the standard level, so there is danger that the building could collapse in a strong earthquake. The Executive Council established a new committee called the "Task Force on the Japan Christian Center Building Issue." The 16-member committee includes the Kyodan moderator, vice moderator, and secretary along with the members of the Executive Committee and the chairperson of the Commission on Finance.

The Committee on the Research Institute on the Mission of the Church reported on the second version of the Revised Basic Principles of Mission. (Cont'd on p. 8)

Kyodan's Commission on Ministry Visits Fukushima

The Commission on Ministry visited churches, church-related kindergartens, and other facilities in Fukushima, Aug. 19-21, and Sept. 2-4, when we were able to visit 25 churches, and meet with 18 pastors. However, we visited seven churches where we were unable to meet with the pastor. In addition, we visited seven kindergartens, daycare centers, and other church-related facilities as well as one facility not directly related to a church.

The overwhelming issue for the churches in Fukushima is nuclear contamination. The issue hangs like a heavy cloud over the lives of clergy, church members, teachers, children at the related daycare centers and kindergartens, as well as all parents and guardians. Not everyone is in agreement as to what the actual situation is, so differences in opinion have created walls of separation between people. One of the biggest problems is that "recovery" and "safety" have come to represent two contradictory views that are in constant tension with each other. If the focus is on recovery, this could lead to an underestimation of the risks of radiation. If the prime minister's unfounded "Safety Declaration" is advertised near and far, this could result in the exposure of a multitude of people to dangerous levels of radiation. On the other hand, if safety becomes the primary concern, then evacuation from Fukushima will be the most important step to insure people's safety. This would lead to a mass exodus from Fukushima, and all forms of commerce and social activity would come to a halt. What makes this present situation so difficult is that it is not easy to discern whose opinion is right and whose is not. The ongoing tensions reveal how serious this issue is.

For the municipalities to "recover," it is necessary to stop the population from moving out of the area. To keep people from leaving, it needs to be emphasized that it is safe to live in Fukushima. This would be the position of people who work for Fukushima Prefecture as well as of local cities, towns, and villages in Fukushima. It was reported that one daycare center received a phone call from a man at the local municipality saying, "Our town water is safe so please have the children drink from the tap." The pastor who shared this information with us said that he himself drinks the water from the tap, but in order to provide a safe environment to alleviate the concern of parents/guardians, he buys bottled water from outside Fukushima. This was the answer that he gave the man who called from the local town hall. Later, the daycare center was criticized for "not cooperating with the town recovery effort."

At present, there are two Kyodan churches that are inactive due to the nuclear disaster. On this visit, we were able to go to both. For Odaka Church, there was no need for paper work, but for Namie Church we had to do the proper paper work at Namie City Hall before being allowed to travel into the area to stand before the church. As we rode in the car, the surreal landscape was hard for us to view without being overwhelmed by

sadness. Before our eyes we could see the town, and yet there were no people. Farmland was overgrown with weeds. Only the traffic lights were in operation, along with a few police cars making their rounds. Suddenly one day, because of the nuclear disaster, the town had been emptied, the church could no longer hold worship services, and the church-related kindergarten had to close. I was speechless as I stood in front of the churches and kindergartens that had been created and maintained, thanks to the prayers and service of so many people throughout the years.

I can understand the feelings of those who emphasize the importance of recovery. They can see in a very real way what will happen if their village or town begins to degenerate and die. And yet, no one can say that it is right to hide the damage that results from exposure to high radiation. This dilemma weighs like a heavy burden on the lives of the people. It tears them and their communities apart, and the suffering continues to grow deeper and heavier. This is the reality of Fukushima today.

Through this visit, we were all made aware of the richness of the Kyodan. Even in the midst of these difficult realities, there are people who are committed to walking alongside the suffering people, carrying on the ministries of the churches and related facilities to bring salvation through the gospel.

In the Kyodan, there are many committed people with a variety of gifts who continue their ministries in Fukushima by walking in the footsteps of Jesus. The Great East Japan Disaster has tested all of us in ways we have never been tested before. But the Kyodan churches and facilities are strong as they carry on the good work of Christ in their respective locations. By witnessing their ministries and listening to their voices, I was able to confirm the enriching presence of the Holy Spirit as it is poured out in each place.

