

# Japan Update

Fall 2012 Number 64



*Youth participants in the SOLA project, an NPO to help children in disaster areas in Tohoku*

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In the 21st century, churches in Japan must once again consider the purpose and necessity of developing younger leadership. This area has challenged churches for many years, and it relates to all of the challenges we are facing in Japan today.

It's become quite common nowadays to hear people saying churches need to appeal more to the younger generation and build communities that will attract youth and keep them. However, the philosophy of leadership I am proposing in this article does not focus on how to bring young people into the church, nor is it written with the intention to advise on how to expand the church itself.

Rather, I believe a philosophy of Christian leadership should arise from the essential reasoning of why Christians, worship, and churches all exist in this world. I write from the perspective of a pastor who works at the actual scene of the challenges we face every day. This message is dedicated to the future generation and to the pastors (including myself) who are in the position of directing these young leaders.



*by Hiroaki Yonai  
Senior Pastor,  
Kokubunji Baptist  
Church*

### The Hope of the World (Romans 1:16)

The younger generation is highly attuned to the times we live in, mainly because they have been greatly influenced by events that have taken place in today's world. As their elders, we must understand that their leadership style is a reflection of what people today are asking for.

Nowadays, it is considered normal to have a church with different cultures and races mixed together. It is also common to have vast numbers of cross-cultural missionaries working overseas. This is also a time in history in which the majority of the Christian population is shifting from the West (mainly referring to Europe and the United States) to the South,

*(continued on p. 4)*

## Interview with a Younger Leader

By *Atsuko Tateishi*

*Assistant Editor, Japan Update*

**Miho Hirata** is one of the younger leaders who was trained at Kokubunji Baptist Church (KBC) in her early years in ministry. Now in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, Miho shared during a Skype interview how she grew to be a leader. Excerpts follow.

**Atsuko (A):** Please tell us how long you were at KBC and what responsibilities you had.

**Miho (M):** I was there for ten years, for the first four years as a seminary student, and another six years as a church staff member. I worked in the area of hospitality. I also led Bible studies. I was in my thirties during most of that time.

**A:** Share with us some of what you learned from Senior Pastor Yonai regarding leadership development.

**M:** I believe he's had a deep influence on me, but it is not because he led me through a structured training program. Each ministry team member was encouraged to think through whatever challenge was at hand on their own, and to act on their ideas.

**A:** So each of you were entrusted with decision-making power in your areas of responsibility?

**M:** Well, responsibilities were not clearly demarcated for each person in the first place. We made decisions more through discussions with the other team members.

**A:** It was a flexible system.

**M:** Yes, you could say that.

**A:** Do you see any areas that you wish to be improved, with regard to leadership development at KBC?

**M:** If you prefer leadership that gives you hands-

on instructions, you will likely feel lost at KBC. But I don't think that needs to be changed.

**A:** I suppose you had to take risks, which sometimes led you to fail.

**M:** I failed a lot. I have come to believe, however, that the ultimate failure is when you try to prove yourself without asking for help.

**A:** Now you are leading a children's ministry in an area where the Great East Japan Earthquake hit hard in March 2011. What is important for you in developing the next generation of leaders?

**M:** I have been with SOLA (Serve for Others, Live with one Another) since last April. My leadership style is probably a lot like KBC's. Once I communicate the core values of our ministry, I expect each member to think and to act on their own by taking risks. I want my team members to challenge my ideas and methods, which I expect will help me grow out of my box. There will be failures, but we learn most from our failures. I have come to a point where I appreciate my own failures.



**Miho Hirata**

**Director of SOLA (<http://solailo.jp>) SOLA coordinates student volunteers to teach children in disaster areas who need help with their school work**

## Testimony of a Younger Leader

By *Fumika Mizunashi*

*A senior high school student leader with hi-b.a.*

"Evangelizing high school students through high school students" is the motto of hi-b.a. (high school born-againers). I have learned a lot and have been able to grow as I have been involved with hi-b.a. As I take up the responsibility of leading meetings and directing hi-b.a. programs, I am constantly thinking about what God requires of us and what his mind is for us. I believe it takes a lot of prayer to know this.

Sometimes I wonder if what I am doing is outside God's will. I become anxious—especially when programs do not go as I planned, when meetings are not as lively as I expected, or when only few students show up. However, when I see everyone praising God and each face filled with God's grace, I feel I am in the will of God.

As an emcee standing before a group, I feel it is my

privilege to receive God's grace by seeing those in attendance filled with God's blessings

I have also learned that I cannot do anything by myself. I can do my part only because I have various co-workers working with me. It takes many people, such as an emcee, a team of musicians, a speaker who shares about God, hi-b.a. staff, and others. On top of that, we would not be able to hold meetings unless high school students belonging to hi-b.a. brought their friends. That is why I feel we need cooperation on all levels.

