On March 20, 2012, a national holiday, the Tohoku District Evangelism Committee held a gathering at Sendai Aobaso Church to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The event was divided into two parts: a symposium and an Ash Wednesday Worship Service in remembrance of the disaster. There were 190 participants, including 20 from other districts.

Those who made presentations at the symposium were Kawabata Junuhiro, member of Sendai Kita Church, Sato Keiko, member of Koriyama Church, Maekita Mio from the Kyodan Relief Headquarters, and Kataoka Etsuya, pastor of Wakamatsu Sakaemachi Church in Fukushima and the chair of the District Evangelism Committee.

Kawabata spoke of his visit to the morgue to check whether any of his church members were there and said that the indescribable scene, with all of the dead bodies, brought thoughts of the Lord Jesus walking among them. He said his faith was shaken to its foundation. As a theologian, he asked himself how he could speak of an all-powerful God to the families of the victims. But seeing the young volunteers, who shared the suffering of the survivors, forced him to change his opinion of young people. He said that because Japan is not involved in war, such service is possible. After a year, it is now clear what volunteers can and cannot do. He concluded by saying that the task of the church is to raise up people who have a sense of involvement in politics and social issues.

Sato explained how much her family was helped by the fellowship of the church and what led them to leave Fukushima. The day after the disaster, her daughter left for Kansai to enter school. In the midst of their anxiety, Kawakami Jun, pastor of Kobe Higashi Church, met their daughter and called to say that she had arrived safely. Both their daughter and the rest of the family were moved by his kindness. Sato's husband, who was teaching at a public school in Fukushima, was offered a job at Keiwa Gakuen in Niigata, the school their second daughter was attending. It was difficult to leave Fukushima, but his colleagues encouraged him to leave by encouraging him to help his new students understand the pain of other people’s suffering.

Next, Maekita told of her experiences as a volunteer, describing herself as a “nameless old cleaning rag,” and expressed how thankful she is. After the disaster, she discussed the situation with her family, seeking their support, and decided to work as a volunteer. That led to her present assignment in the Kyodan. The churches around the Emmaus Center offered overnight accommodation, even though they had been damaged. Through this, a number of young people had their first experience in the church, which changed their hearts. She introduced the daily life of the Emmaus Center and concluded by saying how wonderful this evangelism is. As a representative of the volunteers, she expressed her thanks to the Tohoku District for its work.

Finally, Kataoka explained how the Emmaus Center became a support center for the survivors on March 15, immediately after the disaster. This was possible because the Emmaus Center building was there. He expressed his gratitude to Director Matsumoto Tadao and Manager Jeffery Mensendieck for their decision, taken in faith, and to the women of the neighboring churches, Tohoku District, and student volunteers for their help.

After the discussion, the chair, Fuda Hideharu, pointed out that the common theme of the four speakers was how important human contact is. Tohoku District Vice-moderator Konishi Nozomi, Support Center Director Takada Keiji, Ou District Moderator Ohara Muneo, Kyodan Secretary Kumoshikari Toshimi, and Kyodan Relief Planning Headquarters’ Executive Secretary Kato Makoto each gave short greetings.

After a short silent prayer at 2:46, the time the disaster struck, the Ash Wednesday worship service was held, based on Amos 9:11-15, along with John 2:19-22. Tohoku District Moderator Takahashi Kazuto spoke on the important biblical theme of “recovery.” What Israel sought was not a recovery of the present but the recovery of humanness, which is something that only God can do. The “recovery” spoken of in the Bible is for us to become God’s possession again. Those living in the disaster area have experienced so much death and are living with many unanswerable questions. What has supported us in our recovery is our faith in the risen Christ. Our help comes from faith and hope, and this keeps us working. (Tr. JT)

—Kato Makoto, Executive Secretary

Kyodan Shinpo (Kyodan Times) No. 4747 & 4748
Opening of Emmaus Sasa-yashiki:

Rest Haven for the Survivors of the Tsunami

by Takada Keiji, Director
Tohoku Disaster Relief Center

We would like to express our gratitude for your precious offerings and strong support of the survivors and the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake disaster, which happened on March 11, 2011.