More than anything, I believe we are being called to pray. We need to pray for each and every person in Fukushima and that the enriching work of the Holy Spirit will be felt over the land. Moved along by those prayers, I pray that each of us can give with thankful hearts for the work that needs to be done. I heard from our brothers and sisters that the Kyodan Relief Funds have been put to good use. I heard many words of appreciation for the financial support that the Kyodan has been able to provide. Through our incessant prayers and financial gifts we are enabled to participate in the work of God there in the disaster-stricken areas. I want to emphasize that our prayers and financial gifts are both signs of solidarity that we can offer in the face of difficulties as well as service that we can offer to our Lord. (Tr. JM)

—Yoshizawa Hisashi, secretary
Commission on Ministry

From *Shinpo (The Kyodan Times)*, No. 4783

Yamanashi Eiwa's Founding: First Principal, Sarah Wintemute, and Other Young Pioneers

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding in 1873, the Canadian Evangelism Society adopted a resolution to establish a mission presence in Japan, after the end of its self-imposed isolation, by sending two missionaries as its first representatives. Evangelism in Yamanashi began with the second group that arrived in 1876, with Charles Samuel Eby coming to the Kofu basin on horseback to engage in mission work. After three years of evangelistic efforts, he was able to establish the first church in Kofu, the Japan Methodist Kofu Church, in 1878. The youth of that region who became members of the church expressed their desire to have a school for young girls to attend, as they had no school for girls beyond elementary school. Thus, a group of promoters was established who prepared building plans and asked the Women's Missionary Society of Canada (WMSC) to supply teachers. Sarah Agnes Wintemute was sent in response to that request.

Sarah was born in Ontario, Canada in 1864, and graduated from both a school for female instructors and a women's college, where she studied French and Latin. She also graduated from an art school. After graduation, she was sent by the Canadian Methodist Church's WMSC in October 1886 to Yamanashi Eiwa Girls' School, where she taught math, English, physical education, and Western-style sewing until April 1889.

Two years after being initially sent to Japan, Sarah was selected to be the first principal of Yamanashi Eiwa Girls' School by the WMSC. Shinkai Eitaro, Miyakoshi Shinjiro, and Asao Choeki were the sponsors who gathered donations from the entire prefecture of Yamanashi to prepare for the building of Yamanashi Eiwa Girls' School.

Sarah left Tokyo at the age of 25 for Yamanashi, when the Kofu Railway extended only as far as Tachikawa. From there, the only way to continue was by horse or on foot. The most difficult section was the six-kilometer climb up to Sasago Pass, and Sarah cried tears of joy when she saw the youth who came to greet her. She eagerly shook their hands with a very firm handshake. She was overjoyed to meet these young people who were of like faith and of the same heart. She arrived at Yamanashi Eiwa on May 14.

With Sarah as principal, Yamanashi Eiwa Girls' School converted a merchant shop into a school and began operation on June 1, 1889. The school had just 80 tsubo (2,840 square feet) of floor space, and there were only six students. By summer vacation, the number had increased to nine. One of the founders, 25-year-old Shinkai Eitaro, advertised often in the *Yamanashi Daily News*, trying to recruit students for the school. Finally, by September, another three had enrolled, increasing the student body to 12. The official Opening Ceremony was held on November 2, and Sarah's address, entitled "Considering Girls' Education," was printed in its entirety in the *Yamanashi Daily News*.

Sarah reported to the WMSC that "Japanese was taught in the morning, and English and moral science were taught in the afternoon, intermingled with Bible. As this was the first opportunity for most of the students to learn about the Bible, they eagerly listened and had many questions." "It's an unusual thing for a Christian school to be established, but the people of this area soon realized that this school focused on developing the inner person." In the midst of prejudice and severe resistance against



Sarah Wintemute,
Yamanashi Eiwa's first
principal

Christianity, she gave this as her goal: "Leading students to Christ and giving them the tools to transform their homes in the spirit of Christ into a pure, beautiful and happy environment, while at the same time instilling within them an ethic of service to society."

