



*Exhibition of Tomihiro Hoshino, well-known Christian painter/poet, in Minami-Sanriku town*

## “Lord, I Have Never Done Anything Like This Before”

Reflections on outreach as a result of earthquake relief experience

### A learning experience

The opportunity to spend time with people in fishing communities on the Tohoku Sanriku coast while doing relief work following the 3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake was a learning experience. These people, who carry on a traditional lifestyle in which religion and mutual aid blend together, taught me the importance of building up trusted relationships by understanding not only the local dialect, but also community culture.

As a pastor with such experience, I wondered how was I supposed to minister to the churches and communities for which I was responsible.

### The connection between the world and the Church

Then last summer I happened to receive a message on my answering machine. When I listened carefully it seemed to be from a wrong number. The caller left a message saying “Hello so-and-so, I’m calling about the *bon odori* (Buddhist festival of the dead) that the neighborhood association is responsible for. We’re short of help for traffic control. Could you arrange something for



by **Makoto Suzuki**  
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us?” From time to time over the last few months I had been receiving messages on my answering machine supposedly from one of the officers at the neighborhood association. Since my home and the church are in separate places, the calls I received during the night would be diverted to my answering machine. As a member of the community, and always needing more volunteers myself, I immediately understood that due to the aging of society, the officers in my neighborhood association also were suffering from a lack of personnel.

From this time on, I realized that it was important to make connections with the traditional communities of Tohoku, and it made me wonder how my local community could make connections with my church. In cities there are

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neighborhood associations and residents' associations, but they don't have strong connections to traditional folkways like Tohoku does, and the Church has hardly any connection to paganistic rituals or customs. This made me wonder whether that made the church unconcerned about the local community. Tohoku is currently struggling with the aging of society and depopulation. Cities, although not suffering from an aging society, struggle with the shallowness of relationships between neighbors. Both are struggling to maintain community.

When I considered why I had been insensitive toward the surrounding community, I came up with reasons such as, "Well, our church is too small to consider such things." I realized that the church focused merely on doctrine and not on the fact that the church is a gathering of individuals who believe in Christ.

### My Paradigm Shift

Through my experience with relief work and a call to a wrong number, I reconsidered how we can relate to the community as members of the body of Christ and how I could make church members aware of the church's role in being used to reflect the Kingdom of God in this world. Then it dawned on me. Every Christian organization and Christian church has a desire to do youth outreach, and is racking its brain to come up with a suitable program. One way is to invite youth to wor-



Serving soup for tsunami survivors

ship meetings, but better still would be for youth in the church to make a contribution to the community by joining the local fire

brigade, thereby making proactive connections to non-believers. This would enable them to be channels into the church as well as equip them in spiritual outreach. A church should essentially be a "flock of Christians who have been gathered to be sent out in the world." This means that when church members actively connect to the community (through residents' associations, the fire brigade, gatherings for the elderly, etc.), they are naturally faced with questions such as how to deal with pagan customs and unbiblical issues. For this reason, I would like my church members to be able to think about these things from a theological perspective. I took this opportunity to have a discussion with them on the theme of "sending youngsters and Bible college students to local fire brigades and building connections with residents' associations." We discussed the following points:

**Q1.** Is it meaningful to the church to build connections with residents' associations and for church members join various activities? What are the downsides to this?

**Q2.** What does the Bible teach us about how we connect to the world?

**Q3.** If we become officers of neighborhood associations or residents' associations and happen to have duties on Sunday, how should we view missing Sunday services? What does the Bible teach about this?

**Q4.** We call the above, "thinking from a theological perspective," but what is the difference between faith and theology?

I discussed these thoughts with a group of church members and the pastor at a church meeting. As a result, it was decided in the general church meeting that took place in March, that church policy for 2014 would be to "become a church participating in the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth." Some specific results of this were that from April, two of the church members became chief officers in their local neighborhood association, and the church prays especially for them. Of course, when they have duties that collide with Sunday services, we support them with understanding and prayer. And we have also decided whether it would be possible for Bible college students to join the fire brigade once they have graduated.

We never would have imagined this kind of thing possible considering the customs of our church. As a pastor I asked myself, "Am I leading my church in the wrong direction? Won't church members say we are prioritizing the works of this world rather than the worship service?"

*In Acts 10:9-14, we read these words:*

*<sup>9</sup> About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." <sup>14</sup> "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." (NIV)*

As you know, this is the preface to how Cornelius the centurion, a Gentile, was led to salvation. The Lord showed Peter food that was unclean by Jewish law. Based upon what he had believed up until then, Peter responded by saying "I have never done anything like this."

In the same way, we have been shown the problems that are brought about from the current situation of the church, and the need of a paradigm shift. But whenever we actually try to do something, the thought of us "never having done it before" drains our strength away.

