



Caring for Pastors in Japan

1. Envisioning a place for mutual support

For several years, a vague idea grew in my mind. Then, in April 2007, I was on a train returning from a meeting. The vague idea became a clear conscious thought as the phrase “make a place” came to me.

I had seen and heard that many ministers, their spouses, and other members of the Church in Japan were tired, sick, and suffering. There was a need for a place of mutual support with “Jesus-like warmth,” a place where people of various denominations could come and have fellowship free of social hierarchies.

So I shared my hope to create such a place with friends that I regularly met for prayer. One of them, who worked at a Christian publishing company, said, “That will be tough to do alone. Why don’t we form a team along with my pastor and work toward this?” The three of us met at a fruit parlor in Machida station building, and that was how the Christian Servants Platform began.

2. The grace of God made known through mentors and friends

Many church workers begin their ministries after several years of seminary, which is both a precious and intense period. After entering the ministry, ministers and their spouses prayerfully tackle many



by Naoki Mori

*Director,
Christian Servants
Platform*

*Pastor,
Urayasu International
Christ Church*

problems. They are able to stand fast with the support of church members. But during the course of the battle, exhaustion and defeat takes its toll. Suffering in itself is not the problem. However, without rest, help, or the energy to face suffering, defeat is a natural outcome.

The aim of the Christian Servants Platform has not been to provide assistance and advice from a “superior,” but to be a place where church workers have been able to rest their minds and quietly listen in the presence of the Lord.

This parallels what I have been able to experience during my thirty or so years as a pastor. When I was in my early forties, after twelve or thirteen years of ministry, I went to a minister with whom I had no personal connection. I asked him to be my mentor. He accepted my request, and for over ten years he mentored me, even coming to our church a few times a year.

Inside

Caring for Pastors in Japan 1-2

Interview: Learning to Appreciate Who You Are 3

Column: Art Therapy for Pastors in Disaster Areas 4

Report: JEA Annual Assembly in Kobe 5

News and Notes 6-7

Prayer/Editorial 8

The blessing we received as a church and as a couple was immeasurable.

At around the same time, I developed a friendship with another person through reading a book and meeting regularly to share our thoughts about what we were reading. At times the two of us would have an overnight retreat during which we would reflect on our work responsibilities and share about our lives up to that point.

Once, at a seminar I regularly attended called “Pastors and Spirituality,” a workshop was conducted in which we wrote down experiences in our past and divided our life into seven year periods. I didn’t expect to see what I saw. I saw a broken, delicate heart and frustration. I saw darkness. Looking back at my youth, I saw that my experience of becoming a child of God—confessing my sins, receiving the atonement of the cross, and gaining the assurance of forgiveness—focused on being forgiven by the One who righteously judges sin. On the evening of the workshop, I shared feelings I had continued to carry with me and confessed my sins to the lecturer. And so, after many years, I came to see another aspect of the love of God. God the Father securely embraces me, the prodigal son, in his strong arms. I experienced deeper forgiveness and deeper healing. I reveled in the forgiveness of the Father in the depths of my heart.

It takes years to deeply relish God’s grace. We need people to support us. The more I came to know I was in the Lord’s arms as I ran toward Him, the more my attitude was changed from that of a person concerned with results to that of a person who values the process of ministry.

3. Starting the Christian Servants Platform

With the help of like-minded people and lecturers from whom I was eager to learn, the Christian Servants Platform slowly came into shape. With no backing organization and no financial guarantees, we were quite anxious as we wondered if this would work. Despite the situation, my wife and I sent out handwritten invitations to a preview day to be held in December 2008. Over 150 people from various denominations attended, confirming the need for such a ministry.