At the beginning, using a merchant's shop for a school was not necessarily an ideal environment for the students. One of the founders, Shinkai Eitaro, bought a 730 tsubo (0.63 acres) piece of land the following year and quickly began construction so that the students could enter by the summer of 1891.

The new building was a half-Western, half-Japanese modern structure. Many people from the prefecture came to see the new building and came to a deeper understanding of the educational philosophy of Yamanashi Eiwa, which reduced their original fear of Christianity. This resulted in the enrollment of 31 new students, 25 of whom lived in the dormitory.

In March 1892, Sarah went back to her country. She returned to Japan in 1893 and married Harper Havelock Coates, a teacher at Toyo Eiwa Boys' School in Tokyo. The following year, Coates became the second leader of the Chuo Kaido in Tokyo (now Hongo Central Church), following Eby, and Sarah became the head of the women's association. She worked diligently together with her husband in education, evangelism, and social service, while becoming the mother of six children.

After 48 years of service, Harper died in 1934 at the age of 70, but Sarah remained in Japan. She was present for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of Yamanashi Eiwa Girls' School in 1939.

When World War II broke out, she was required to return to her home country, but she never made it back home. She died at the age of 81 in a makeshift hospital in Nicolai Church in the Surugadai section of Tokyo in June 1945. She worked in Japan for about 60 years as an evangelist, and surely never forgot those who worked with her in the early days to establish Yamanashi Eiwa or all the effort she invested for such an important cause. We also must never forget the vigor of youth and the young missionaries among us as we strive for the Lord together. (Tr. WJ)

—Fukasawa Mieko, Yamanashi Eiwa
Historical Research Society
Yamanashi Eiwa Junior & Senior High School
Alumnae Association

Kyodan Officials Visit Germany

by Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo

This summer, the Kyodan's Task Force on Evangelism Promotion sponsored programs with both U.S. A. and German youth. As part of that exchange program, I gave the message at a commissioning service for Japanese participants held at Narita Airport. The expressions on the faces of the Japanese youth going to Germany were rigid, perhaps due to concern about the language. I left for Germany later and went to the camp where the exchange program was being held. By then the faces of the Japanese young people were bright and completely changed. One of the youth said effervescently and confidently: "I'm speaking German. By saying 'ya' and 'nain' I can communicate everything." We were invited to the Wittstock Municipal Building by the mayor of Wittstock and warmly welcomed.

The theme set by the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany) was "Environmental Issues." The youth climbed up places to see propeller energy generators and visited organic farms. This youth exchange, previously a program of the National Federation of Kyodan Women's Societies, from this year is sponsored by the Kyodan Task Force on Evangelism Promotion. Those who participated in the past as leaders of the EKD took care of the details of the youth exchange, and every one of the host families gave the Japanese youth heartwarming care. Moreover, the youth spent a full day on Saturday working on a worship service, and the Sunday worship service resulting from that preparation was moving.

This youth exchange was accomplished at the invitation of the Wittstock-Ruppin Deanery District of the Berlin Brandenburg Regional Churches, and I visited the church office in Berlin to pay my respects. Bishop Dr. Markus Droege, the Ecumenical Centre's Director Roland Herpich,

and Dr. Christof Theilemann of the Berlin Mission's Ecumenical Centre gave me a hearty welcome. That same church has pledged to provide support over a 15-year period for Horikawa Aiseien*, which were damaged during the Great East Japan Disaster, and they visited Japan in June to bring the first installment of these funds. In return, I visited and greeted the officials at this church office.

Then I visited Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS), as the Kyodan's representative, to express gratitude for the donation of a considerable amount of funds in relation to the Great East Japan Disaster and for continuing that aid.