I have also learned that when we are serving God, he gives us the things, people, and prayer we need. As I experience God supplying all our needs I feel God giving his abundant grace and unmeasurable blessing.

If God has chosen us for a position, I believe we should never use such excuses as "My faith is weak" or "That person is more gifted to be a leader than I" in order to run away from or refuse to accept the responsibilities given to us.

I believe a place and responsibility is given to a per-

son because of who he or she is.

I have learned and experienced that I will receive abundant grace as I respond to what God requires of me where he has placed me.

God has given me a phrase as I have been involved with planning meetings for hi-b.a.: "In Jesus, to stand in front of the people is to be loved by them. To be loved by them is to love them." I would not have understood this truth if I had just attended hi-b.a. meetings. It has only been as I have served God through hi-b.a. that I have been able to grasp this truth.

Above all, I believe that everything including myself and hi-b.a. belongs to God. That is why we need to commit everything to God if we expect our meetings to succeed. I have also learned that our meetings must be acceptable in God's sight, not according to our value system or our understanding.

Even when my opinion is not ac-

cepted in the discussion to prepare for the meetings and things do not go the way we planned, it is important not to get angry, but to choose what is truly good in God's sight.

I believe that serving God is our mission and mankind's way to live.

I believe that it is important to serve God wherever we are, to share about him and to use the life given to us by God for his sake no matter what kind of job we hold.

I believe that as we young people become more enthusiastic and on fire for God the name of our Savior Jesus Christ will be spread all over Japan and all over the world. I believe that is why hi-b.a. considers it to be important for high school students to evangelize other high school students.

I sincerely desire that we walk as leaders, become more like Jesus as God's disciples, abundantly receive God's eternal grace, and share that grace with others.



## Sharing the Vision for Youth Evangelism in Japan

The first Japan Congress on Youth Evangelism, the *Nihon Seinen Dendou Kaigi* (NSD), was held at the National Olympic Memorial Center in Yoyogi, Tokyo from September 17 to 19, 2012. It was organized by the JEA Youth Commission. More than 700, including youth and leaders who work with youth, gathered to share in the vision of reaching out to Japan's youth to raise up the next generation of Christians and church leaders.

Yoshiya Mitsuhashi, Chair of the JEA Youth Commission, said, "We are gathered here today to share in God's vision to evangelize the youth of Japan. We may have come from different church groups and organizations, but we need to be united in God's vision to carry out His mission. Youth workers in mission organizations and pastors of local churches need to work together and build strategic relationships in order to reach out and care for the youth of this generation."

The morning sessions started with Bible exposition. Participants were challenged to dig deeper into God's Word and reflect upon their own lives. In project sessions, several "youth-friendly" churches presented their worship styles, small group ministries, outreach methods and so on—and also their philosophies behind what they do. The goal was to share different ideas and methods without criticism, so that attendees could experience the variety of ways God is working

in Japan. In the afternoons, there were more than fifty workshops and seminars in small groups through which participants could meet and network with others with similar interests and ministry areas. The leadership is convinced that personal networks are the key for advancing God's Kingdom beyond the Congress.

In the evening, "Night-de-Lite," a Christian band popular even in the secular music scene, was featured to reach out to more youth. Many participants said they were encouraged and challenged to take part in God's vision to transform Japan through youth. Pray that the Holy Spirit will move among Christian youth and use them to reach out and transform the youth of Japan!



(continued from p. 1)

where 75% of the Christian population now lives. Furthermore, the introduction of social networking [through the Internet] has established a new dimension of how people can interact with each other. This means we are living in a completely different world than past generations. Many young people now coexist in multiple networks. This is bringing in new conflict as young people establish their own identities at the same time as they develop acceptance of other cultures and beliefs. This is why a new philosophy of leadership is required to address these challenges.



*Youth leading worship for a children's camp*

Accepting diversity was also a challenge for the early Church. At a time when churches were gaining recognition across the Mediterranean world, one exceptional characteristic that stood out was the Church's racial and cultural diversity. Another was the fact that the leaders of these early churches were diaspora Jews—including the Apostle Paul, the martyr Stephen, the missionary (to Samaria) Philip, and the eloquent Apollo.

What I sincerely hope is that our younger generation will be the hope of the world. And I also hope that this future generation will follow the above early church leaders in such a way as to nurture a global perspective while at the same time valuing and establishing their individual identities.