On March 11, 2012, the opening ceremony of the Rest Haven, Emmaus Sasa-yashiki was held. The center was built in the area called Shichigo Sasa-yashiki, which is in the Arahama section of Sendai. This is one of the regions directly hit by the tsunami, which our Tohoku Disaster Relief Center (Emmaus) has been supporting. The fact that we could open this Christian center in this area on the day of the one-year anniversary of the disaster is truly amazing. We would not have even imagined that such a thing could happen before the earthquake.

It has been reported that the number of Christians in Japan is very small, being less than one percent of the whole population. More than that, the reality is that many Japanese people do not wish to have anything to do with religion. Please understand how great it is that a Christian center, such as Emmaus Sasa-yashiki, has been established in the midst of the disaster-affected areas through the support of Christians, despite the reality of this situation.

This project was empowered by every volunteer who came to the area. They have touched the people’s hearts so deeply. It was also made possible by all the people who, working behind the scenes, helped to send those volunteers and by the people who supported them with their prayers.

Of course, our support center has itself been supported by the love of Christ, and so under God’s leading, we have continued our activities. However, as mentioned above, at the time of the disaster, as severe as it was, relief activities done by religious organizations were not so easily welcomed. Thus, we have become “nameless Christians” who were determined to bring light, hope, and love to these people who had experienced such great hardship.

One year has now passed, and people we meet in Sasa-yashiki say with a smile, “We were helped by ‘Kirisuto San’ (Christians).” Those are words that bring joy to our hearts. Please continue to remember and support the center as we reach out to the people. (Tr. BN)

Prayers of Moderators from Districts Suffering Damage due to the Great East Japan Earthquake

Ou District Moderator Ohara Muneo

For churches in Ou District, the earthquake and tsunami have given us reason to reflect on the slogan and goal of our district: “Let’s Live Together.” Hearts have been united in constant prayer for churches that have experienced heavy damage (Miyako, Shinsei Kamaishi, Ofunato, Senmaya), as well as for direction in working together toward restoration.

Damaged churches are just beginning the work of restoration, and local church councils are considering how they will proceed. Because of the necessity to find a new location, the Senmaya Church is continuing to confer about the purchase of property and the building of a new church. Shinsei Kamaishi Church is planning repairs, and Miyako Church has started an overall assessment of its situation. It is our hope to share in these undertakings.

Tohoku District Moderator Takahashi Kazuto

Over 50 of the 88 churches in Tohoku District suffered damage from the earthquake and tsunami, with 12 of those churches suffering serious damage. Radiation has spread throughout Fukushima Prefecture, and it is impossible to calculate the amount of damage this will have on the lives and hearts of the people. The entire Northeast has been wounded and weakened. Although there are areas where outward recovery can be seen, there are many deep wounds that remain.

There are differences in the speed of reconstruction, but each church is earnestly working to hold on and recover in the midst of difficulties. Although it is difficult to set a timeline for recovery, we find hope in the support of prayer and the Lord’s direction. Please pray with us.

Kanto District Moderator Akiyama Toru

In the Kanto District, repair and reconstruction of damaged churches, parsonages, and affiliated facilities has been our focus. Some reconstruction has been completed, and some churches are still in the process of determining their next steps. However, all of our churches are experiencing the trials and challenges of not only restoring a building but also bringing together the church as the living body of Christ.

Within Kanto District, especially in prefectures such as Ibaraki and Tochigi where there are churches with nursery and kindergarten facilities, an urgent question is how to deal with the danger of radiation. This is true also for Asian Rural Institute. Another concern is for parishioners’ homes that have been severely damaged. We have been encouraged by the prayers and support of churches throughout the country, and we have committed ourselves to be a part of those prayers and support. (Tr. JS)

From 311 Inori no Shiori (3.11 Prayer Guide), issued by the Kyodan
Christian School Students Urged to Pray for Disaster Survivors

"Together in Prayer: Remembering The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011" was printed on cards and distributed to over 205,000 elementary, junior high, and senior high students who attend church-related schools of the Christian Schools Council (Protestant) and the Japanese Catholic Church Schools Council. This is the first cooperative effort to involve the entire student enrollment of both school councils.