I spent time in consultation with EMS Deputy General Secretary Ms. Ulrike Schmidt-Hesse and with Liaison Secretary of East Asia/India Lutz Drescher. I spoke especially about the accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Energy Power Plant, presenting the Kyodan's position, and requested that someone be sent to speak at the international conference to be sponsored by the Kyodan in March 2014 on the theme "Resisting the Myth of the Safety of Nuclear Energy-The Fundamental Question Posed by Fukushima." The two officials listened intently and expressed understanding of the Kyodan's position. Saito Atsushi, the Kyodan missionary pastor sent to Cologne, aided in setting up this visit. On the day I stayed in Cologne, we also met with Okada Naotake, the Kyodan missionary pastor to Brussels, Belgium, and I heard about his struggles and joys and his vision for evangelism. The Kyodan needs to resolve anew to deepen our prayers, especially as we remember the work of missionaries serving overseas. (Tr. RT)

*A residential child care facility in Fukushima Prefecture

Germany and Switzerland Visitation Diary

by Kyodan Vice-moderator Ito Mizuo

From May 7 through 15, I went with Executive Secretary Kato Makoto to visit some churches in Germany and Switzerland. The Herrnhuter Brudergemeine (Moravian Church) was our first official visit. It takes 1.5 hours to travel by car from Dresden Airport to Brudergemeine, a town in what was formerly East Germany, near the border of the Czech Republic and Poland. Kyodan missionary Saito Atsushi, pastor of the Cologne-Bonn Japanese Church, was our driver.

We went to Herrnhuter Brudergemeine because the church had donated six million yen to the Kyodan's Great East Japan Disaster Relief Fund. We expressed our gratitude and gave them information about the international conference the Kyodan will host in March 2014. We were shown the process of drawing lots from a crystal bowl to determine the scripture readings to be used in the church's publication, the *Losungen* (Daily Watchwords.) The visit made a deep impression on us. From Herrnhut we went by car to Berlin and visited there with Kyodan missionary Akiba Mutsuko. The next day, once again by car, we made a study tour of the Wittenburg churches, staying one night in Brunswick.

The following day, we visited the main office of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church

in Germany) in Hannover and met with Regional Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Ministries Abroad Paul Oppenheim. The topic of conversation was mainly the possibility of establishing a mission covenant between the EKD and the Kyodan. Oppenheim, who will be retiring this summer, took an active interest in the negotiations and wants his successor to continue with this. I informed him that the Kyodan also is positive about this negotiation and, in addition, asked him to participate in the international conference on nuclear issues to be sponsored by the Kyodan in March 2014 on the theme "Resisting the Myth of the Safety of Nuclear Energy-The Fundamental Question Posed by Fukushima."

From Hannover we boarded a train and went to Cologne. In Cologne, we visited missionaries Saito Atsushi and Akiko at Cologne-Bonn Japanese Church, and on May 12 we worshipped together with the people there.

On May 13, we went by train to Bern, Switzerland, visiting the main office of the Schweitzer Evangelischer Kirchenbund (Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches). The SEK is in mission covenant relationship with the Kyodan. We met with Executive Officer of Church Relations Serge Fornerod, to learn about the situation of

(Cont'd on p.5)

The Changing Needs of Japanese Language Ministries

by Kondo Makoto, Kyodan missionary
California, U.S.A.

Pine United Methodist Church holds services in both Japanese (*Nichigo-bu*) and English (*Eigo-bu*). Although Pine Church was originally established by Japanese people, as the generation-change progressed, the members of *Nichigo-bu* have gotten older and decreased in number while the size of *Eigo-bu* has grown. Some of our neighboring Japanese churches have given up inviting Japanese-speaking pastors and have decided to phase out their *Nichigo-bu*. The main reason is that the number of people who attend church in American society in general has decreased. But the decline in *Nichigo-bu* ministries is also due to the fact that Japanese companies that used to send employees to the U.S. for long periods of time are now opting for short-term business trips, and Japanese students going abroad to study have diversified their destinations to more countries than just the U.S.

Likewise, the role of churches in serving the Japanese and Japanese-American community has become less important as a result of the spread of the Internet. In the 20th century, it was in the churches that we could get information about Japan, speak in Japanese, and heal our tired hearts by sharing Japanese food. In the 21st century, however, we can get any information we need in the Japanese language on the Internet, such as where Japanese restaurants are located and how to get a driving license. We can even watch Japanese news and television programs live.

I would, of course, not want to negate such conveniences, but I do regret the consequences for the churches, where we used to be able to get direct communication face to face. Now there are fewer opportunities to meet Jesus Christ in the church.