### **Love the World (Matthew 5:43-48)**

In this article, I would like to focus primarily on “globalized perspective” and “independency” as the core essence of my philosophy of leadership.

#### ***“Globalized Perspective”***

To keep readers from misinterpreting globalized perspective as “sending missionaries around the world,” I would like to rephrase this as “contribution to communality.” I believe the development of younger leadership should not aim to have young Christian leaders be committed to a certain church, but rather it should seek to have them be committed to contributing to world society itself.

Especially after the Great East Japan Earthquake took place last year, I could not stop thinking that the communality of churches in Japan is being questioned as never before. Along with that, I also sensed that young leaders have a strong desire to serve not only the local church but all of society. This is why the development of younger leadership interlinks with how we in the church consider communality and “becoming a good neighbor” to people outside the church.

#### ***“Independency”***

Some people may have the idea that “independency” means isolation from others, but that is actually the exact opposite of what I understand. For example, in a sport such as soccer, the team should be composed not only of players who are fantastic at scoring goals, but also with players who are excellent at defending their own goal. In the Ekiden marathon relay race, athletes are needed who can outrun opponents in the uphill, but athletes are also needed who can compete in the downhill. It is a known fact that a team will develop a stronger bond if it has a good combination of athletes with different talents and abilities. A good “communality” cannot exist without valuing the “independency” of individuals, and churches today must also construct a network not just within its own periphery, but across borders in every direction in the world.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan has finally come to value the different strengths of urban and rural areas. The country has started to explore ways to share the respective strengths of each, rather than applying a standardized path of growth to all areas. This idea is expected to lead Japan to shed its unified value system. In order to pursue this, urban and rural areas must shift from unquestioningly obeying standardized directives from the central government and get used to sharing and discussing their respective strengths with each other.

I propose that churches should also incorporate the same idea to deploy ministries that at the same time



*College students are paired up with youth  
One on one relationship is important*

interface and are mobile. This is the kind of movement new Christian leaders want to be involved in when facing the global challenges we are facing today.

### **Inspiring the New Generation (Matthew 9:17)**

The challenge we face with this particular philosophy of leadership is whether or not churches can provide such a globalized perspective and also support the independency of individuals. Here I would like to take a close look at some of the difficulties we face in this and how we can overcome this challenge. I will not attempt to share a concrete proposal on how to acquire “global perspective” and “individual independency.” But I will touch on changes taking place in the predispositions of the Church in Japan.

First, we senior Christian leaders need to acknowledge that the future generation always has the “starring role” of leadership, meaning that we should not impose our own theories and methods on younger leaders in order to pass on our old values.



*Junior high girls' camp  
Prayer is an essential element for spiritual growth*

Leaders of the new generation should seek to become the new wineskins of this world, symbolizing flexibility and expansibility. Throughout history, churches have always been faced with this challenge of accepting innovation. Facing innovation is the same as confronting something beyond your own comprehension. It requires painful self-expansion and the destruction of walls you have created around your identity. This is why many people tend to avoid this sort of self-examination. However, we must understand that we cannot break the Church's current stagnation unless today's pastors and other Christian leaders decide to accept these changes.

Second, as pastors we must question ourselves as to whether we are incorporating this global perspective in our church and in our worship service and whether we are stepping out to support these young leaders in finding hope to experience life transformation. We



*A Bible study group for young women*

must make a paradigm shift from simply bringing young people into “church” to introducing the Church to young people out in the world.

This also relates to how the worship service and the message are impacting young people nowadays. I include myself when I say pastors need the experience and the skills to share messages that are relevant not just to church members but to those who have never read the Bible or attended a church service before. However, this “global relevance” cannot be acquired by simply altering scripture exegesis or changing the service. A pastor is challenged to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (I Peter 3:15). In other words, we as pastors must strengthen our interpersonal communication skills, including what we “preach” in our daily interactions with people.

Finally, if I can take the liberty to direct a message directly to young leaders, I would like to let them know they should not feel they are simply responsible to receive a handoff. As those who hold “independency,” they are accountable to select what is good for the future generation. Only then can they become a true blessing to this world (Gen. 12:3b). I sincerely pray that together we can become new wineskins, revitalizing churches in Japan and all over the world during this 21st century.



*Junior high boys' group  
Imagining 21st century leaders for churches in Japan*

# JEA General Assembly Report

The 27th General Assembly of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) was held from June 4 through 6 in Kakegawa-city, Shizuoka. In the opening address, Chair Nosei Ando mentioned the Fukushima nuclear power plant accidents. "We must be repentant for using nuclear energy without deep consideration. According to the Bible, we need to discuss what is right or wrong, and take responsibility as Christians who have been entrusted with the gospel."