For Elementary Schools:
Dear God, our Father, please help those people who continue to suffer because of the earthquake and tsunami. Give courage and hope to those people who have lost family members, homes, and jobs; and to those who have lost heart because of sadness and pain. May we continue to remember these people and maintain hearts ready to help them. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen

For Junior and Senior High Schools:
O God, creator of our world and constant guardian of our lives, we give you thanks for the gift of life and the privilege of living it in the midst of nature. Please pour out your help and encouragement on those who continue to suffer because of the earthquake and tsunami. And help us to remember that each of us, as well as the natural world, is a part of your creation.

No matter what the time or situation, whether joy, sadness, or pain, please be our constant companion.

Dear God, give us the will to act for those who are in distress and help us to discern your will for us as we continue our studies at school.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen (Tr. JS)
From Kirisutokyo Gakko Kyoiku (Christian Schools and Education) No. 650

Supporting the Earthquake Survivors at Kamaishi

The Worsening Mental Health Situation and Need for Immediate Care

Oe Hiroshi, Secretary General of Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service

JOCS has cooperated with health-medical activities in the developing countries for a half century. Immediately after the Eastern Japan Great Earthquake, we started support activities for the survivors. In March, we cooperated with Emmaus, Tohoku Disaster Relief Center of the Kyodan; in April, our major activities were transferred to Kamaishi; and by the end of May, we made the rounds to give medical services at three shelters, including during the night.

As local medical service systems fortunately began to be operated after June, we shifted our activities from medical care to preservation of health. After July, cooperating with the “Care of Mind” team of Caritas Japan, which is centered in the Kamaishi Catholic Church, we have continued visiting care of the residents of the temporary housing facilities, as well as in isolated villages, sending counselors every month and a nursing team once every two months.

When I visited Kamaishi for the first time in the beginning of May, I was overwhelmed by grievous experiences and outrages of the people who had suffered deep psychological wounds and who suffered from guilty feelings that only they had survived. Toward the end of August, when I visited there with the first nursing team, I found in the temporary housing both those who had made a home there as well as those who had lost a sense of human relations and were suffering from the sense of isolation. The latter group showed such symptoms as emotional disorders, alcoholism, depression, and insomnia. The nursing team has been visiting every person who met them in the shelter but moved to the temporary housing or went back to the isolated villages, to talk intimately with them for an hour, measuring blood pressure and taking pulses.

Toward the end of November, the second nursing team visited the survivors in their homes in the isolated village on a peninsula about a forty-five minutes’ drive from Kamaishi. Some 150 or so houses and some 300 inhabitants were there, but 56 lives were lost in the tsunami. Inside the warm and carefree smiling faces of the survivors who welcomed us, the deep scars of their hearts could be painfully felt. Each of them described for us the detailed conditions of the day of the earthquake and afterwards; the horrific scenes they described were beyond description. They were isolated after the earthquake, and were somehow saved by the rescue helicopters. Such suffered areas of Tohoku are dotted with many areas that have few conveniences and lack basic medical facilities. In the season of snow and ice, these spots may become “isolated islands of the land.”

As to counseling activities, we have sent JOCS counselors to “Base Philia” (from the Greek word for brotherly love) and “Mobile Philia,” organizations of the Kamaishi Branch of Caritas Japan, and are working with the survivors through these organizations. “Philia” is the name given to this ministry for psychological care. “Base Philia” is a free café which the survivors can visit anytime they like. “Mobile Philia” is a volunteers’ activity to visit temporary housing and listen to their stories while sharing a cup of tea. We realize the significance of listening to griefs of the people.

Working together with the Kamaishi Branch of Caritas Japan, “visiting care” as well as “psychological care” will be ongoing. I think that it is to unite “care” and “cure.” The motto we have, “Living Together,” that we use in our activities abroad, is one that is appropriate for the disaster areas in this country as well. We recognize the importance of acting with the spirit of “Go to the People.” (Tr. AY)

Summarized by Nishio Misao, member of Suginami Church, West Tokyo District and KNL Editorial Committee member
Based on a Shinto no Tomo (Believers’ Friend), February 2012
"Heartful Tono UCCJ" is a ministry of the Kyodan (UCCJ) itself that is designed to help disaster survivors by providing mental health care. Every week an average of 60 participants gather at three temporary shelters in Kamaishi City, about 50 kilometers from Tono. Through these gatherings, a relationship of trust has developed in an atmosphere of friendship and harmony. As a result, in the more than one year that has transpired since the disaster, the expectations placed on Tono Center, Heartful Tono UCCJ by the Kamaishi Social Welfare Council and the various organizations representing residents of the temporary housing for disaster survivors have only increased.