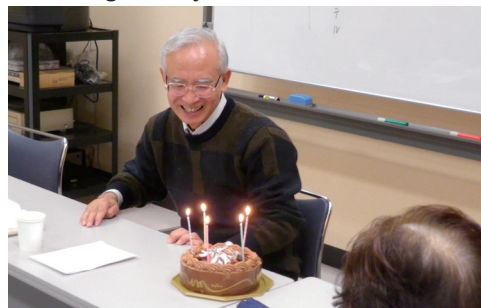


Session for minister's wives

Comments made on that day included such statements as, “After many years of pioneering work, I have become ill. So while taking a break, I would like to review my pastoral work up to this point”; “I am joyful that I can study for the first time since becoming a minister’s wife”; “As a church member, I would like to understand the struggles of a minister.” From such statements, we could see that people were serious about their ministries and wanted deeper spirituality in their own personal walk. We could see ourselves and other ministers in the group that Jesus addresses as He says, “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion

on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt 9:36 NIV)

And so the work of the Christian Servants Platform started in April 2009. From the beginning, the plan was to limit the ministry to a period of five years. As a place for ministers and their spouses to grow and be cared for, and for members of various denominations to grow spiritually, we rented halls in places throughout Tokyo, including Yotsuya, Ochanomizu, Waseda, and Setagaya.



Celebrating a facilitator's birthday

We have had various classes: those exclusively for ministers and their spouses, those for minister’s wives, and those for general church members. We have had over 500 participants from over 30 denominations during the course of these five years. Some have come from as far away as Okayama, Ishikawa, Yamagata and Miyagi prefectures.

The main topics we have looked at are pastoral theology, pastoral counseling, spiritual growth, and pastoral psychology. At the Christian Servants Platform we value personal involvement, equal relationships, and the process. Because we value each participant’s voice, we do not just end with a lecture, but include a workshop or a time of discussion.

We address each other as “San (Mr. /Mrs.)” rather than “Sensei (Teacher).” We also protect each other’s privacy by promising not to share what others have said during the classes. This is to create a safe environment in which each participant can share his or her heart.

4. The current state of the Christian Servants Platform

As we come to the end of five years, with no organization or sponsor having backed us, we know it was all by the mercy of the Lord. We remember all of the support given by churches and individuals. We remember the lecturers who took the time to prepare meaningful and interesting lectures—never condescending, but speaking to us as equals. We remember the participants who sacrificed time and money to take part. We remember all those who backed us in prayer. We want to share our sincere gratitude and respect to everyone who was involved.

My wife and I did much administrative work and joined all the classes. We worked to make a good atmosphere as we connected participants and lecturers. Our greatest joy was seeing ministers and spouses who were facing much heartache become more and more joyful as they were involved in the classes. This was a gift from the Lord Jesus.

Our next task is to know, Lord willing, where and how to grow and continue this work.

Learning to Appreciate Who You Are

interview by *Atsuko Tateishi*
Associate Editor, *Japan Update*

How has the Christian Servants Platform (CSP) impacted its students? In August 2013, Makoto and Emi Okuyama, pastoral couple of Heiwadai Grace Church, Nagareyama City, Chiba Prefecture, shared their experience with *Japan Update*.

Atsuko (A): Please tell us why you wanted to take a course at CSP.

Emi (E): Before we were transferred to Nagareyama City in the spring of 2012, we were pastoring a church in Nagano Prefecture. While there in 2008, I was reading the Christian Servants Journal. An advertisement for a CSP preview event caught my attention. At the time, I was struggling with raising our two teenage children. So I invited my husband to attend the event with me. While I was listening to the presentation of various CSP courses, I was struck by a comment in which a presenter brought up the thought of “becoming disillusioned with yourself.” I was a bit of a perfectionist, so when I heard that phrase, I thought perhaps I could learn to accept my shortcomings at CSP.

Makoto (M): Exactly the same phrase struck me, too. By that time I had completed about seven years as a pastor, and to a certain extent it had been rewarding. However, an experience had come up that served as a trigger for me to question whether my years of work had produced anything good at all. It was around that time that my wife invited me to attend the preview event. As a result, we decided to commute to Tokyo to attend CSP classes.

A: You enrolled in the first semester, I suppose.

E & M: We wanted to, but by the time we applied, the courses were full. So in fall 2009 we entered Ohtawa-san’s class for a year. After that, we sometimes took a break. Some semesters, only my wife attended. Currently, the two of us are enrolled in Hori-san’s class, and Emi is in Ohtawa-san’s class.

A: CSP must have been very good to you, as you have taken numerous courses over the years.

M: I have learned the importance of taking good care of myself. The Bible says, in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching” (NRSV). I realized that I was pursuing a sense of accomplishment by doing all sorts of busy work.

E: For me, too, it was easier to work for others than to take care of myself.

A: That is understandable, considering how self-sacrifice is valued in Japanese culture. Did the instructors give you practical training in how to take care of yourself during the classes?