Even under these less-than-ideal conditions, however, *Nichigo-bu* ministry is still needed. Why do Japanese people who are fluent in English and are used to American culture still need pastoring and worship in Japanese? Although a theological approach may be necessary to answer this question, I would like to share what one member said.

Q: Is there any difference between listening to a sermon in Japanese or English?

A: Yes, of course!

Q: And why is that?

A: Even if I understand what the English means, it still doesn't enter my heart smoothly.

Whether or not it "enters one's heart smoothly" is important. The same thing may be said not only of foreign languages but also of dialects. Language and the heart are directly connected. Especially for Japanese people far away from Japan, biblical words spoken in their mother tongue sound much more profound. I believe that this is the significance of services in Japanese held overseas. I heard of one opinion that *Nisei* (second-generation) pastors who speak Japanese and the missionaries from Japan are different. Thus, it may be that more is involved than just whether or not one can utilize a language as a mere tool.

In addition to the so-called *Issei* (first generation) and *Nisei* immigrants, other categories of people who attend include those who came to the U.S. as the result of an international



Nichigo-bu worship service participants

marriage but whose spouse has died, those who came to the U.S. to study and ended up getting jobs here but who miss Japan, and those who found our homepage while traveling to the U.S. There are some who meet Jesus for the first time here. Japanese churches may be far from the brilliant effects of mission work, but they still exist as a support for the hearts of Japanese people.

To approach such people, the *Nichigo-bu* of Pine Church holds three different kinds of gatherings. Young students and trainees from Japan get together at the *Tomodachi Wakamono no Kai* (young friends' meeting). The *Tomodachi Oyako no Kai* (parent-and-child friends' meeting) is for parents and their children. At the *Furusato no Kai* (hometown meeting), lecturers in various fields make presentations in Japanese. We also have an "ABC Pre-school Program" (childcare in Japanese). These do not necessarily emphasize Christianity, but they are activities based in the church. My role as a missionary is to unite the community with the church. Just as *Japanese Fukuin-kai*, which was our forerunner, Pine Church is established here as a church open wide to the Japanese and Japanese-American communities.

Our Japanese churches are each involved in Christian ministry within the context of each one's unique characteristics. I sincerely hope that you become cognizant of the work and significance not only of Pine Church but also of every Japanese church around the world and pray for them. (Tr. AH)

(Cont'd from p.4)

the SEK and matters under that umbrella regarding Mission 21. The SEK, the three Korean Churches, and the Kyodan have held a three-nation conference once every four years called the "Trilateral Conference." The next one is to be held in March 2014 in Japan. We will gather together for an international conference on nuclear energy issues, so we affirmed our intent to cooperate in working toward this. That day we returned to Basel, and the next day we started our homeward journey via Munich. (Tr. RT)

Painful Memories Shared of the Great East Japan Disaster

Moriwake Kazuki, pastor of Miyako Church, Iwate Prefecture, Ou District recalled personal and church-related struggles since the 2011 disaster during an interview with a *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend) editorial staff person.

Although it did not collapse, Miyako Church was heavily damaged by the tsunami that occurred on March 11, 2011. Many members of the church, along with numerous other people connected to the church's kindergarten, were heavily impacted....

More than two years have passed since the earthquake and tsunami. At the end of the first month after the disaster, I reached the limits of my physical and mental strength and took a two-week rest. Nevertheless, as the hardship of daily life in the aftermath continued, I sought psychological treatment. Restless night after restless night my body ached, and even just standing up and sitting down became difficult. I did not have the strength or the time to write the weekly sermon. After an examination, the doctor informed me that my body had been extremely weakened and that I was just barely able to cope. So, I thought to myself that if I could just manage to continue, things would somehow work themselves out.

From that point on, the mantra that I repeated to myself was "let's keep a slow pace." Friends told me that it actually took about half a year for me to "cool down." I continued to be an outpatient at that hospital for about a year. One of the best things about the treatment was the sleep medication, as that allowed me to get some rest. It was good for my whole body. Receiving treatment was an important turning point in the process. Although I have been able to persevere for the past two years, I cannot say that I have overcome the anxiety about burning out. At the very least, I would like to endeavor to lead the church to its next step on the road to recovery.