Kyodan asked the Tokyo Suicide Prevention Center to start the Tono Suicide Prevention Center in August 2011 for the purpose of “grief care,” and the Kyodan decided to provide financial support for it. However, as time passed following the disaster, the needs of the community changed, so following the advice of the Kamaishi Social Welfare Council, we decided temporarily to suspend our activities to determine how best to give continued support to the survivors. The operation of this suicide prevention center had been delegated by the Kyodan to the Tokyo Suicide Prevention Center, so a consultation between the two was held. This resulted in having the Tokyo Suicide Prevention Center hold a series of lectures and training seminars as well as facilitating the sending of volunteers. The training of volunteers is something that the center was well suited for, as it requires a considerable degree of expertise. So by adapting the center’s program to facilitate what it does best, the need for more volunteers could be met.

In the meantime, the Kamaishi Social Welfare Council asked the Kyodan to resume mental health care because as the overall disaster relief activities began winding down, the number of volunteers helping out began to decrease drastically. Several organizations ended their activities, so a shortage of volunteers developed. In order to meet this changing need, the Kyodan began a regular program called Ochakko Salon (literally, tea-drinking salon), a coffee-shop style ministry that meets once a week at three different locations. During this whole process, we learned a great deal through our close collaboration with the Kamaishi Social Welfare Council as well as from other relief agencies, including Caritas (a Catholic relief agency), the Japan Episcopal Church, and CRASH Japan (Christian Relief Assistance Support Hope).

Kamaishi is a city located on the coast of Iwate Prefecture that had a pre-disaster population of about 30,000. The main industries were ironworks and fisheries, and there were many seafood-processing facilities as well. Some 900 people lost their lives in the tsunami, and it has often been reported in the news that because the town was protected by the highest levee in Japan, the townspeople had a false sense of security that a tsunami would never reach them. The situation was further exacerbated by the high percentage of elderly people in the town. The removal of debris is well behind that of other towns, and redevelopment plans are still uncertain, which causes residents a lot of anxiety. They do not yet know whether the property their houses stood on will be redeveloped into housing areas or business areas, and with the poor employment outlook, the people are left with a dim future.

The Ochakko Salon ministry began in mid-February and is held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the common lounge built in each of the temporary housing facilities. Being a coffee-shop type ministry, we offer a variety of beverages, including coffee, black tea, herbal teas, cappuccino, brown rice tea, along with cookies and other sweets. On average, about 20 people a day come to enjoy themselves, chatting about various things with the volunteers running the program. At first, residents were rather reticent and appeared a bit wary of these strangers in their midst, but they gradually opened up to us as we worked together in such activities as knitting and flower arrangement and began sharing their experiences in the disaster as well as their current situations. So progress is being made.

In early March, after this tea-house ministry had become a regular event, the matter of how the March 11 anniversary would be commemorated became an issue faced not only by the survivors but also by us volunteers serving on the scene, as our own activities would be in the spotlight. A kind of “depression related to the commemoration” set in during the time just before and after the anniversary, when special care was needed to engage with the increasing number of survivors who felt the need to talk about their experiences. Some of them would talk for two hours or more, crying all the while, and the things they were sharing were truly on a scale we had never heard. It is hard for even a trained volunteer to be able to do what on the surface would seem to be an easy thing—simply listening, as it involves giving so much of yourself as you share in their pain, so a great deal of care is needed. The living witness to what had happened was so overwhelming that it was beyond our comprehension, and it was often difficult to bear. The scale of the event and the things we were hearing almost crushed our spirits as well.

This is why the kind of professional training that the Tokyo Suicide Prevention Center was able to give is so critical. With that in mind, we held a training seminar for volunteer counselors on April 21 and 22, 2012. There were 25 participants from some 20 churches who received the training and, from the following week, began to serve with the ministry of Heartful Tono UCCJ.

On April 25, Heartful Tono UCCJ held an event that was a kind of inital summation of the tea-house ministry. We took 38 residents from three temporary housing units in Kamaishi, who had been receiving that support, on a cherry blossom viewing tour of Tono by bus. It was a great opportunity for them to have a refreshing time away from the disaster area. There were even some unexpected reunions along with new friendships, so it was a great success. The participants enjoyed singing karaoke on the bus as well as eating a meal together and going to hot springs. Thus, they were able to relax and make some pleasant memories. This is how our tea-house ministry built up a relationship of trust and bore much fruit.