M: I have learned that taking care of myself takes discipline. In every CSP course we have taken, emphasis

is placed on having regular quiet times with the Lord. Taking that time is part of the discipline to take care of oneself. Secular values such as competition and striving for success can infiltrate the church. By being in the Lord’s presence, I am less likely to become ensnared in secular values.

E: The class sessions are practical. We meditate on a Scripture passage and practice having communication and fellowship with God. All of our classmates are in similar situations. Whatever we discuss in class, we keep confidential. It is a safe place.

M: Just learning that others are struggling with the same kinds of issues as I gives me a great sense of relief.

A: How have you been applying what you have learned to your ministry?

M: By attending CSP, I have reframed my value system. I have been freed from imposing my expectations on church members. Now I truly appreciate who they are.

E: I have really come to know that God loves me as I am. I have become humble enough to share my weaknesses with the Lord and with my church members. I have begun to ask church members to pray for me. These changes in me also have had a positive impact upon relationships among church members. I have seen the fellowship in our church grow deeper and richer than before. I am a pastor’s kid, and so is my husband. Perhaps in the past both of us tried too hard to meet unspoken expectations for ourselves.

M: That reminds me of my childhood. The parsonage was in the same building as the church. There were times when I felt my privacy had been invaded. I vowed not to let that happen to my children. But then, one day, I realized that I had offered some space in the parsonage at the sacrifice of my children’s privacy. I need to apologize to them some day . . .

A: Would you like to teach what you have learned to others?

M: Yes, we want to somehow pass it on to younger pastors who are in the midst of struggles.

E: I am helping in the area of continuing education for ministers in our denomination. As part of that assignment, I helped launch an annual newsletter to support minister’s wives. The inaugural issue was published last February. I am also hoping to lead a quiet

time during future gatherings of minister’s wives in our denomination. After the planned closing of CSP next spring, I want to continue to have a place to learn. Some of our classmates have been exploring ways to do that. I also would like to see a mentoring system for our colleagues along the lines of what the Catholic Church uses.

M: While our denomination, the Japan Alliance Christ Church, does have an advisor system, I believe there is great need for a mentoring system, in which your mentor is someone outside of your circle of interests. For me, that need has been met through CSP courses, where everyone is on an equal level. I believe pastors need a safe place to share their concerns freely.



Art Therapy for Pastors in Disaster Areas



by **Akira Fujikake**
*Clinical Psychologist,
 Associate Professor of
 Seigakuin University Graduate School
 of Human Welfare Studies*

A month after the Great East Japan Earthquake, I was asked to help organize a retreat for pastors in the disaster area. Many pastors in the disaster area were exhausted and needed a restful time to relax and be refreshed. In order to make it work, we needed to get these pastors to step out of their “aid/provider” roles.

Pastors generally wear the aid/provider role like a suit of armor. If we can get them take off their aid/provider roles and experience a retreat as individuals, then they will be refreshed and be able to find a good balance between rest and work.

We held the first pastors retreat in June 2011, and by the end of March 2013 we had conducted five retreats. I would like to share three insights I learned from conducting these retreats.

Embrace paradox

The main method I used for therapy with these pastors was the creation of collages. I tried other methods, such as drawing, but making collages from photos cut out of magazines proved to be the most effective. By making collages, the participants were able to discover something new about themselves or communicate some important aspects of their inner feelings.

One female pastor from Fukushima made a collage that displayed a field, crops, and the ocean. She then explained that all of these precious things that she loved had been contaminated through the nuclear power plant accident. This scene was an expression of what she saw in her mind as reality.

She made another collage that portrayed an airport control tower and the floor plan of a high-rise apartment. This was an expression of what she saw as her ideal world, with the key elements as far away as possible from the contaminated ground.

I shared with her that both the reality and the ideal are very important and that we live somewhere in between. I considered her to be in a healthy mental state, since she was able to handle both the reality and the ideal in her mind.

We often tend to live in only one state of mind—in reality or in the ideal—and try to stabilize ourselves in that state. But we need to embrace both sides—the paradox. The two sides may be in contradiction and that is not easy to cope with. However, if we eliminate one side we deceive ourselves, and that is not healthy. Actually, anyone who is faced with crisis and the absurdities

of life needs to embrace paradox.

