

Japan Update

Spring 2012 Number 63

THE CHALLENGES OF BABY BOOMERS IN JAPAN



Members of Caleb International Tokyo region in 2009

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Vision

Nineteen years ago, retired Australian doctor Lester Jones and his wife cared for me as I recovered from a serious illness. Through this experience, I realized the importance of encouraging retired people to use their gifts for the Lord by helping people.

In 2006, with the challenge facing Japan of how to deal with the 6.5 million baby boomers planning to retire from 2007 through 2009, I knew it was time to act upon my vision of founding Caleb International. Although many Christians were approaching retirement with a sense of gloom, I wanted to share the message that retired Christians could bring hope to individuals, families, and society.

So on December 2, 2006, we held the first Caleb International meeting with five members. Five years have passed since then, and the importance of this vision



*by Goro Ogawa
President,
Caleb International
(translated by Tomoko Kato)*

has grown. Prime Minister Noda recently reminded us that not so long ago a senior citizen was supported by a large group of people in the work force. Today, every three people in the work force must support one senior. Soon one person in the work force will have to carry the full load of supporting one senior.

Goals

The passion of Caleb, who in faith wanted to achieve God's will (Joshua 14:10-12), clearly shows the spirit of Caleb International. When as Christians we hear we can expect to live for 30 years in retirement, we must purpose to use

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Reflections on “Relief and Mission” in View of the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster

By President Masashi Moriya, Sendai Baptist Seminary
(translated by Mizue Uchida)

Introduction

About six years ago, our seminary decided to make a paradigm shift in regards to our traditional theological education and leadership training. Hans Kung in *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* and David J. Bosch in *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Japanese translation by Shinkyō Publishers) discuss the paradigm shifts that have taken place in Christian churches up until today and are suggesting new paradigm shifts for the post-modern world. The common thread running through both of these works is a rediscovery of the importance of the local church and its ministry.

I was attending a seminar in the U.S. when I encountered a fresh viewpoint along these lines, and it was as if the scales fell from my eyes. I was introduced to the writings of Bruce Winter, author of *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens*, as well as other Biblical theologians and scholars who were going back to take a new look at patterns of church life in the New Testament era.

Ever since that time, my colleagues and I have been wrestling with the truths found in this Biblical theology and the building up of churches based upon this theological perspective. That is, we have been grappling with how best to go about Christian education and leadership training.

Then we were struck by the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster. Our theological reflections led us to focus our attention on the necessity of putting into practice “Relief and Mission” as a united concept accompanied by a way of life—not relief for the sake of relief, or relief as a humanitarian activity, nor even relief for the purpose of mission.

This theological perspective teaches us that the church should become a community that contributes to the welfare of “the city” by using the resources, money, and personnel that have been entrusted to the church. At the same time, it requires that we seek to understand the core of God’s plan of salvation and how it strikes at the very root of how we approach today’s society and the

use of our abilities, our talents, our material resources, and our human resources.

God’s People as Contributors and Benefactors to the Community

When we read Jeremiah 29:4-7, we discover a quite interesting viewpoint. In this passage, God’s people are to seek prosperity and live in a place that is neither a place of peace, nor a utopia. It is a place of paganism with different standards than that of God’s kingdom, and it is a foreign land with a different lifestyle that could hinder their normal way of life. However, God’s intention was that his people would raise families that would last for generations in this land, that they would work hard by the sweat of their brow to meet their own needs, and that they would give to those who needed help. Furthermore, they were to do this while praying for God’s blessing on the city.

As we turn our eyes from Jeremiah’s prophecy, we are led to focus on Daniel’s life. Daniel was taken captive to a foreign country and lived there as one of God’s people. Surprisingly, Daniel worked for the prosperity of the king of this country whose policies were against God’s plan and God’s people. Daniel was a sojourner in a faraway land, served the king, lived to the best of his ability where he was placed as a member of God’s people, and died of old age there. In so doing, Daniel made an impact upon the city and the whole country. This is but one example we can see in Scripture of seeking the welfare of the city.

Models in the Plan of God’s Salvation

Daniel’s case is not an unusual model found only in the Old Testament, but clearly is to be applied to the church, as reflected in the teachings of the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:11–18) and the Apostle Paul (Rom.13:1–4; Titus 3:1, 14). Along with other teachings, these passages encourage good works and sincere obedience to civil authorities in a foreign society. Doing good works is a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of the gospel, and this means we should work hard wherever God places us.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:10–15 Paul gives a warning.