We look forward to continuing this ministry of support that God has given us, taking on the tasks we are given as opportunities of blessing and giving thanks to God as we seek guidance in prayer for the things we can best do to further this cause. (Tr. SM)

—Maekita Mio, staff member
Kyodan Disaster Planning Headquarters
Personal Experience of Christianity in Practice in Germany

by Nakagawa Shiori, member*
Shinmatsudo-koya Church,
Chiba Subdistrict, Tokyo District

For five-and-a-half months, from Feb. 15 to July 28, 2011, I experienced life in Germany as a participant in a volunteer program of the Das Evanglische Missionwerk in Sudwestdeutschland (Southwestern German Evangelical Church). The purpose of this program was to enable Christian young people from countries where Christianity is a minority religion to learn about other religious cultures while living in Germany, a country of many forms of Christianity. I responded to an advertisement in the Kyodan Shinpo (The Kyodan Times) and, following an interview, was selected to participate.

There were a total of five participants who came from Indonesia, South Africa, Hong Kong, and Japan. During our stay in Germany, we did volunteer work at nursery schools, public schools, and churches during the week. On weekends, we spent time with our host families. Once every two months, there would be study/training at the EMS home office as well as opportunities for fellowship with other volunteers and EMS staff.

I experienced Christianity as a child, being taken to church by my parents from the time I was in kindergarten. Perhaps it was because it was an assumed part of my life from childhood, but I found it difficult really to grasp Christian faith as an adult. I became less active in church attendance, and I thought of myself as a Christian of shallow faith.

Even after being allowed to be a part of the program, I found myself wondering if I should be participating as a representative of Japan. However, after going to Germany, I found that most of the songs sung in nursery school were hymns; families gathered together and celebrated Easter; and many of the after-school activities took place at the YMCA. In fact, I found myself in surroundings where Christianity was an assumed part of almost every facet of life.

I was taken to worship services by my host family on numerous occasions. However, my host mother felt that the important thing was not the frequency of church attendance, but one’s faith. I was able to hear this view — different from that of many Japanese — and that helped to lighten my feelings. I was able to look at my personal life of faith in a more positive way.

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake occurred while I was in Germany. I was exposed to foreign media coverage...
The Joys and Challenges of House-church Ministry in the Philippines

by Ayako Ogawa Beltran, Kyodan missionary

I worked as a single woman pastor in Japan and then as a missionary in Cambodia until I met a Filipino evangelist there. After we got married, we moved to the Philippines and started a ministry together as evangelists for the Bohol Gospel Saturation Project (BGSP). BGSP is a church-planting movement, started by my husband’s parents, that aims to plant house churches all over the Bohol Province of the Philippines and beyond.

I am very excited and overjoyed that God has been using me in ministry here. It is such a privilege that this little Japanese woman can go to isolated islands, or even to tribal people in the mountains, to participate in and conduct evangelistic events. I found my ministry can go deeper and a lot of opportunities and friends are given me because I have a local evangelist partner. Without the hesitation of bringing in “foreign” things, I am now more confident to teach and share whatever I have to offer.

Since it is a house-church movement, our pastors and workers are basically tent-makers: some are fishermen; some are builders; some have small businesses. They do struggle financially, but they are so passionate about God’s work that they use all they have for the ministries. My husband and I also live simply, like these people, and I am beginning to understand more about their lives, struggles, and joys. And our church and the BGSP workers treat me as a team member as we do evangelistic events or go on mission trips together. I feel that I am really accepted as one of them. That is what I wanted!

Basically, my husband and I travel a lot because we are helping with local churches’ activities, and if anybody invites us for preaching, training, Bible study, or workshops, we will go anywhere. When we are at home, I have a daily Bible study and recorder class for children and help our church’s free preschool. Actually, all of the activities take place at our house, since it is a house church and a house preschool.

