

# Japan Update

Spring 2014 Number 67



*Retreat camp for Fukushima children*

## REALITY IN FUKUSHIMA

from keynote speech at JEA Mission Forum in Fukushima

If you come to Fukushima today, you probably feel that things are mostly back to normal. But underneath the superficial appearance, there are unspoken feelings. I would say there are three keywords that illustrate the reality in Fukushima—they are “anxiety,” “division,” and “numbness.”

The first keyword, “anxiety,” comes from the uncertainty that nobody knows if it’s really all right to live here or not. Some people say “Yes, it is all right to live here.” Especially people on the government side say so. They try to reassure us by saying “As long as you’re eating what’s sold in the market, you’re okay.” But it’s human nature to feel more worried as we’re told “It’s okay.” Other people say “It’s dangerous to live here. We should evacuate.” The same thing has been said repeatedly since right after the nuclear power plant accident. I thought to myself, “Which opinion is really true?” I wanted to hear some opinions from the middle ground, but haven’t heard any up until now. People who say, “It’s dangerous,” keep saying that continuously and people who say, “It’s okay,” keep saying that as well. Nobody can say which is really true. There is no way to come to a



*by Keiji Kida*  
*Chairman,*  
*Fukushima Christian*  
*Council*  
  
*Pastor,*  
*Koriyama Christ*  
*Evangelical Church*

conclusion.

Second, there is the issue of “division.” Since there are two opposing opinions about the effects of radiation, people are inevitably divided depending on which opinion they believe. The division happens even within the same family. The situation was really bad right after the nuclear power plant accident. Fights between husbands and wives occurred in many families. The wives wanted to evacuate with their children right away, while we husbands could not decide so fast. What do I do about my job? Will we be able to earn living if we evacuate? These thoughts made it difficult for men to make decisions. Every night husbands were blamed for not making decisions and constant fights occurred within households. That seemed to be the typical

### Inside

Reality in Fukushima 1-2

Interview: My Grace is  
Sufficient for You 3

Book Review: Nuclear Power  
Plants and Our Responsibility 4

Report: JEA Mission Forum in  
Fukushima / Art Exhibit 5

News and Notes 6-7

Prayer/Editorial 8

pattern those days.

There is division between the elders and the young people as well. I am fifty seven years old now, so if I were to get cancer twenty years from now, I would be seventy-seven. If it were thirty years from now I would be eighty-seven. Either way, nobody would know if the cancer came from the effects of the nuclear power plant accident or from just getting old. At that age, I don't think I would worry about it too much. So I can eat this and that because of my age. But in the case of young couples with three- or four-year-old children or elementary school age children, thirty years from now those children will be in their thirties, working and raising their own children. If the effects of radiation impacted their lives then... It's impossible to remain calm with thoughts like that in mind. This kind of division is a big issue among people in Fukushima.

There is division also among the people in temporary housing. Kawauchi village has issued a return declaration, which means the decontamination work is completed and the village is ready for people to come back. But there are elderly people who cannot go back because there is no hospital in the village. Other elderly people have told me they had to move from one evacuation center to another so many times, and at some places there were hot spring baths and warm meals while at other places they got cold lunch boxes everyday.

These are some of the divisions in both emotional stress and varied living situations among people in temporary housing.

The third keyword is "numbness." More than two years have passed since the earthquake disaster, and I feel our senses have become numb in many ways. I am walking without any protection in places where people in Tokyo would not dare to enter. We have gotten used to living in this radiation contaminated environment, and our senses have become numb in order to avoid worry. It is so tiring to worry about radiation effects in everyday life day after day. It is probably the protective function of our mind to become numb so that our mind does not break, but that does not change the physical harm of radiation. Everybody knows that but in order to continue living in this place you need to develop this numbness in yourself. This is the reality of Fukushima these days.

Despite all the difficult situations I think there are

blessings for us as a church. I have been really blessed by joyful and intimate fellowship with people from other churches with whom I've had no previous relationship. I feel this has been a wonderful blessing from

God for me, especially because our denomination does not have any churches outside of Fukushima. Without these interdenominational relationships and support from outside, we would not have been able to do anything.