The Assembly adopted the 2012 project plan which mainly concerns continuation of relief and restoration efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake. Three focus areas are: (1) support for disaster affected churches, (2) support for regional church networks, and (3) preparation for future disasters.

During the 2011 fiscal year, the JEA provided financial support to 120 JEA member and related churches which were affected by the 3.11 disaster. The JEA also has been planning to expand support to churches outside of JEA affiliation in 2012.

After guest speaker Rev. Kida, Chair of the Fukushima Christian Conference, presented "the voices of Fukushima," attendants prayed for people and churches in Fukushima. Although church networks in the disaster-hit areas can be the most effective in responding to local needs, church staff in those areas often are exhausted. So the JEA has budgeted 5 million yen for supporting regional church networks both inside and outside of disaster areas to continue relief and recovery ministries.

In preparation for future disasters, the JEA Relief

Commission is collaborating with Wheaton College HDI (Humanitarian Disaster Institute) and the Salvation Army to develop Disaster Response Chaplaincy Training and Church Network Project, in order to increase the disaster response capacity of churches in Japan.

The Assembly also resolved to hold JCE6 (The 6th Japan Congress on Evangelism, Chair: Teruo Saoshiro) in 2016 in Kobe. Being one of the first areas Protestant churches were established in Japan, Kobe has been an important city in Japanese church history. It is also a city which has experienced a massive earthquake disaster, the 1995 disaster, which resulted in more than 6,000 fatalities. Thus, holding JCE6 in Kobe in 2016 certainly has a symbolic meaning to Japanese churches.



(from left) JEA Chair Ando, FCC Chair Kida, Rev. Abe of Sagami-hara Church Network, Captain Ishikawa of the Salvation Army

## JEA Takes Initiative in Disaster Response Project

On July 5-6, 2012, the first forum for Disaster Response Chaplaincy Training was held at OCC (Ochanomizu Christian Center) and more than 60 participated. The JEA Relief Commission and the DRC Network invited Dr. Kevin Ellers of the Salvation Army USA who has developed extensive training courses in ESC (Emotional and Spiritual Care).

Many of the participants have been involved in relief work following the 3.11 disaster and they said they should have learned this before the disaster happened. JEA general secretary Kenichi Shinagawa said, "With so many earthquakes predicted in the near future as well as an increasing number of other natural disasters, every Japanese church should be prepared to respond to disasters in holistic ways. Churches are especially able to provide emotional and spiritual care and to be witnesses to the love of Jesus Christ in the midst of suffering."

The JEA Relief Commission is also collaborating with Wheaton College HDI (Humanitarian Disaster

Institute) to develop a social networking platform (Web site) and a variety of disaster response support tools that will provide a structure for Chaplaincy Training. The second forum for the Disaster Response Project, focusing on church network and disaster preparation will take place November 19-20, 2012. Dr. David Boan and Dr. Jamie Aten of Wheaton HDI will share their experiences and insights.

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

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](mailto:adminoffice@jeanet.org) to let us know your name and the amount sent.

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# NEWS and NOTES

## ***Tohoku Celebration of Hope with Franklin Graham***

A three-day evangelism event, Tohoku Celebration of Hope was held March 2-4, 2012, at Grande 21 in Rifucho, Miyagi Prefecture. The total turnout was 11,720, with another 884 who watched the live feed in seven venues all over the Tohoku region. In response to the simple and straightforward gospel message delivered by Franklin Graham each day, a total of 299 people came forward. Over 70% of them expressed their decision to believe in Jesus.

Noriyasu Tanaka, Pastor of Sendai Kirisuto Church and Chair of the Executive Committee of the event, was pleasantly surprised by the large number of positive responses from the traditionally conservative and shy people of Tohoku. "Christian volunteers have been demonstrating Jesus in Tohoku through their way of life for the past year," observes Tanaka. "This, I believe, has produced trust among the local people, and has led to the positive results of this event."

## ***Fukushima Future Forum by Christian Youth***

On March 18 to 20, about fifty Christian youth gathered at Inawashiro, Fukushima, for the 2nd Fukushima Future Forum organized by Fukushima Christian Conference (FCC) and Friends with the Voiceless International (FVI). They gained hope for the future of Fukushima. The aim of this event was that "while [many in] the young generation are leaving Fukushima, dedicated people who will lay down their talents, time, and life for the Kingdom of God might emerge."

## ***TCTS Completes 62 Year History***

Tokyo Christian Theological Seminary (TCTS) in Inzai City, Chiba Prefecture, held its final commencement and the closing ceremony on March 9, 2012, thus completing its 62-year history of producing evangelical ministers. TCTS was founded in Tokyo in 1949. The total number of the alumni counts 539. TCTS merged into the Tokyo Christian University Graduate School of Theology, which opened in April 2012.