If we want to support survivors, we need to help them embrace paradox. Actually, Christian faith is a paradox. God’s sovereignty is on one side, and human effort on the other. It would make things easier if there were only one or the other. But in reality, we must accept both elements.

Create narratives

When I counsel people, I encourage them to create narratives. In this way we can interpret various experiences. Take, for example, a situation in which someone fails to keep an appointment. The person who has been stood up might get angry because he felt he was treated lightly, whereas someone else might worry that something might have happened to the person who didn’t show up. Even when we experience exactly the same thing, how we interpret a situation can make a significant difference. So counseling is a process of liberating someone from a warped narrative and helping them create a new one.

Two risks are at hand here. One is to create a narrative too quickly. Appropriate narratives should be developed over time as we try to cope with a situation. We don’t need to imitate someone else’s testimony, for example, someone who may have said, “I became Christian in order to face this tremendous disaster.” It is important to be able to say, “I don’t understand,” when you are not ready to create a narrative. Another risk is to finalize the narrative. It’s okay to rewrite a narrative as you realize the need to refine or change it.

Encourage peers to share their stories

A pastor at one of the retreats put together a collage entitled “Lighthouse of Evil.” The pastor then said, “I am an evil pastor because I wasn’t able to rescue people from the tsunami—and I can’t even bring myself to sympathize with those who survived.”

As a professional counselor, I replied, “It is quite normal for a person like you, who narrowly escaped from a horrible disaster, not to be able to sympathize with others. You have been severely damaged by the experience as well.” To that, he just said, “Is that so?” I wasn’t sure if he understood.

After dinner that evening, he shared the same story with fellow pastors around the table. Another pastor from the disaster area replied, “Yes, I feel exactly the same. I can’t sympathize with tsunami survivors, either.” At that moment, the first pastor’s face lit up and he said, “Oh really? Thank you for telling me!” I felt that my advice as an expert had no impact on him, while his fellow pastor’s words really reached into his heart. I was glad he was relieved, but it also made me realize my limitations and the power of peer counseling. Providing a logical solution to a problem does not always solve the problem. Peers who have had similar experiences and then share their stories seem to be able to help each other process trauma more effectively.

I have found the above three insights to be crucial in caring for disaster workers. The Christian community is a quite fitting place for these three things to happen. So my hope is that, in the upcoming process of recovery, the Christian community will work to deepen and promote this type of care.



An example of a collage

Sharing the Challenges of Holistic Ministry Looking Ahead to JCE6 Kobe in 2016

General Secretary, Japan Evangelical Association

Challenges and Lessons Learned from the 3.11 East Japan Earthquake Disaster

As the leader of the most devastated denomination, Rev. Keiichi Mori from the Conservative Baptist Association shared his experience in gathering information and coordinating relief operations during the critical days right after the disaster.

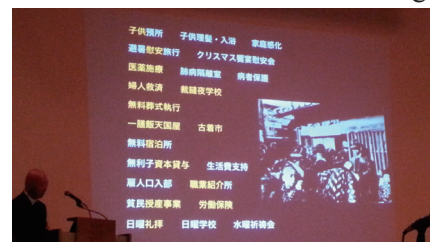
Rev. Makoto Suzuki shared what he learned from serving in various Tohoku disaster areas and proposed *Sensho* (mission through witness) as an alternative ministry framework—in contrast to conventional *Senkyo* (mission through teaching). Overall, the session presented multiple views on the holistic challenges that churches in Japan are facing.

In 2016, Kobe will serve as the venue for JCE6 (the Sixth Japan Congress on Evangelism). This event will bring together 2,000 church leaders and lay people to

第28回日本福音同盟総会

Plenary speakers and JEA leaders

Kagawa (Rev. Toyohiko Kagawa's grandson and the director of Kagawa Memorial Museum). Rev. Toyohiko Kagawa (1888-1960) started his ministry in deprived areas of Kobe and developed innovative and holistic ministries to empower the poor. Mr. Kagawa acknowledged that Rev. Kagawa's ministries weren't free of faults, but from them we can learn a passion for living out the gospel in concrete ways that can make a significant difference in the lives of those who are suffering. The underlying principle behind all of Kagawa's social ministries was "sharing pain," following the model of Jesus as he lived among people.