Another blessing is that through relief ministries, the church is now welcomed by the people in local communities. Before the disaster, the church was seen as an outsider. But now, when we visit temporary housing areas, we are welcomed and some people call us "Kirisuto-san," meaning people of Christ. This has never happened before. It is truly a big harvest resulting from relief ministries that we are able to go into places we could not enter before.

These blessings give us some hints about what we should do as we think about the future of mission and ministry in Fukushima.

I would like to present three action points that are important for us now. First, we, as churches in Fukushima, need to start some collaborative projects to help in the recovery and rebuilding of Fukushima. Since the disaster in March 2011, our main task has been sharing information. By sharing information with each other, we have connected organizations and churches and helped various projects take place. But now I feel the reality of Fukushima in front of our eyes, demanding us to act together.

Second, I think we need to build mature friendship among Christian groups. We have been broadcasting evangelical radio programs in Fukushima for many years. After the 3.11 disaster there was a church in Gunma which received a large amount of relief funds from Germany and started an evangelical radio program in Fukushima without knowing our radio programs. So those people came to me later and apologized. I said to them that it's okay because more people would be able to listen to the gospel as a result. They were very glad and even sent us some funds. We should acknowledge our differences and respect each other rather than reject or criticize each other.

Third, there is a pressing need to come up with some practical ways to continue sustainable ministry in Fukushima. Pastors in Fukushima have been running continuously in emergency mode ever since the 3.11 disaster. We all realize this cannot continue forever. I feel we are coming to a point where we need to slow down and think about how to continue this ministry in a more sustainable way. There is an open door for the gospel and we need to pray for God's guidance and discuss together how to proceed from here in this forum.



*Organizing an event at temporary housing*



*Radiation monitoring post by government. The measurement is often lower than individual counter.*



## My Grace is Sufficient for You

by *Shoko Kuba*

*Pastor's wife, Hokushin Calvary Church, Fukushima City;  
Part-time nurse, Fukushima Prefectural Medical College  
Hospital*

Excerpts from Shoko Kuba's testimony, published two years after the triple disaster in "Recounting That Day, That Time in Fukushima"

### Friday, March 11

My shift was over at 2 p.m. as usual. For some reason, I lingered in the staff lounge of the outpatient department, taking a leisurely lunch.

At 2:46 p.m. the devastating earthquake hit. I rushed to the outpatient area. In order to keep the patients safe, I called out to them to stay away from the light fixtures and walls. Then I remained with them until the quake had subsided.

It was nearly evening when I was finally able to talk to my husband on the phone. He said, "Everybody is safe. We are at the church. The church building is okay, too."

At 7 p.m. that evening Shoko attended an outpatient staff meeting. Then she headed back to the church by car, normally a drive of thirty minutes. That evening it took six hours. (Later she recalled feeling at times in the middle of the emergency as if she were watching a TV drama.)

### Tuesday, March 15

I don't remember exactly when I learned about the explosion of number one reactor at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant. Probably I first learned of it in the hospital on the 15th. On the same day I also saw on a television in the hospital that the number 3 reactor had exploded the day before. I remember our conversations among the co-workers, "What will happen next? We should be all right, shouldn't we? We are 60km away, after all." While I felt uncertain about the future, I also had assurance that God would protect us.

### Thursday, March 17

The fuel supply was getting short. So I obtained permission from my supervisor to be late for work and come by bus. My usual thirty minute drive became a three hour bus commute.

Shoko's reflections from around the second anniversary of the disaster

### A Sense of Support

The morning was windy and sleety. I had started commuting to work by bus about three days before. Holding an umbrella, I hurried to the bus stop. As I tried hard not to get wet, I fell into depression. I imagined the icy rain absorbing radioactive particles from the air, and now falling full of contamination. It was drenching ev-

erything. "What are we going to do?" I cried to myself.

Some raindrops fell from my umbrella onto my shoulders. I shook them off in despair. At that moment, a Scripture verse suddenly flashed into my mind. "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). I felt as if I was being lifted high up into the sky, looking down upon the Tohoku region from over the sea. All across Japan, the sky was clear. The Tohoku region was full of lush green and blooming flowers. Only Fukushima had a dark shadow over it. And yet, I saw God's grace filling the bright scenery of Japan—even the dark shadow over Fukushima! His grace was being poured out equally upon the entire country. Since that day, this Scripture verse has given me strength.