His intention is to wean the busybodies of Thessalonica away from the welfare syndrome, encouraging them to use their resources to support themselves and help others, whether or not they are Christians. In other words, early Christians and churches were conscious of the fact that as individuals, families, and the community of God they were citizens of “the city” and were to seek its prosperity and welfare.

From the beginning, the church had an understanding of “Relief and Mission” as inseparable from life, and followers of Christ intentionally tried to contribute to society.

The Challenge to a Paradigm Shift

When we were struck by the unprecedented disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake, we could not sit still. We were driven by an unseen power into the stricken areas to help in any way we could.

In the midst of the continuing recovery efforts, I am convinced that the paradigm shift we have been grap-

pling with in relation to theological education is indeed “for such time as this.” The church should be involved in the affairs of society. We must shake off the negative image that Christians are an isolated group of people doing their utmost to stay away from the “secular” world with its lust, corruption, and idol worship. Rather, local churches all over Japan should team together to seek the prosperity of their regions with all wisdom.

If a network of like-minded churches seeking the welfare of “the city” were to have an impact upon their regions, this would eventually have an impact upon the entire society and change it. This is exactly what happened with early churches. The 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster offers us a great opportunity for just such a church paradigm shift.

However, this paradigm shift does not mean that the church needs to start something new. It means the church needs to return to what it should be in the first place.

JEA DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES

On March 11, 2012, the one year memorial day for the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster, we were very encouraged by the responses from all around the world to “Prayer Chain for Japan.” The prayer requests are as follows:

- (1) That Christ’s love and hope will touch those who are suffering from the 3.11 Disaster.
- (2) That Japanese Christians and churches will continue to engage in recovery and rebuilding of churches and people’s lives in the disaster-struck Tohoku area, especially with the churches in Fukushima that are struggling with radiation related challenges.
- (3) That there will be unity and harmonious collaboration among existing and new churches to reach out and minister to their local communities with Christ’s love.
- (4) That through all these, God’s glory may be revealed and the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread all across Japan.

The JEA helped organize a regional church network meeting in Sendai with DRCnet (Disaster Relief Christian Network) in early December. We also hosted the JEA Missions Symposium in February. As a national organization, the JEA seeks to provide networking opportunities for collaboration and to facilitate theological/

missiological discussion among those who are involved in relief/mission work in the Tohoku area so as to discern Lord’s will in this “*kairos*” moment for this nation.

As the third phase of our support project for disaster-struck churches, JEA is giving financial assistance toward the rebuilding and repair of the buildings of about 20 churches. (The total amount of third phase assistance is about 20,000,000 yen, or about US\$250,000.)

The JEA is also participating in an initiative to build disaster response capacities among Japanese churches by starting the Disaster Response Chaplaincy Training Program in collaboration with the Salvation Army and DRCnet.

Please continue to pray for Japan. Send donations to the JEA Relief Commission through:

The Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi UFJ
[SWIFT code:BOTKJPJT]
Jinbocho Branch 013-0305243
JEA Relief Commission

Please send an e-mail to adminoffice@jeanet.org
to let us know your name and the amount sent.

check <http://www.jeanet.org/> for more updates

(continued from p. 1)

our gifts, live out our mission, and bring blessing to people around us. As members of Caleb International, we have adopted two goals to accomplish these ideals.

1. We will support each other in finding our dreams, and in accomplishing those dreams.

We will do this through regular meetings, personal visits, the sharing of our knowledge and experiences, and by exercising our gifts.

2. We will help each other transition from the workforce into retirement.

We will help each other through various life changes such as losing our “social titles,” entering the “empty nest” years, experiencing the loss of a spouse, seeing our health decline, and moving from being a caregiver to becoming a care-receiver.



Tokyo region group sharing dreams for after retirement

Scope

Caleb International range in age from people in their fifties to those in their seventies. Those in their fifties are preparing for retirement, those in their sixties are pursuing their unique dreams, and those in their seventies are developing their dreams or trying to pass the baton to their successors.

Currently, groups are active and meeting on a monthly basis in Tokyo, Utsunomiya, Sendai, and a few other regions. We will be spreading gradually to various local towns. Men as well as women have been joining these groups, and some are seekers.

As our members have pursued their dreams, newspapers and magazines have reported on some of their unique activities.

Fumio Yamamoto, one such example, shared: “When I reached the age of sixty, I wanted to be a giver rather than a taker. Believing Psalm 92:14: “they will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green” to be God’s promise to us, my wife and I purchased a retirement cottage in Shizuoka Prefecture, where

we grow vegetables and flowers. We named it “Open House” and invite anyone to come and share old songs, organic vegetable cuisine, and conversation together.”