Special lecture on Rev. Kagawa

Among all of the devastated areas, Fukushima is faced with the most difficult challenge of all—radiation. The JEA Mission Forum in Fukushima will take place November 18-19 in Koriyama City to listen to the voices of Fukushima churches and to stand together in solidarity. Many pastors and relief workers seem to have symptoms of compassion fatigue. The need for emotional and spiritual care is great. Please pray for churches in Fukushima as they face the radiation challenge and minister to the people of Fukushima with the love of Christ.

At the closing worship service, JEA board member Rev. Tatsuro Naito challenged us to rethink the gospel message as evangelical Christians. From Genesis 1:26-28, he pointed out that God has entrusted the whole earth to us and the purpose of our salvation through Jesus is not only to save us, but to fulfill the task of subduing and managing the whole earth. This includes social issues, energy issues, political issues, and so on. The priority of saving souls never changes, but spiritual transformation needs to go further. As a transformed community, we need to engage the whole range of issues around us and be catalysts of transformation. This is the holistic challenge we face.

NEWS and NOTES

Summaries translated from selected *Christian Shimbun* articles - May to August 2013

DV Prevention Activity as Mission

Every year, 706,000 couples get married in Japan, while 251,000 marriages break up. Domestic Violence (DV) is the second biggest reason for divorce. In 2011, Kayomi Kurihara, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of STEP, an NPO for women's rights, started a DV education program for abusers.

She says, "If DV abusers learn to change the beliefs behind their emotions, then their actions, emotions, and physiological responses will change. As a result, they will stop shouting, kicking and hitting."

In the program, abusers learn to get rid of their belief that their partner "must do or must be..." We all have an ideal image of our partner and the gap between the ideal and the reality often causes anger to be directed toward the partner. So removing, one by one, each "my

wife/husband must do/be..." is the main process of this program. One of the abusers used to become violent when he found rotten food in the refrigerator. However, once he was able to think "I can let my wife be concerned about the refrigerator," he did not get furious any longer. He simply asked, "May I throw this away?" when he found rotten chicken in the refrigerator. For the first time, his wife responded, "I'm sorry."

Initially, Kurihara participated in DV counseling and shelter activities for victims, but she found that the real solution was to be found in DV education for abusers. The STEP program is originally from the USA, but has been adapted for use with the Japanese. There are many Christian staff, and Kurihara uses phrases from the Bible in the program. This leads some clients to church and some to faith. "Since the activity of STEP is a religious outreach, the prayers and support of Christians has been a great help. I will dedicate myself to my clients here as Mother Teresa did in Calcutta," Kurihara says.

Regional Christian Associations Spreading

Kurisuchan Todoufukenjinkai — associations of Christians from the same region — have convened various area gatherings. These offer good opportunities for Christians from the same district to develop stronger ties and broader networks.

Since the beginning of 2012, the Hokkaido, Tohoku and Kanto district associations have gathered. Then in May of this year, "A Gathering for People who Love the Chubu District" was held at Ochanomizu Christian Center in Tokyo.

Rev. Toshio Nagai (J.Clay Mission Network) of Nagano prefecture (which is in the Chubu district) gave a speech in which he talked about the history of Christianity in the Chubu area. He mentioned the work of A. C. Shaw, the missionary who first introduced Karuizawa as a resort, and he emphasized the role of Christian teachers, who significantly influenced school education in Nagano prefecture, known as



"the educational prefecture." Rev. Nagai added, "before we met Jesus, there were great numbers of prayers lifted up by local Christians in our district. The fruit of those prayers will never disappear." Those in attendance joined in prayer for their district and families, and enjoyed the regional specialty, soba — noodles made with buckwheat. Contact: toyoshi@io.ocn.ne.jp

The 4 Points Japan

7Media, a company founded by an Internet missionary, has launched a new website called "The 4 Points Japan" (<http://the4points.jp/>).

When accessed, the site shows four marks, ♥ × + ?, which symbolize the love of God, sin, Jesus Christ, and the choice to live with God.

The site explains, "The 4 Points Japan is a movement to tell you the message of the Bible in a simple way. Andy Game, representative of 7 Media, tied up with The 4 Points UK, and various organizations for young Christians in Japan such as hi-b.a., One Hope Japan, and Japan Campus Crusade for Christ to create the site.