### Battles Against Radiation

No longer could children be seen playing in the parks of Fukushima. All play was indoors. We took great care in selecting what to eat. We thoroughly washed all produce, cooked it until it was almost tasteless, and made sure the cooking water was discarded afterwards. Such was our custom in the early days. It required enormous amounts of water. It took so much energy and time that I soon was exhausted. The simple acts of breathing and eating became continual battlegrounds. Every aspect of life turned stressful.

Around the third anniversary of the disaster, Japan Update (JU) conducted a Skype interview with Shoko.

**JU:** How have you been coping with everyday stress up until now?

**Shoko:** Remembering 2 Corinthians 12:9 has never failed to strengthen me every time something has gotten me worried. In the midst of anxiety, I rely on the firm conviction at the bottom of my heart that God is good. As the radiation level has come down, and the decontamination work has progressed, I feel less stressed about the radiation. Of course, after three years of living in uncertainty I often feel tired. I tell myself that I am also a disaster victim. I gratefully accept help and try not to work too hard.

**JU:** Please tell us your utmost wish right now. How can we, living outside of Fukushima, help make that wish come true?

**Shoko:** Please remember the situation in Fukushima. Pray for us. When possible, come and see for yourself. Pray that the people of Fukushima, children in particular, will be protected from any radiation-related health damage such as thyroid cancer. Pray for the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the workers at the nuclear power plant and the people living in temporary housing, that they would be able to move forward into the future. My hope is that Fukushima (福島 – Lucky Island) will become Fukuin no Shima (福音の島 – Gospel Island), where people will discover the True Light and be saved.



Shoko and her family

## Nuclear Power Plants and Our Responsibility

JEA Theological Commission Booklet #7

by *Takashi Tsutada*

*Professor, Immanuel Bible Training College;  
JEA Theological Commission member*

The JEA Theological Commission has published a collection of essays on nuclear power generation that has been released as Volume 49 of The 21st Century Booklet Series published by Word of Life Press Ministries. Although it is too early to come to a theological conclusion on this issue, as bearers of the gospel we need to examine this matter from various points of view.

Rev. Yoichi Yamaguchi, who majored in history, wrote on “Nuclear Power Plants and our Historical Responsibility.” After explaining how Japanese society has believed in a “safety myth” and accepted nuclear power generation for “peaceful” use, he notes with regret that if Japanese churches had been “as wise as serpents,” we would have seen through all the betrayals and lies and not been manipulated by flowery slogans. Yamaguchi suggests that now we have a historical responsibility to protest against the forces that are again promoting the use of nuclear power plants.

Rev. Yoshiyuki Muchiki entitled his thesis, “Thoughts on nuclear power plants from the phrase ‘subdue the earth’ (Genesis 1:28).” Muchiki proposes that in God’s statement “subdue the earth,” he was not giving human beings permission to abuse their authority just to pursue their own interests. Rather, he has entrusted human beings with the responsibility to maintain the order of this world, God’s creation. Muchiki suggests we need to reconsider all nuclear-related technology: atomic nuclear operation, radioactive waste treatment, accident management, and environment observation systems. The development of his thesis is based upon the Book of Genesis.

Rev. Yuji Sekino mentions in “Nuclear Power Plants and Christianity from the View of Natural Science,” that not only in regards to the use of nuclear power plants, but whenever modern science goes forward, we are asked about “God’s realm,” which human beings must not invade. This is an alarm that in this world, there is always a sacred area into which human beings should not enter. On the other hand, without biblical observations, this kind of alarm describes the natural world as only an obscure menace. Christians are expected to stand between faith in the Creator and a healthy understanding of this world that was made by the Creator. Sekino points out that nature and its phenomena may be explained by the laws of modern natural science. However, only considering those laws makes the natural world a closed system. Though the Bible accepts those laws, it does not agree that the natural world is

controlled only by those laws. There is always room to accept, for example, supernatural phenomena—an open view of the world that allows intervention by God. If we take nuclear power plants as the topic of discussion and are against them only on the basis of a closed system—for example, the conservation of nature—we are in danger of not considering all of the necessary angles. Sekino concludes that the view of the world that Christians should seek is a view toward nature that allows for a Creator.