The Bible teaches us how Peter was freed from his fixed way of thinking, and was used to lead Gentiles to salvation. Perhaps in the same way, the Lord is showing us through the experience of doing relief work that we must break the fixed idea of "I have never done this before."



## How to Engage with Rites for the Dead and Traditional Folkways

by **Takashi Yoshida**

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### Introduction: Why This Topic?

When we discuss missions in Japan, and in particular, missions in rural Japan, we must consider how to engage with rites for the dead and traditional folkways. I would like to attempt here to address the topic not in terms of cultural contextualization, as is often done, but in terms of the realities that Tohoku churches have been facing since the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011.

Working in the disaster area where the casualties, including the number of missing people, totaled nearly 20,000, we have learned the crucial importance of burying the victims respectfully and at times in collaboration with ministers of other faiths. What is the meaning of rites for the dead? What is the significance for Christians, and more specifically, for pastors as religious leaders, to be involved in those rites? Through carefully contemplating these questions, I believe new light will be shed upon the topic.

### 1. The Earthquake Disaster and Rites for the Dead: Efforts by Tohoku HELP

The Sendai Christian Alliance Disaster Relief Network (Tohoku HELP) was founded a week after the March 11, 2011 disaster. During those early days, an unexpected question was posed: “Should we somehow pay respect to the deceased?” Later it became clear that this question was asked out of an awareness of the need of survivor care for family members of suicide victims. It was pointed out that if your loved one is suddenly taken away, grieving and giving them a proper burial will help greatly in coping with the loss.

Tohoku HELP and the local Buddhist Association jointly asked Sendai City for permission to minister to the dead. As a result, we were allowed to set up a religious consultancy office in a crematorium, to offer to perform simple funeral rites for free, and to provide free counseling in waiting rooms of the crematorium. The Miyagi Prefectural Association of Religious Organizations embraced the local government’s response. They took the initiative of setting up the consultancy office and approved that the Sendai Buddhist Association and Tohoku HELP would jointly manage the office.

Thus started the Heart Counseling Room in the local crematorium. A Buddhist monk and a Christian minister (Protestant or Catholic) would be available at all times, to advise not only about funeral and burial rites, but also about medical and legal issues. The workers in the Heart Counseling Room agreed to be, first and foremost, ministers of presence for survivors, and never to coerce toward their religion. They would focus on the survivors’ grief care as they participated in rites for the dead. They would keep in mind that this is a joint work with other religions and the local administrative office, and would always treat co-workers with respect. These were the primary guidelines agreed upon by all parties involved in the Heart Counseling Room.

Though the consultancy room in the crematorium was closed in May 2011, the collaborative work was valued so highly that it continued as telephone counseling service. A

radio program was then developed and has been aired until today under the title “Heart Counseling Room.” Another spin-off is the launch of a course at the Tohoku University, funded by donations, to develop clinical religious ministers (chaplains, in the Japanese context).

### 2. Biblical Examples of Rites for the Dead

What does the Bible say about the rites for the dead, and in particular, indigenous rites? Let us examine two representative examples in the Bible. First, we will look at the burial of Jacob, the father of the Israelites. Second, we take up the burial of Jesus.

#### (1) Jacob’s burial

Jacob ended his earthly life in Egypt. Genesis 50 describes his burial in detail. His body was embalmed by Egyptian physicians.



*A survivor mourning for the deceased*

Egyptians mourned, if only for the sake of formality, for 70 days (vv.2-3), sent off the body with great flourish for burial in the land of Canaan (v.9) where a solemn funeral was conducted (v.10)—so much so that the local Canaanites said, “This is a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians” (v.11 NRSV).

This passage does not come across as a record of humiliation in that Jacob, an Israelite patriarch, was buried according to pagan customs. We should rather read it as a record of God’s grace in which a former “nobody” grew in the Lord’s mysterious guidance, to reach the end of his life in a grand manner, at least by earthly standards.

#### (2) Jesus’ burial

Jesus was also buried, quite naturally, in accordance with the Jewish burial customs of the day (John 19:38-42). He was not buried in a “Christian” manner. As a matter of fact, there were no rules regarding Christian funerals at that time, nor has there been up to today. Like the burial of Jacob, the burial of Jesus is also recorded as a praiseworthy event with the bold act by Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43).

### 3. The Whole Gospel

#### (1) Human dignity

The two Scripture passages that we have looked at tell us that the Bible does not stipulate a set of rules for rituals surrounding death. The focus is not on indigenous customs but on the importance of burying the body in a respectful manner. Burying the body with respect allows people to remember the grace of God upon the deceased and to express their appreciation and love for the deceased. In other words, the body is not a mere decaying object, but the visible remains of someone who was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and whose remains, therefore, should be treated with dignity.