On the page STORIES, students, athletes, artists and other young people share the gospel through their own stories, telling wounded young people "God loves you." They also have various goods for sale and often plan street performances. "We want more people to feel love of God not only through the Internet, but also in relation to local [Christian] communities." Since its start in August 2011, 7 Media has been providing Hope for Living Japan (<http://www.hopeforliving.net/>) in cooperation with various Christian disaster relief organizations serving in Tohoku.

Preparation for the Tokyo Earthquake

Last February, the University of Tokyo Earthquake Research Institute released a [less than comforting] statement, "The probability of an M7 earthquake hitting Tokyo within the next four years is below 50%." As the sense of crisis for the coming Kanto earthquake increases, disaster preparation networks are being initiated in the Tokyo metropolitan area by Kazuyoshi Kurihara of CRASH Japan, a Christian relief organization.

On May 10, the second council meeting of the NHK Disaster Preparation Network was held. (NHK stands for the three cities of Niiza, Higashi Kurume and Kiyose.)

Jonathan Wilson, president of CRASH Japan, shared, "Disaster relief [for Tokoku] has been extensive, but only 1% of the monies given have been spent to reduce the impact of [future] disasters. Every \$1 used on preparedness saves \$7 in response. To focus on disaster preparation has its financial benefits."

Following this, each church shared about their efforts in disaster preparation. Yukio Hanazono of Kiyose Evangelical Free Church shared that they will provide maps to church members and have them mark which evacuation location they will go to, so that when disaster strikes it will be easier to check on their safety.



NEWS and NOTES

Summaries translated from selected *Christian Shimbun* articles - May to August 2013

Pastor Katsuhiro Sugaya of Seikyodan Kiyose Grace Chapel, shared how members of the Seikyodan (Holiness Association) are preparing. "We have divided the area into seven blocks, appointing a leader to check the safety of each group. We also have prepared packs of emergency food that can feed 500 people for three days, which has been divided and stored in four churches in the Kanto area. Kiyose Grace Chapel is one of those churches."



Pastor Taizo Morimoto of Kurume Christ Church said "We have an escape route map in the church, in case the earthquake hits on a Sunday." Concerning the rice cookers and grills they have for use at summer festivals: "At times of disaster, we hope to use them to provide food for the people." The church also has four cases of bottled water, which "is enough to go around at times of need."

Kurihara proposed creating a face-to-face disaster preparation community. "If pastors and members, who are walking distance from one another, will meet face-to-face and build a network, they can become a window to outside help during times of disaster. In order to play a part in the whole town's disaster management plan, cooperation with the government and local community is crucial as well."

In the three cities of Niiza, Higashi Kurume and Kiyose, there are around 30 churches, of which 10 or so have joined the disaster preparation network. Five churches from Ueno, Tokyo have also joined the network.

Tohoku Tracts

Three local pastors in Tohoku provided the inspiration for three new evangelistic tracts. Having experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake first hand in 2011, these pastors wanted to produce the tracts to meet the specific needs of people persevering in the slow recovery process. New Life Ministries (NLM) published the tracts in 2012 and distributed them for free in the disaster area.

"Scripture Verses That Will Sustain You" (あなたをささ



える聖書のことば) is a collection of biblical passages, based on an idea by Pastor Yuki-kazu Otomo. A Scripture verse is printed in a large font on the right hand page,

and on the left hand side, the same verse is printed in pale ink. You can trace the pale letters and read a short explanation of the verse. The Japanese are familiar with tracing letters. Besides, the tract gives lonely people something useful to do.

Pastor Hiroshi Minegishi's passion for making God the Creator known to local people, has come to fruition in "The Seven Days of Creation" (創造の7日間). "People here typically go to a Shinto shrine to pray for safety. We need to show more widely what the Bible says about who God is,"

reasons Minegishi.

The True Bond (本当の絆) is a short reflective message by Pastor Nobuyoshi Nagai. It begins by demonstrating how God created us to live not alone, but in fellowship with others. Exploring the most important bond in life, Nagai concludes that Jesus is the true bond between God and each of us.

The NLM plans to publish a second series of Tohoku tracts based on the input of pastors in Fukushima Prefecture.