Yamamoto and his wife have worked to create a community filled with love. Neighbors come to gatherings in their home drawn by their loving example. Through this relationship, neighbors are introduced to the “letters of Christ” and some even are connected



to local churches. Mr. Yamamoto has become a community leader and has continued to work for the local people.

We have started to introduce the life stories of some of our members through a newsletter. This has begun to grow natural networks between members. Recently we have been receiving inquiries from all over Japan and overseas about Caleb International.

To conclude, I would like to share a comment by Ryuzou Hoshino, a member since the beginnings of Caleb International:

“For a Christian, entering retirement is like opening a treasure box. It means getting blessings and gifts from God. We can choose our own direction rather than do what we are told. We can achieve our life mission as a Christian by doing what matches our gifts. It is our prayer that very soon, the blessings of the gospel will be spread throughout Japan and the world by increasing numbers of retired Christians.”



Utsunomiya region group talking about how to deal with death

The Potential of Baby Boomers in Japan

By Atsuko Tateishi
Assistant Editor, Japan Update

The definition of “baby boomer” varies from country to country. A few different definitions exist within Japan itself for its baby boomers, or *dankai no sedai*—literally, the “lump generation.” The Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan (SB) defines the first wave of baby boomers as those who were born in 1947-49. This is the most prevalent definition in Japan when one refers to baby boomers, and I will go along with this definition in this article.

The 2012 Challenge

According to the Statistics Bureau, as of October 1, 2009, Japan’s baby boomer population totaled 6,644,000. If we add to that number those who were born in 1950-51, the total comes to 10,634,000, or nearly 10% of the national population (see <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/jinsui/2009np/index.htm>).

During the years leading up to 2007, when baby boomers were beginning to reach the then common retirement age of 60, there was much concern about the potential sudden reduction of the skilled work force. In response, a number of companies extended the retirement age, and Japan seems to have successfully overcome the 2007 challenge. Today, we are facing the 2012 challenge. This year baby boomers are beginning to turn 65, the current retirement age for many companies and the age of pension eligibility.

At a Loss

Baby boomers were born and raised in a society of radical changes and great aspirations, when the country literally was trying to “rise from the ashes.” During Japan’s period of high economic growth from 1954 to 1973, this generation joined the work force and became a major engine driving the economy. Most of them worked extremely hard, while enjoying a comfortable and growing income along with stable employment. Many have their own houses, with the housing loan already having been paid off many years before retirement. They have fairly large bank savings accounts and expect a relatively lucrative pension.

But some are now at a loss as to what to do with their lives. Because these baby boomers have worked toward and achieved goals throughout their career, many of them need to learn how to relax and simply enjoy retirement life.

The Potential of Christian Baby Boomers

Christian baby boomers could make a great impact in churches in Japan. With time on their hands and no financial worries, these retirees are now free to devote their energy to Christian ministries. They are the perfect leaders for reaching out to non-Christian baby boomers. They could also mentor and develop younger Christians.



Population Pyramid of Japan in 2009
(chart by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan)

Another idea would be for these baby boomers to launch businesses that operate on solid Christian principles. More and more young people are getting tired of today’s cutthroat business environment. Quite a few become wounded to such a degree that they lose their effectiveness for years in the full-time work force. If Christian baby boomers would provide such individuals with a safe place for employment, they would be able to work part-time and start regaining their self-esteem and financial independence.

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Bibles Distributed in the Tohoku Heart Language

A total of over 100 people attended Sunday worship on August 21, 2011, at two churches in Ōfunato City, Iwate Prefecture, to receive a free copy of the Kesengo Bible and an audio recording of it on CD. The Kesen dialect is the heart language of the people of the southern Sanriku coast, an area razed by the earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.

The Kesengo Bible contains the four Gospels written in the Kesen dialect. Harutsugu Yamaura, a Catholic doctor in Ōfunato, translated this well-regarded version directly from the Greek. The four Gospels were released separately by local publisher E-Pix from 2002 to 2004. When the Detroit Japanese Christian Fellowship in the U.S. learned that the inventory of the Kesengo Bible and its CD recording had gotten wet but was still usable after the disaster, they decided to use their relief fund to buy up the inventory and to give the Bible and CD to local survivors.