Status in the disaster area and the need for assistance

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, a large number of volunteers and observers came to the area—over 10,000 people in the first year. On average, I had to meet 35 new people every day, which itself created much stress. Of course, I was not able to say, "Please don't come." In a rather disorganized manner, groups from various committees of several Kyodan districts and congregations came. It seemed that the process could have been coordinated better so that local pastors would not be burdened with yet another responsibility in this difficult situation.

Although Miyako, Shinsei Kamaishi, and Funato churches along the coast in Iwate Prefecture are neighboring congregations, they are separated by a distance of 40 kilometers. Each had its own unique circumstances and its own unique needs in response to the disaster. Even if base camp is set up outside the disaster zone, transporting volunteers from one place to another requires an hour or more—two hours for a round trip, so this further made relief work more difficult.

Thoughts of affected persons as they go their separate ways

Although they are all referred to as survivors of the disaster, each survivor has his or her own unique experience and hurts. Some lost loved ones and family; many lost houses; others lost employment. In the first month following the disaster, we were united through our shared anxiety. However, even though we had been harmed by the same blow, we started to realize that each had been

impacted differently, and the feeling of differentiation among the survivors began to be felt.

This is why at church we try to emphasize the commonality of our pain—that we all suffer together with all survivors. We listen to each other's complaints but focus on our oneness as together we move toward healing and restoration, in the same way as the church building itself has been restored from the mud and debris.

Worship right after the disaster was simply reading scripture and singing hymns. As volunteers began attending the services, members of the church shared glimpses of our story through our self-introductions to the volunteers. We found this to be an extremely healing experience for us, and it became like group counseling for us. Telling the whole story of our pain would be too difficult for all of us—especially among ourselves. However, these brief introductions to outsiders, who earnestly listened to us, offered the opportunity for us to open up. Even later people realized what a good experience this had been.

Plan for the future

When the earthquake struck, I was at Hikari Kindergarten, which is somewhat far from the church. It happened that there was only a morning session that day. If it had been a normal day, the children most likely would have been in a bus, driving along the shoreline, when the tsunami hit.

Originally, the kindergarten was located adjacent to the church and was called Miyako Kindergarten. But later it was moved to its present location. If it had still been situated next to the church, it would have been damaged along with the church. Although the city is now allowing rebuilding in the church's neighborhood, it has also acknowledged that the area is vulnerable to future tsunamis. We would very much like for our kindergarten to be located once again alongside our church building, but we cannot endanger the children by putting them in harm's way. It is my hope that we can eventually find a safe place to relocate where both the church and the kindergarten can operate for the next century without fear of another tsunami. I believe this is the responsibility of the survivors to future generations.

I overheard an adult in an emergency shelter immediately following the disaster say, "The children seem so full of vigor." However, that was not the way I saw things. I think it was a kind of mass hysteria. In fact, in talking to therapists and counselors, it is clear that the children were also barely hanging on by a thread. I realized the importance of the children having space to play in the emergency shelter and hope that if needed, any new kindergarten facility we build can be used as an emergency shelter for children in the future. (Tr. AKO)

Summarized by KNL Editor Kawakami Yoshiko

Based on an article in *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers' Friend), August 2013 issue

The Importance of Encounter*

by Nagano Takuya, 2010 graduate
Doshisha University, Kyoto

Through my six years of study in the School of Theology at Doshisha University, I learned the importance of our “encounters” with others. To most, I suppose a “university” is considered to be a place for a high degree of specialized study. However, in the School of Theology, I was always encouraged to consider how I should live and behave as an individual in this society.

Before entering Doshisha University, I thought of study as reading books and memorizing what was important. However, in our School of Theology classes, we were constantly challenged to consider our individual viewpoints when addressing issues. We were not encouraged simply to increase our “knowledge.” That was obvious in our daily university life; for example, in our conversations with our professors. In casual conversations, they showed a personal interest in me. At the same time, in a variety of ways they provided hints for me to see what was important in my life. At times, I completely missed their “hints.” However, now that I have graduated, I feel that I am beginning to understand the meaning of some of those conversations. When I consider why they cared so much, I realize that to them we were not simply students with names they knew; they cared for us as unique individuals.