Urgent Prayer Meeting for Japan before the House of Councillors Election

Among the points of contention in the 23rd House of Councillors election, which was held on July 21, are several proposed constitutional amendments. It is expected that steps toward adoption of these constitutional amendments may move forward at a rapid pace, depending on the strength of those forces who are for the amendments. With this crisis at hand, on July 12 forty-seven Christians from various denominations gathered to pray before the House of Councillors election. Organized by the JEA Social Issues and Religious Liberty Commission, thus "Urgent Prayer Meeting for Japan: facing the crisis of constitutional amendments" was held at the Ochanomizu Christian Center in Tokyo.

"In forty-three years of ministry, this is the first time we have had an urgent prayer meeting in relation to elections. This is no ordinary matter," said Rev. Hironao Watanabe (Chair of JEA Social Issues and Religious Liberty Commission), as he began his sermon.



He also said he was shocked when he read the Liberal Democratic Party's constitutional amendments draft, as it "completely denied the constitution of Japan. The Abe administration is leading toward the prewar state of wealth and military strength. I felt the [draft] was denying all post-war achievements and returning Japan to its prewar state."

He emphasized that "the time to fight for our faith, as Mordecai and Esther did, has come. We are alive for such a time as this (Esther 4:14). As Christians, we must first appeal to God in prayer. Then, we must do our utmost to go to where our Lord has guided us."

At the study meeting to explain the LDP's draft, Rev. Takuya Hoshide (member of the JEA Social Issues and Religious Liberty Commission and pastor of Presbyterian Seibu Yanagisawa Christ Church), said "The aim of these amendments is to shift us from 'a nation that exists to protect each person's rights,' to 'a group of people that exist to protect the nation's system.'"

He went on to say that as a Church facing such a situation, "We must keep watch so that the authorities do not get out of control. We must ensure they stay loyal to the Constitution, protecting human rights and the dignity of humankind as people made in God's image."

Participants divided into pairs to pray for this situation, and an urgent prayer request was sent to the churches around the world that are members of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA).

Please Pray for Japan

1. That more places of mutual support will be established for pastors to share their experiences and grow together in Christ.
2. That churches in Japan will respond to the holistic challenge in their local contexts, engaging the community and addressing social issues, so that they will be used as catalysts for transformation.
3. That different denominations and church groups will stand together in unity against an increasingly militant and nationalistic government agenda.
4. That God will protect and bless the churches in Fukushima to see hope and to minister to people with Christ's love.

JEA Schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
Nov. 18-19	JEA Mission Forum Fukushima	Fukushima
Dec. 16	JEA Board Meeting	Tokyo
Jan. 21-25	Relief Com. Philippines Visit	Philippines
Feb. 10-11	Asia Mission Forum	Singapore
Feb. 15, 17	3.11 Theological Symposium	Tokyo

Editorial

Japan is known for its low crime rate and high suicide rate. Suffering and anger are often internalized. One of the critical issues in the evangelization of Japan is the increasing number of pastors leaving the ministry due to depression and emotional problems.

The feature article deals with the challenge of creating a community that reflects the character of Jesus Christ, in which those who hurt are healed and grow together in Christ. This kind of endeavor seems to work best in inter denominational settings in Japan, probably because Japanese pastors wear the aid/provider role like a suit of armor. As professor Fujikake pointed out. It is hard for them to take that off among the people of the same denomination.

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will restore those pastors and also change the spiritual atmosphere of churches in Japan.

Kenichi Shinagawa, Editor in Chief

<http://jeanet.org/>

Japan Update

Autumn 2013 - Number 66

English Newsletter of the
Japan Evangelical Association (JEA)

Chairman : Nohsei Ando
General Secretary : Kenichi Shinagawa

Japan Update is published biannually by the JEA. Through Japan Update, the JEA seeks to disseminate information about the Japanese church in order to stimulate Christians around the world to pray and work together for the advancement of God's kingdom in Japan. Views expressed by individual authors do not necessarily reflect official JEA positions. Japanese names appear in Western order (surname last).

Permission to reprint is granted, but please give credit and send one copy of any publication containing reprinted material to the editor.

Japan Update Staff

Editor in Chief	Kenichi Shinagawa
Asst. Editor	Atsuko Tateishi
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
Email adminoffice@jeanet.org
Website <http://jeanet.org/>

Subscription:

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