The article “Nuclear Power Plants and Human Greed” was written by Yoshiki Saito, who specializes in Christian counseling. He does not think nuclear power plants themselves are the products of human greed, but thinks that human desire, which expects endless profits from them, must be questioned. An inquiring mind is a gift from God. But when we are alienated from the Gift-giver, while our endless desire still motivates us, problems arise. If such motivation causes too much expectation

for special energy and we are dependent upon it, it is time to listen to the alarm of the Lord.

Rev. Tatsuro Naito tries to approach this theme from an engineer’s point of view (Naito once designed radio equipment) in “Thoughts on Nuclear Power Generation about which Churches Should Be Concerned.” He gives concrete and meaningful suggestions to politicians,

researchers, engineers and local governments. The most interesting part of his thesis, however, is his question to evangelical churches: “How seriously have we worked to maintain this world created by God?”

Working hard in mission does not justify neglecting our social responsibility. If that is true, now we must seriously consider Naito’s question.

“Views of Churches in the US and UK toward Nuclear Power” by Rev. Don Schaeffer presents various positions in regards to nuclear power plants that have been argued in western societies. Schaeffer says no matter which opinion they take, Christians are asked to behave like “salt and light.”

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami happened just when the Theological Commission was engaged in a comprehensive study of faith and science. It was quite natural for the members to turn their attention toward problems related to nuclear power generation. It is especially meaningful at this time to gather a collection of essays on this subject. The next time we use electric power as we switch on a light, perhaps we will be drawn into some theological reflections on this topic.

(translated from JEA News No.44, September 2013)





## JEA Mission Forum 2013 in Fukushima

## Mission Living with FUKUSHIMA

by *Kenichi Shinagawa**General Secretary, Japan Evangelical Association*

The JEA Mission Forum 2013 in Fukushima was held November 18 and 19, 2013 in Koriyama, Fukushima. About 150 participated. Two-thirds were from outside of Fukushima, which indicated the high interest and concern about Fukushima among the churches in Japan. The forum was co-hosted by the FCC (Fukushima Christian Council) and the JEA Mission Commission.

The theme was “Mission Living with FUKUSHIMA”(フクシマと生きる宣教). The name FUKUSHIMA was written in katakana (フクシマ), which is often used to write foreign words in Japanese, instead of the usual Chinese characters (福島). FUKUSHIMA in katakana implies the suffering and whole situation of Fukushima after the nuclear power plant disaster that made the name FUKUSHIMA to be known internationally. So the theme “Mission Living with FUKUSHIMA” means our mission of living and ministering with the difficult reality of Fukushima.

In the session titled “Hearing the Voices of FUKUSHIMA,” pastors and relief workers in Fukushima shared testimonies from their experiences. Rev. Takuo Takahashi of Aizu said that he was not sure if distributing relief materials two years after the disaster was really helping survivors. But when one old lady in temporary housing thanked him with a broken voice for his visit, he realized how lonely these people were feeling as time passes and less and less people come to visit.

Rev. Masaru Asaoka, general secretary of Fukushima Hope Project, examined church involvement in Fukushima through four marks of the church:

- one,
- holy,
- catholic,
- and
- apostolic.

He challenged churches in Japan as a whole to

walk along with churches in Fukushima just as Jesus instructed us to go in pairs in Mark 6:7.

Rev. Ryutaro Suematsu, chair of the JEA Mission Commission, pointed out that when we try to be Good Samaritans as in Jesus’ parable, we find ourselves incapable of becoming a true neighbor. That is the reality of the human condition in Fukushima as well. But it is God himself who groans for our sufferings, and our only solution is Jesus Christ who is the ultimate source of compassion and justice.

The forum served not only as a place to discuss issues but also as a place to listen to God’s voice in the midst of sufferings and hardships in Fukushima.



150 participants gathered for the forum

## Participating in God’s Work of Recreation

by *Eisuke Kanda**President, Friends with the Voiceless International*

Japan experienced a great tragedy in 2011—an earthquake, tsunami, and especially in Fukushima, a nuclear plant explosion.

FVI (Friends with the Voiceless International) chose to focus their disaster work on partnerships with churches in Fukushima since they were facing the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and radiation.



With the prayer that God’s Kingdom will come to Fukushima, we have been working together with church leaders to hold several Fukushima Future Forums. An art workshop is planned as Fukushima Future Forum #5.

God is the Artist who created a beautiful world at the beginning of history, and he will create a New Heaven and a New Earth at the end of history. God who is at work today is calling his people to participate in his work to bring in his Kingdom.