As one who spent six years in the midst of that atmosphere, the friends I made continue to be very important to me. Since the School of Theology has a small student population, there were opportunities for rich relationships, regardless of age or status. Of course, I still have pre-college friendships, but it was those friends I met at

Doshisha who taught me the importance of having an open heart.

In the School of Theology, learning was not limited to the classroom. Through field work and practical training outside the classroom, we had opportunities for encounters with a variety of people. Of course, as an individual, it is possible to meet others outside the university setting. But it was through the opportunities to meet with friends daily, spending time together in study, conversation, and dialogue that I was able to identify and accept myself and my values. Needless to say, that was possible because of the acceptance and presence of friends.

Currently, I am teaching the Bible as a faculty member at Kyoai Gakuen, a church-related school in Gunma Prefecture. As one who had no intentions of becoming a teacher, there is no doubt that I am here because of the influence of my six years at Doshisha University. What I learned there is that by opening our hearts, we can become individuals who are ready for our “encounter” with others.

Working with junior and senior high students everyday is more challenging than I ever imagined, but moments of exhilaration are plentiful. I have found that what I can do in the midst of this is to open my heart and continue my “encounters” with individual students. (Tr. JS)

*“Encounter” is the translation of the Japanese word “deai/deau,” noun and verb. It implies something deeper than simply “meeting” someone.

Historical Background of Doshisha University (A research school for the study of “the Religions of Abraham”)

In 1875, at the dawning of modern Japan, Nijima Jo founded Doshisha English School in Kyoto. Based on the principles and spirit of Christianity, it was to provide an “education that would completely fill the conscience of individuals.” (Incidentally, the wife of Nijima Jo, Nijima (Yamamoto) Yae, is the heroine of the current yearlong historical drama series on NHK TV, “Yae no Sakura.”)

The history of the School of Theology dates back to 1876, with the establishment of a theology major as an adjunct to the English School. (Today this would be the equivalent of a graduate school.) Although the School of Theology continues to make Christian theology the foundation of its curriculum, today it incorporates the study of Judaism and Islam. It has become a research facility for the study of “the Religions of Abraham.” This is because Judaism is the mother of Christianity, and Islam has been strongly influenced by both Christianity and Judaism.

One of the added advantages of being a School of Theology in a university setting is the opportunity to take classes in Doshisha University’s other 14 faculties. Here, one has the freedom to develop a personal curriculum and freedom to explore interests in areas apart from theology and religion. It is the purpose of our Theology Department to not only equip the individual with a thorough understanding of Christianity and related religions but also

to provide our graduates with a well-rounded education in other fields as well. (Tr. JS)

—Mizutani Makoto, dean
Doshisha University, School of Theology

From *Shinto no Tomo* (Believers’ Friend), August 2013 issue

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all KNL Readers

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

A Message From General Secretary: Guests from Overseas Churches

We are happy to report that since the district assemblies this past spring, we have hosted a series of overseas guests and have had very good exchanges.

On June 28, Bishop Dr. Markus Droge of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg-Schlesische Oberlausitz (EKBO), Roland Herpich, director of the Ecumenical Centre, Berlin Mission, and Dr. Christof Theilemann, Ecumenical Centre Berlin Mission visited our office. They were followed on July 11 by Lutz Drescher, liaison secretary for East Asia/India of the Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS). As general secretary, I took this opportunity to express our thanks to them all for their fervent prayers and financial support for the relief work of the Kyodan in responding to the March 11, 2011 disaster. In response to an appeal from the EMS, the Kyodan also sent an offering to help with the education of Syrian children whose families had fled to Lebanon, as well as appealing to churches nationally, through the Kyodan's Committee on Social Concerns, to contribute to the efforts as well.