Filipino children are so eager to learn. After we held a Kids’ Camp, those who attended the camp were teaching their friends all the memory verses, songs, and dances they had learned. In the end, all the neighborhood children learned the songs, and they sang them loudly as they visited us everyday. They are very friendly and sweet. Often we come home to find by the window some letters written on a piece of cardboard or toilet paper saying, “We love you Ate (elder sister) Ayako and Kuya (elder brother) Jun Jun.” When I see these children eagerly practicing how to draw, play a recorder, and even write Japanese characters that they have copied from my broken laptop’s keyboard, I feel that there are so many needs we can fill since they lack opportunities. We could open a home library/art space for children. Or we could set up a library van to go around Bohol. We could make a park. We could create some jobs for the parents so that the children can go to school. We thank God that we have child sponsorships with the assistance of the Korean church that helps with schooling. Also, we give children some lectures about how to protect themselves from crime.

For now, we are making some needed materials, such as pictures, manga tracts, and children’s books. We are also preparing to produce songs, films, and later broadcasts for world-wide evangelism and training, since we have those creative backgrounds and believe these are callings God has for us. We are hoping and believing that our church will plant more house churches and expand their ministries more and more. Even though it is not a big church, our members are already well-trained, and everybody is passionately participating with what they have.

Some families have opened their houses for outreach ministries, and one family has been praying about starting a new house church at their house. Every Sunday afternoon, two youth go to an outreach place to gather and teach children about Jesus, while people left in the church handle “Kids’ Super Sunday.” The passion for bringing the Gospel to struggling people is really the core of our ministry here. There is not much strategizing, theology, or theory and not much planning or budgeting. Our only method is love, passion, and listening to the Holy Spirit’s guidance.
Cornelia Judson: The Missionary who gave Everything for a Night School

The people of Matsuyama call her "Judson Sensei (teacher)," with affection.

Cornelia Judson was born in Stratford, Connecticut, on Oct. 20, 1860. The following year, she was baptized at the First Congregational Church of Stratford. She was brought up in a pious Christian home and later became the first missionary sent by that church.

Judson experienced a turning point in her life at the age of 13, when she came down with a severe case of pneumonia and was cared for by her parents day and night. Facing death, she asked God to forgive her sins and vowed to work for God and for many people. Her prayer was heard, and she miraculously recovered from her illness. She studied hard to go to college. While at college, she learned about missionary work and especially about the need for missionaries in Asian countries. The prayer she had offered to God at the age of 13 came to mind, and she decided to dedicate herself to a career as a missionary.

After her graduation from college, Judson applied to the Women’s Foreign Mission Society (WFMS) and was sent to Japan in 1887. Her first posting was to Niigata Girls’ School in Niigata. She began to have doubts about her ability to survive Niigata’s severe winters, especially after her colleague got sick and died. At that time, she found out that Matsuyama Girls’ School (currently Matsuyama Junior and Senior High School) was looking for a woman missionary, so she ended up going to Matsuyama in July 1890. After arriving in Matsuyama in Shikoku, she attended Matsuyama Congregational Church of Christ (currently the Kyodan’s Matsuyama Church).

Judson walked from her house to work at Matsuyama Girls’ School. She noticed, however, children playing in the street or caring for infants, in spite of it being time to go to school. She learned that it was because of poverty that they couldn’t go to school, and so she prayed for a place where such children could learn and decided to establish a place where they could study at night. She talked about her plan with Ninomiya Ikujiro, who was pastor of Matsuyama Church as well as being headmaster of Matsuyama Girls’ School. He understood the need and promised to cooperate. He was a very busy man, so he introduced her to three youths from his church. One of them was Nishimura Sugao, who later wrote a well-known Japanese hymn.

None of the youth had a teaching license, so in lieu of receiving a salary, they asked Judson to give them English lessons. She was more than happy to accept their plan and started to prepare for the school to open. Her two-story house was to be used as the school building: the second floor for English lessons as well as for her living space and the first floor for school classrooms, so some old chairs, desks, and a blackboard were brought in from the girls’ school.

The school was opened on January 14, 1891 at 7 p.m., with 25 children attending the opening ceremony. This became the first Christian night school in Shikoku. Although the three youths taught without any salary, school finances were still a problem. There were several discussions about closing the school, but Judson was able to hire paid teachers and begin preparations to purchase a new school building. In the autumn of the same year, she was able to buy a new building, and about 100 children attended.