JEA Missions Forum in Akita

The Missions Commission of the JEA organized *Missions Forum Akita* in Senboku City, Akita Prefecture on October 31–November 1, 2011. Under the theme “Exploring the Deeper Layers of Japan” with a subtheme of “Missions amid New Crises,” the Forum attempted to highlight major ministry issues and perspectives in Akita. The local presenters outlined the culture and society of Akita, a rural area of heavy snow along the Japan Sea, and their ministry efforts. The over 60 attendees also looked at some emerging initiatives, including diaspora ministry and caring ministry for disaster survivors. The achievements of the Forum will help shape plans for the JEA’s Sixth Japan Congress on Evangelism to be held in 2016.

Financial Support for Suicide Prevention Initiatives

The year 2011 was the fourteenth consecutive year in which Japan saw more than 30,000 deaths by suicide. Yoichi Fujiyabu, pastor of Shirahama Baptist Christ Church in Wakayama Prefecture, has been actively involved in suicide prevention since 1999. He also serves as director of Shirahama Rescue Network (SRN), an NPO for suicide prevention.

In December 2011, SRN launched the Piece Proj-

ect as a means of financial support for its affiliated members. Project T-shirts have the logo of a jigsaw puzzle printed on their front, indicating the irreplaceability of each and every piece. The puzzle symbolizes the world, with each piece symbolizing a person. When a suicide prevention organization sells the T-shirts for SRN, it receives a portion of the profit. When an individual buys the T-shirts directly from SRN, the profit is used for its suicide prevention efforts. For details and to place an order, go to www.pieceproject.jp (Japanese only).

Songs of Hope to the Disaster-struck Area

The CD *Songs of Hope from Nagasaki: When Sorrow Becomes Joy*, which was distributed in Nagasaki following a series of violent crimes by young offenders, is now being distributed in the disaster-struck areas of Tohoku.

Kumiko Kuriwada of Sendai, Miyagi, who started this activity, spoke of how “in the weeks following the earthquake, *Songs of Hope* eased my anxiety and sorrow.” Ms. Kuriwada contacted the distributor of the CD, requesting permission to distribute the CD to primary and secondary schools in Miyagi Prefecture. Soon after, she started the “Songs of Hope Miyagi Committee,” which distributed CDs to all 690 schools in the area by August 30.

By the end of November, they had received 560 donations amounting to 1,850,000 yen. Following this, in response to many requests, another 5000 copies were produced and distributed to all 592 schools in Iwate prefecture by November 25 and all 754 schools in Fukushima by December 18. These CDs are now being played in primary schools, hospitals, libraries, and on the radio in these areas.

Nineteenth Japan Gospel Awards presented to Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara and Rev. Akira Izuta

On November 2, 2011, at Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo, the Nihon Fukuin Shinkoukai (Japan Gospel Promotion Committee) presented the nineteenth Japan Gospel Awards to Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara, Board Chair and Honorary Director, St. Luke’s International Hospital, and Rev. Akira Izuta, Chair, Japan King’s Garden Association.

Dr. Hinohara founded the Life Planning Center and started the New Elderly Movement, which has pro-

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vided hope for the elderly. In addition to his contributions to the field of medicine, he has written many books, including *Gendaiigaku to Shukyo* (Modern Medicine and Religion) and *Ai to Yurushi* (Love and Forgiveness).

Rev. Izuta was selected for this honor because of his dedication to mission. Along with his service as pastor of Nerima Baptist Church and Chair of the Japan Baptist Church Association, he has worked hard to unite and develop Japanese evangelists through the *Nihon Purotesutanto Seisho Shinko Domei* (Japan Protestant Conference) and the *Nihon Fukuin Shugi Shingakkai* (Japan Evangelical Theological Society). He also has served as Chair of the Japan Evangelical Association. He has dedicated himself to serving the elderly and people with disabilities through Hosanna Shop, a workshop for the mentally disabled, Hosanna Home, a group home for the elderly, and Japan King's Garden, a permanent residential home for the elderly.

“An Endless Dream” Becomes the Theme Song of Consadole Sapporo

“An Endless Dream,” a song composed by Night de Light, a Christian band based in Sapporo, was selected as the official theme song of Consadole Sapporo, the city's professional J.League soccer club.

Night de Light was formed in 2006. They have released two CDs (*It's OK / Home*), and as well as performing in Sapporo have been actively touring in other areas of Japan. In February they gave their first live performance in Tokyo.

The official homepage of Night de Light is: <http://night-de-light.com/index.html>

From “Relief for Mission” to “Welfare of the Local Community”

As relief work and reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake continues, voices regarding future mission possibilities are increasing. In response to this, the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) mission commission held an urgent Mission Symposium at Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo on February 6.