In November 2013, nine artists (including specialists in oil, water, picture book paintings, glasswork, and poetry) who wished to participate in God’s work in recreating Fukushima, visited tsunami sites and the restricted zone within 4km of the nuclear plant (while wearing protective gear). We wanted to listen to God, because we believe that God is speaking his message at this very moment. We need to have ears to hear now, and in the age to come.

As artists, we would like to share God’s important message in a way that words are unable to describe.

Title: We are born at this very special time

Let us remember Fukushima

Sponsored by: Friends with the Voiceless International

Supported by: Japan Lausanne Committee and Bible & Art

Location: Iwaki City Culture Center 3F

Date: March 8–13 (Saturday–Thursday)

contact e-mail: acekanda@karashi.net

## Supporting Iwate from Chiba

### The United Project: Becoming an NPO to continue support

Soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake, members of a church in Chiba started the “United Project”(UP) to help in disaster relief. In September 2013, they became an NPO in order to continue relief work. The inaugural meeting was held on September 21, where reports on the relief work and prospects for the future were shared.

UP consists mainly of volunteers from International Bible Fellowship (IBF) of the Japan Evangelical Covenant Church. In conjunction with the 3.11 Iwate Church Network—a disaster relief organization—they have sent over 300 volunteers. Michio Nagata serves as their long-term local staff.

Director Mark Tan reports, “During the first year, our work was providing for needs and doing physical work, such as repairing buildings. During the second year, our work focused on caring for the hearts of the people. Now, I feel we are in a new phase. Though the numbers of volunteers are decreasing, the needs of the local people are still present. There must be things that only those who are far from the disaster area can do. We want to discuss next steps and continue in this work.”

Yoshiya Kondo of Morioka Bible Baptist Church, Conservative Baptist Association of Japan, said “Through relief work, we got to know people who did not know any churches or Christians. Again and again, we have heard of those who have come to know Christ. It is said that the restoration work is proceeding at a very slow pace. Yet the restoration work of God is continuing with no rest. I plead with you churches, you who have been given this task, to stand firm in the disaster area.”

To meet needs in the disaster area, UP is considering a children’s development project and a medical and welfare project. To support this work, one can donate, volunteer or become an affiliate member.

Email: [jimukyoku@unitedproject.jp](mailto:jimukyoku@unitedproject.jp)

Web site: <http://unitedproject.jp>



## Dementia Care

With the progression of Japan’s declining birthrate and aging population, the care of people with dementia has become an issue in the church. The “Gathering Aiming to Become a Church that Lives Alongside Disabled People” (“The Almond Society”) was started by the Saitama District of the United Church of Christ Japan. The Society held its nineteenth gathering at Saitama Wako Church in Wako city on September 23. A care worker and two individuals involved in caring for



their families spoke from their experience. Yasuo Kojima, Facilities Director of Kawagoe Kings Garden gave counsel as an advisor.

Fumio Sakuma, welfare care worker and Chairman of Tasukeai Net shared:

“The seemingly abnormal behavior of people with dementia has meaning. This is because such behavior is an expression

of that person’s life up until now.” He also said that it is not unusual for wives to be overburdened because of a lack of help from their husbands, who are busy at work. “To get men involved, just saying it’s hard work will not do. You must be rational and specific,” he explained.

Kojima pointed out that there is no place where the caregiver can “speak her heart.” He introduced some examples of discussions conducted at their facility and said “It would be good if there were places within the church in which a person can speak without being criticized, but rather find sympathy.” He then quoted from Romans 12:15, encouraging the church to be a place where we “rejoice with those who rejoice.”

A time for discussion and answering questions was held in the afternoon, after which Sakuma closed the meeting with the words, “Rather than ‘kindergarten’ the church’s focus will now be on ‘elders garden.’”

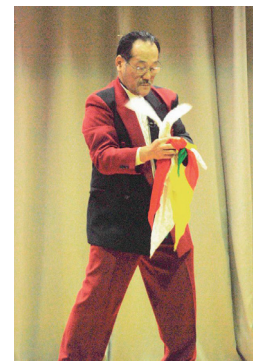
## Kaiku Katoh, Gospel Magician

Kaiku Katoh had always wanted to go out into the world to be the fragrance of Christ in Japanese culture. Years ago, when his wife was invited by a church to perform ventriloquism, he went along. There, someone asked him if he was also a performer of some sort. That question and a providential meeting around that time with a Christian who was a professional magician, triggered him to start learning Gospel magic.