After Judson returned to the U.S. upon reaching retirement age, her rheumatism worsened, and she developed a heart condition due to stress and exhaustion. So her doctor recommended that she convalesce. However, when she got better, she visited her friends and churches that had supported her night school and asked them to increase their financial support. She wrote a long letter to the people of Matsuyama, some of which is as follows: “If God gave me wings, I would wish to fly to you. However, I am now disabled and cannot even walk to Japan. Within a few years, I will be free from this disabled body, and I shall put on a body that can freely come to you.”

Later, at the age of 80, Judson developed breast cancer that then spread to her stomach, for which she received an operation. At that time, she told one of her former school students, who was visiting the US, “If you pray for me, do not pray that I will live long. If I leave this world, my house could be sold and the proceeds sent to Matsuyama Night School for their new buildings.” She was called to heaven on Sept. 17, 1939 while wearing her favorite kimono, Tomesode. She entrusted all her estate to the American Board and left a will, asking that it be used as a fund for the Matsuyama Night School (currently Matsuyama Jonan Senior High School). To this day, the interest on the fund is sent to the school every year.

All through her life, Judson gave many things and devoted her life to the night school’s education. One of her favorite Bible verse is said to be “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35) We can see that Judson herself lived that verse. The way she lived her life taught us that the words from the Bible are not just what we read or listen to, but are living words.

—Aizawa Hironori, chaplain
Matsuyama Jonan High School
Thoughts about “Passing on the Faith”

Within Kyodan churches, there is a strong trend in age distribution towards the elderly, and so within this context, the issue of “passing on the faith” becomes even more important. If the present trend continues at the same pace, within ten years the membership will decline by about half, and the ability of the church to be in mission will radically decrease. So what is the solution to this dilemma? How can we pass on the faith to the next generation? I think that one effective method is to promote the practice of infant baptism.

“Passing on the faith” is fundamentally different from passing on one’s property or money to one’s children. After all, religious faith is a spiritual and mental thing—an issue of the heart. One enters the faith by first encountering the living Christ, placing one’s trust in him as savior, and then living one’s life in view of that. So it is not something we can inherit from our parents in the same way we can inherit property. The only thing that parents can do is to pray for their child to encounter the Lord Christ through his Word, and that must not just be through lifting verbal prayers alone but also through taking practical steps, such as having that child baptized as a witness towards their future.

From its inception, the rite of baptism has been a spiritual matter, symbolizing the receiving of eternal life as the person who has accepted Christ as Savior receives the blessings of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From ancient times, this has been a solemn ceremony in which the person confesses his or her sins and receives the Lord’s forgiveness, and it was something that only persons who confessed Christ as their Lord and Savior received within the context of the church. However, when it came to infant baptism, since small children could not do that yet of their own accord, parents who had received baptism themselves and were living a life of faith could stand in place of their children to confess Christ on their behalf to become members of the Body of Christ, the Church. This practice was backed by the doctrine of “prevenient grace.”

Thus, the important and glorious task of raising that child up to be a person of faith in their own right begins as the parents, who have had their child baptized, work together with the church that has received that child into its fellowship. It is for this reason that the catechism was developed, to serve as a means of faith education by which the parents and the church community pray together and work towards that goal from that child’s infancy. The catechism is a powerful tool in faith education, and so the Japanese church and laity need to become serious about educating their children to take on the mantle of Christian faith.

Parents who, with the concept of “freedom of religion,” choose to let their children simply decide for themselves when they become adults, often end up allowing them to pass through their adolescent years idly, without sufficient guidance. This should not be, and so as the people of God joyously living out their faith throughout their earthly journey, they should work together and pray to pass on that most precious treasure of Christian faith to the next generation of children and grandchildren. I am confident that the Kyodan has a bright future if we increase the numbers of children receiving baptism and if the church puts its emphasis on faith education. (Tr. TB)

—Naito Tomeyuki, general secretary

Personal Experience in Germany

(Cont’d from p.5)

and the thoughts of people other than Japanese. I felt that I had an opportunity to see Japan objectively. I also had the opportunity to make special friendships with Germans and other foreigners.

In closing, I want to thank God for watching over me and providing me this opportunity to reside in Germany. I also want to thank the Kyodan Committee on Ecumenical Relations, the staff of EMS, and the many people who made my participation in this program possible. I am very grateful to everyone. (Tr. JS)

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