On Sept. 6, we received a visit from Moderator Gloria J. McCanna of the Reformed Church in America, together with Global Mission Director Jhonny Alicea-Baez. We had a lively, in-depth discussion concerning the situation of educational missionaries sent to the Kyodan-related schools, as well as the various issues involved with missionaries sent to do evangelism. On that occasion, I mentioned Dr. Gordon Laman, who devoted his life to evangelism through literature, and thereafter I received a letter from Dr. McCanna, informing me that after her return to the U.S.A. she read the "Pioneers to Partners" written by Dr. Laman and had been studying about the ministries God had brought to the churches in Japan.

On Sept. 17, we received a delegation from the Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)/United Church of Christ: Executive Minister James A. Moos, Dr. Xiaoling Zhu, executive secretary of East Asia and the Pacific, and Representative Director Jeffery Mensendiek of the Zai-Nippon Interboard Senkyoshi Shadan. They invited us to attend the Asia Pacific Forum to be held in April 2014 in Toronto, organized by the major Christian organizations in North America. They also presented us with documents for the transfer of the ownership of the missionary house in Tohoku District to the Kyodan.

(Cont'd from p. 1)

Kyodan Moderator Ishibashi Hideo stated that the important issues left over from the 2010 General Assembly have continued to be discussed by the Executive Council and have been drafted as specific proposals that will be on the agenda of the 2014 General Assembly. Most of the related discussion deals with "world mission" and focuses on what the Kyodan's vision should be as well as on how to relate to and cooperate with various overseas churches.

The 2012 General Assembly had referred discussion on the resolution concerning nuclear power plants to the Executive Council. The continuing discussion resulted in two proposals on that issue, which were to petition the Japanese government both to abandon plans for the construction of the Kaminoseki Nuclear Plant and also to phase out promptly the presently operating nuclear plants. As there were many opinions on the

On the following day, Sept. 18, we met with Associate General Secretary for International Programs Melissa Crutchfield of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) of the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries. The Kyodan moderator and other related staff joined in this meeting to discuss details concerning the new funding for the March 11 Disaster Relief proposed by Kyodan. Although there was not much time for the meeting, we had a friendly discussion on the logistics of the Kyodan's fund proposal to UMCOR, which consists of the amount of 100 million yen toward the costs of the international conference on nuclear issues in March 2014; volunteer efforts based in Sendai, Ishinomaki and Tono; expenses for "liberation camps" for children affected by the nuclear power plant accident; an endowed chair at Tohoku University as well as scholarships for university students; and an additional 50 million yen for Tohoku District's Taskforce on the Nuclear Power Plant Accident. We are now waiting for the outcome of their study of our proposal.

On the same day, we received a visit by the team headed by President Su Chii Ann of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, and Chairman John Ling of the Council of Missions of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. They shared with us about their situation, having to deal with the power of Islam as well as the difficulties of spreading the gospel in the context of tribal customs and blood ties, and we had a very cordial time of exchange.

On Sept. 19, we welcomed General Treasurer Roland Fernandes of the United Methodist Church's General Board of Global Ministries and Executive Director Hikari Kokai Chang of the Wesley Foundation. We discussed the restoration of the relationship between the Kyodan and UMC that had become slightly strained following the 2004 dissolution of the former Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission (JNAC).

The disaster of March 11, 2011 was surely an unfortunate event; however, the Kyodan has received many prayers and concrete support from all over the world. This experience has made us renew our commitment to walk beside those who are suffering from natural disasters, wars, and poverty. We were able to respond to the request to send a monetary contribution to aid the people in Colorado, U.S.A. suffered from flooding at the end of September. (Tr. KY)

—Nagasaki Tetsuo, general secretary

contents of the specific proposals, the motion was tabled, and three members were chosen to draft modified proposals for the next meeting.

There was also a report on the activities of the Kyodan Great East Japan Disaster Planning Headquarters and the budget for that work, as well as a report on the International Conference on the Great East Japan Disaster that is scheduled to be held March 11-14 in Sendai. This will be the first such international conference sponsored by the Kyodan, and preparations are being made for approximately 200 participants from both within and outside Japan. There will also be a memorial service and a memorial lecture that will be open to the public, with about 1,000 people expected to attend those events. (Tr. TB)

—Kato Makoto, executive secretary