It turned out that magic was a great tool to reach out to local communities. Through his affiliation with an NPO called Japan Children’s Cultural Academy (日本子ども文化学会), Kaiku has been invited to different elementary schools several times a year for the last 15 years. He participates in an open class, typically on a Saturday, as a guest teacher.

In a 45-minute presentation entitled “What Do You See?” he quickly grabs the attention of his audience by producing dove after dove out of a piece of silk fabric. He then teaches three simple magic tricks to the children. During his lesson, he quotes 2 Corinthians 4:18 where Paul speaks about looking not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. He drives home the point that the important things in life often cannot be seen, such as feelings, life, love, words, and happiness.

Gospel magic also takes Kaiku to nursing homes, kindergartens, and nursery schools. God has answered his prayer to be able to go out of the church to where non-believers are.



## KGK Hosts Kibokoku 2

In the wake of the passing of the bill 特定秘密の保護に関する法律 (Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets – commonly referred to as the Secrecy Act), the KGK (Kirisuto-sha Gakusei Kai), an inter-university organization of Christian students, hosted Declaration of Hope Evening 2 (Kibo o kokuhaku suru yoru, abbreviated to Kibokoku) in Tokyo on December 12, 2013.

Two college students and one KGK staff member each discussed the pros and cons of the Secrecy Act. Professor Yoichi Yamaguchi of Tokyo Christian University then stood to preach from the book of Daniel. He exhorted the audience to learn from the way Daniel acted when a harmful law was



enacted in Babylon. He encouraged all to pray fervently and to carefully seek discernment with regard to what is happening today.



The meeting concluded with prayer for Japan and its leaders, for the Church to profess Jesus and hope, and for the abolition of the Secrecy Act. The over 230 attendees

included high school, college, and seminary students. The event was broadcast live on the Ustream Web site and attracted more than 1,000 views.

### Obituaries:

#### Remembering Azuma Konno, former member of the Diet and Rakugo-ka (Comic Storyteller)

"I'm going to be an angel, Mister Angel," Konno wrote in the hospital before he died of DIFP (diffuse interstitial fibrosing pneumonia) in April 2013. On October 23, 2013, fifty-seven of his friends organized "The Memorial Meeting for Azuma Konno" at Japan Christian Hall in Shinjuku Ward. Attendees included members of the Diet, such as former Prime Minister Naoto Kan and Banri Kaieda of the Democratic Party of Japan, as well as refugees who had been supported by Konno, church members, and various other friends. There were too many for the room to accommodate.

Satsuki Eda, former President of the House of Councilors, said "Konno was a great person, as he sincerely served people who badly needed political support. We should carry on his spirit." Rev. Takashi Hoshino, of Sendai Higashi Ichibancho Church related, "DIFP disturbed his breathing so he could not talk. But he peacefully passed away listening to the words, 'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me' (Psalm 23:4).

Shin Sugok, representative of Norikoenet - the International Network to Overcome Hate Speech and Racism, directed some comments toward the late Konno: "Some refugees who have not even been allowed to walk around have sent flowers for the funeral. I respect you as a politician who spoke aloud for the people who could not vote for you and who cried together with them. Thank you for making us laugh until the very last moment, even while fighting this disease." Konno's daughter, Sanami, described Konno: "His disease was tough, but he was always cheerful and making jokes. He wrote a note, 'After I leave the hospital, I will write a book named Great Comedy in the ICU.' He was thankful and showed us so many good things until the very end."



The meeting included food cooked by refugees who had been saved by Konno, and a video presentation of Konno's various stages as a comedian and some of his questions as a member of the Diet. The attendees also observed a moment of silent prayer listening to Konno reading poems of Kenji Miyazawa\* in the Tohoku dialect.

While working for human rights, refugee issues, World

War II compensation, and restoration projects following the Great East Japan Earthquake, Konno also presided over Tohoku Rakugo (Comic Story Telling in the Tohoku dialect) and performed in many charity events for refugees.