Mission representatives from member denominations and agencies joined to debate issues that had arisen from talks and reports from church officials

engaging in relief work and reconstruction support in the disaster areas. Many of these reports proposed a need for a paradigm shift in the concept of mission in Japan.

The agenda for the Symposium has been proposed by Masashi Moriya of the Disaster Reconstruction Assistance SBS Network, Eiji Sumiyoshi, the vice chairman of the Christian Liaison Committee of Fukushima, and Yoshiya Kondo, coordinator of the 3/11 Iwate Church Network.

Sumiyoshi, speaking from his experience in post-disaster Fukushima, proposes that “the key word of mission is coexistence” noting that God's Word and bread (food) must become one. Kondo, in regards to the “Theory of Mission in Iwate” suggests a shift from “relief for the sake of mission,” to “person to person.” Quoting Hisashi Ariga, he suggests it is important to shift the question from “How can we effectively convey teaching?” to “How can we live and serve in the community as Christians?”

Obituaries

HATSUMI, Rev. Shiro, Pastor Emeritus, Utsunomiya Church (Brotherhood of Christ)

Rev. Shiro Hatsumi participated in the founding of Brotherhood of Christ Church and served as principal for the Brotherhood of Christ Church Bible Institute. He passed away at Shinai-en, a home for the elderly, on August 18, 2011, in Sapporo at the age of 104. Hatsumi was one of the survivors of the persecution of Holiness Churches during World War II.

HAGA, Rev. Tadashi, Associate Pastor, Koganei Church (Tokyo Free Methodist)

Rev. Tadashi Haga, who served as Chair of OMF Japan Committee and Chair of JEA Relief Commission, passed away on October 2, 2011 due to cardiac insufficiency caused by pneumonia. He was 80.

Haga was born in Akita. In his high school days, the GI Gospel Hour (provided by GHQ after World War II) guided Haga to faith. Then he met and followed a zealous missionary named Eva B. Milican. When his prayer with Milican cured his tuberculosis, Haga was struck by the words of John 12:24, and dedicated himself to the Lord. He contributed to the laying of the foundation of Tokyo Free Methodist Church together with Milican. Haga received the Japan Gospel Award in 2009.

Please Pray for Japan

1. That the Holy Spirit would continue to work through Japanese churches to minister to those who are suffering from the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster, especially in Fukushima, where people face radiation related challenges.
2. That Christians of the baby boomer generation would rise up and witness their Christian faith to friends and colleagues.
3. That God would use the JEA Congress on Youth Evangelism in September to encourage and equip young leaders so that His Kingdom will be advanced among younger generations.
4. That Japanese churches would stand alongside other Asian churches for a greater impact of Christ's love in Asia.

JEA Schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
June 4-6	JEA General Assembly	Kakegawa
June 25-27	JEA Women's Retreat	Inawashiro (Fukushima)
Sept. 17-19	JEA Congress on Youth Evangelism	Tokyo
Oct. 29-30	JEA Missions Forum	Sendai

Editorial

My first day as general secretary of the JEA started in Sendai delivering relief supplies to survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster. I had no idea what to do in the midst of such tremendous devastation. But as I look back, I can clearly see that the Lord has been there all the time, touching people with His love and carrying burdens with us. I also really appreciate the prayers and support from the global Christian community. We are so encouraged by your prayers!

Japanese society is certainly coming to a turning point in its history. The demographic change within (the baby boomer issue in this newsletter is one of them) and the shifting trends in the global economy are forcing the status quo to change. Yet no one is able to see clearly into the future. The true hope and the meaning of life in Jesus Christ is needed here more than ever. Please continue to pray for Japan!

Kenichi Shinagawa (Editor in Chief)



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General Secretary : Kenichi Shinagawa

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Japan Update Staff

Editor in Chief Kenichi Shinagawa
Asst. Editor Atsuko Tateishi
Managing Editor Mizue Uchida
Translation Editor Gary Bauman
Translation Staff Tomoko Kato
Timothy Williams

Editorial Office:
c/o JEA, OCC Building
2-1 Kanda Surugadai
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0062, Japan

Telephone 03-3295-1765
Fax 03-3295-1933
E-mail adminoffice@jeanet.org
Website http://www.jeanet.org/

Subscription:

If you desire to subscribe to Japan Update in digital format (PDF), please send the request by e-mail to adminoffice@jeanet.org.

Contacting JEA:

Organizations desiring to initiate contact with JEA should address correspondence in care of JEA (postal address and e-mail address are indicated above) to Kenichi Shinagawa, General Secretary.