## ***The Tokyo Disaster Blog Started***

Rev. Kurihara, newly appointed as CRASH Japan's next disaster preparation officer, writes, "According to statistics from the University of Tokyo, the chances of a big earthquake hitting Tokyo within the next four years is 50%. This is a very high percentage, and it means the earthquake can happen anytime soon. So that people might be prepared for it, I decided to provide information through this blog."

Rev. Kurihara hopes to establish networks between churches and local authorities through his blog. "After the Great Tohoku Disaster, the Lord's work was visible in many places. I would like to see the Lord's handiwork in Tokyo before the earthquake hits."

## ***Food Radiation Detector Installed by Christian Networks***

Sendai Christian Alliance Disaster Relief Network (Tohoku Help) and Iwaki Christian Earthquake Reconstruction Support Network jointly opened Inori, a food radiation measurement center, in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture on May 12, 2012. It is their second center, with the first having been operating in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture since December 2011.

The center is open from Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Reservations may be made online at [www.foodbq.com](http://www.foodbq.com). Measurement is free. Unlike government measurement centers who disclose data on the Web site, the data will be disclosed only to the client. This will protect the privacy of the clients, and also the reputation of local farmers against potential damage by unsubstantiated fear.

## ***Obituaries***

***Rev. Masatoshi Uchikoshi (Airin Chapel Christ Church, Sapporo-city Hokkaido)*** died of colon cancer on April 7. He was 67 and known for his unique Church School (CS) program, called MEBIG (Memory Bible Game). Since Uchikoshi's motto was "CS must be delightful," he always tried to create activities into which children can easily join and enjoy. With MEBIG having become recognized both in Japan and overseas, the study center "MEBIG View" was opened in the summer of 2011 in Niikappu, Hokkaido.

***Rev. Junji Hatori (Principal Emeritus/Tokai Theological Seminary, Pastor Emeritus/Jiyugaoka Christ Church)*** passed away due to complications from pneumonia on April 20, at the age of 84. In his youth, he was involved in labor union movements, peace activism, and became a communist. However, in 1954 when he heard the striking message of Rev. Kiichi Ando, Hatori repented and became Christian. Hatori dedicated himself to broadcasting mission at Pacific Broadcasting Association (PBA). At the same time, he served several churches as pastor and played an active part in founding Tokai Theological Seminary.

***Rev. Atsuyoshi Saito (The former Chair of Japan Alliance Christ Church)*** passed away following a cerebral hemorrhage on June 4, at the age of 75. He was baptized at Kasumicho Church during his high school days. While working as a lecturer at Seigakuin University, Japan Bible Seminary, Tokyo Christian University and Tokyo Christian Institute, he also served as a member of the board of directors for various mission organizations such as *Chiisana Inochi o Mamoru-kai* ("Save Babies from Abortion"), *Seisho to Seishin Iryou Kenkyukai* (Bible and Mental Health Study Group), and Kinugasa Hospital.

## Please Pray for Japan

1. That the Holy Spirit would give us openness and boldness to share and act upon God's vision of reaching out to youth and raising up the next generation of leaders to transform Japan.
2. That churches in Japan would continue to support recovery ministries in the 3.11 disaster areas, and also engage with disaster response training that will prepare us to be God's representatives when the next disaster happens.
3. 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>
Oct. 29-30	JEA Missions Forum	Sendai
Nov. 5-6	JCE6 Theme Retreat	Okutama
Nov. 19-20	Disaster Response Forum	Tokyo
Dec. 4-7	WEA Youth Consultation	Florida
Feb. 4-6	Disaster Chaplaincy Training	Izu

## Editorial

It was such an encouragement to see so many young people (both pastors and lay people) participating in the first Japan Congress on Youth Evangelism. As Japanese society is wrestling with the issue of a rapidly aging population, churches are no exception. Actually, churches in Japan seem to be facing that issue more rapidly than society in general.

The title of the feature article "Inspire a Generation," of course, was taken from London Olympics and reminds us of the image of handing the torch to next generation. Our task is clear—we need to "inspire" (not force) the next generation to take the torch. The fact is, we are not able to inspire anybody without being inspired by the Holy Spirit ourselves. Let us be moved by the Holy Spirit's guidance and commit ourselves to encourage and mentor younger leaders around us.

Kenichi Shinagawa, Editor in Chief

<http://jeanet.org/>

## Japan Update

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Chairman : Nohsei Ando  
General Secretary : Kenichi Shinagawa

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