*\*Translator's note: Kenji Miyazawa was a famous poet who represented the spirit of the Tohoku district.*

#### Remembering Doctor Masami Hirayama

Psychiatrist Masami Hirayama, pioneer in clinical thanatology, passed away of lung cancer on December 18, 2013 at the age of 75. He devoted himself to the support of local medical care for the mentally ill and to the families of suicide victims.

He was baptized during junior high school and studied at the Yokohama City University School of Medicine. During his college days, a good friend who was suffering from schizophrenia committed suicide. He left a message for Hirayama that said, "Please help people with the same pain." This made a strong impression on Hirayama, and was behind his mission to become a psychiatrist. After teaching clinical thanatology and psychiatry at Jichi Medical School, Hirayama opened Kitasenju Asahi Clinic in Adachi Ward. He strongly believed that continuous relationships with doctors could support clients and stop them from committing suicide.

As chairperson of the board of directors of Siloam Incorporated Medical Institution and while working for his clients at Asahi Clinic, Hirayama developed day care systems, home mental health care support groups, group homes, group workshops, and family groups for the mentally ill. Hirayama also became the chairperson of Support Plaza, an NPO for grief care, and a representative for another NPO that he had started, Jishi Izoku Care Dantai Zenkoku Net, a nationwide network of care groups for the families of suicide victims. In 2008, Hirayama was presented with the Japan Gospel Award for his service in these organizations. Rev. Tokio Satake, who had shared with Hirayama research into mental care using the Bible, said at the funeral,

"Doctor Hirayama was loved by clients because he deeply listened to them and shared their agony. Hirayama knew that the problems of mentally ill clients are complicated and that it is not easy to find clear solutions. That is why he diligently searched the Scriptures for answers. When clients with mental disease are abandoned, Jesus is inaccessible to them. Dr. Hirayama tried to care for these patients with the love of Jesus as revealed in the Bible."

He successively held various posts including the position of professor at Toyo Eiwa University, the director of the Christian Mental Care Center, and the director of the Japan Clinical Thanatology Society. His publications include *Shisei gaku to wa nani ka?*—What is Thanatology? (Nihon Hyoron Sha Co.Ltd), *Kokoro yamu hito ni kyoukai ga dekiru koto*—What the Church Can Do for People with Mental Illness (Word of Life Press Ministries), and many other books.



## Please Pray for Japan

1. That our God will protect and bless the churches in Fukushima to see hope for the future and to minister to people with Christ's love.
2. That churches in Japan will stand together with the churches and people of Fukushima, will continue to pray for mission and ministries in Fukushima, and will send volunteers to live the reality of FUKUSHIMA together.
3. That unity and collaboration among different church groups will grow and churches will be used as catalyst for transformation in society leading to greater peace and justice.
4. That God will raise up the next generation of church leaders who will be bold in advancing God's kingdom and sincere and humble under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

## JEA Schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
August 27-28	JCE6 Program Camp	Kobe
Sept. 29	JEA Mission Forum 2014	Tokyo
Oct. 27	JEA Religious Liberty Semiar	Nagoya
Nov. 24-25	4/14 Window Conference	Tokyo

## Editorial

Devastation by massive earthquakes and huge tsunami are damaging enough, but suffering caused by nuclear power plant meltdowns presents challenges of a totally different dimension. These humanly impossible challenges actually have made us realize the certainty and power of our God's promises, as well as the vulnerability of our own agenda.

Mission Forum in Fukushima revealed that our hope lies not in our human effort and agenda but in the Lord's compassion and His plan to transform this nation. If we believe God placed each of us in this generation for His purpose, we need to repent of our self-reliance and inward looking attitude and seek to follow how our God is advancing His kingdom here in Japan. It is only when we seek the eternal that people will see the true hope and power of Christ through us. Please pray for churches in Japan to stand with churches in Fukushima and become agents of transformation in the midst of suffering.

Kenichi Shinagawa, Editor in Chief



<http://jeanet.org/>

## Japan Update

Spring 2014 - Number 67

English Newsletter of the  
Japan Evangelical Association (JEA)

Chairman : Takao Nakadai  
General Secretary : Kenichi Shinagawa

Japan Update is published biannually by the JEA. Through Japan Update, the JEA seeks to communicate how God is at work in Japan and to foster prayer and collaborative work 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](mailto: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](mailto:adminoffice@jeanet.org).