#### (2) Comfort to the grieving

When Jesus came across a funeral procession of the only son of a widow, he saw her and had compassion for her. He then dared to touch the casket, which was unclean according to Jewish law (Luke 7:11-14). When Lazarus died and

Jesus saw Martha at a loss and the villagers mourning, “he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” (John 11:33). Jesus went so far as to weep (John 11:35). Here again, Jesus’ primary attention goes to powerless people grieving the death of their loved one. As Jesus feels indignant about the death itself that caused people’s sorrow, he stands close by the grieving people and shows God’s power which overcomes death.

Jesus modeled how to “[r]ejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15 NRSV). Jesus always shared the point of view with those who fell (Luke 10:36). He set his standards of conduct to living out the whole gospel, which seeks to heal human brokenness.

**Conclusion:** Roles of the Church and Christians on Earth (Particularly Ministers’ Roles)

When discussing the roles of the Church and Christians on earth, the emphasis has often been placed on their

prophetic role. Having experienced the earthquake disaster of 2011, God seems to have been teaching us that the priestly role is just as important. As religious ministers, we play the priestly role in remembering the dead, consoling surviving family members, and providing comfort to grieving people who are powerless in the face of death.

Religions engage with people’s souls at the deepest level. If we love people in their entirety, we need to respect their religious faith. Doing so does not necessarily mean categorically endorsing their religion or beliefs. When we are involved in rites for the dead or in traditional folkways, the most important point is where our heart is. I believe that holding such a viewpoint will open the way for religions to serve in the public arena. I also believe that, through actively engaging with rites for the dead and traditional folkways, the uniqueness and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ will be clearly shown.

## Learning to Trust Jesus

by *Yukako Matsuura*  
Social Development Consultant

I grew up in a typical Japanese family that mixed Buddhist and Shinto customs, but I studied at schools with a Christian base. I have to admit that my understanding of the Bible was very poor even after 10 years of study. For a long time I regarded it as a book of moral guidance widely accepted by Westerners. But somehow, the Bible verse “love your neighbor as yourself” caught my teenage heart with its noble spirit. This was around the time when the African continent was suffering from prolonged famine and apartheid. I was upset to see babies dying of hunger on TV and to read about shipwrecks in the ocean with Indochinese refugees while I was safe in a comfortable room. This was why after university I joined an organization to provide development aid. I believed that the world could be better if international cooperation and peace-building assistance were properly provided.



I finally came to rely on Jesus Christ as my personal Savior when I was posted in Afghanistan to support its reconstruction after the 9.11 attacks in the USA. At the beginning, I was excited that development assistance could empower people, and outsiders like the Japanese could be change agents to build trust among Afghans divided by ethnic lines. But within a year, I found myself not being able to trust people working together, let alone love them. I could not control my mouth, behavior, emotions, or mind, and I got tired of my own hypocrisy. Then, by God’s mercy the verse “give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you” (Psalm 55:22) was brought to my attention through a gift calendar from a Christian colleague. I started to read the Bible for the first time to seek God’s message to me, and guided by Christian friends whom I met in Kabul, to know how to give my burdens to the Lord. That was 10 years ago.

I went to Afghanistan hoping to support people in reconstruction of the country. However, in the end I was the one to be encouraged by Afghans with their resilience, hospitality, and kindness. I also came to understand my sin and the love of God poured out upon sinners. Since then, God has

gradually taught me to rely on him through prayer, not on my own deeds. How much and how well I perform is not God’s indicator of success.

Since coming back to Tokyo, in addition to my job I have participated in supporting asylum seekers as well as serving as a volunteer to help homeless people. In both of these areas, there are no quick solutions in our earthly eyes.

Assisting asylum seekers in Japan requires enormous patience when the government is reluctant even to recognize refugees. Last year, only six out of over 3,000 asylum seekers were admitted as refugees. During their wait for a government decision or during an appeal against a decision, asylum seekers have extremely limited access to public support, a job, health insurance, housing, and so on. Cases that are at a dead-end cause me to seriously pray and ask friends in other parts of the world to pray that the Lord would open a way for them.

Likewise, the environment surrounding homeless people is not at all easy. (We should rather call them “houseless” as the Lord is preparing a home for all of us in heaven). So again, ministry volunteers rely on the Lord by praying and spending time with the houseless.

I find myself in the desert in these activities, a place prepared by God where we are truly taken care of by him (Revelation 12:6). In such a desert-like situation, the light of Jesus Christ shines into the conduct of asylum seekers and houseless people regardless of their faith. This is seen as they share food with others and care for each other, as they show their desire to support Tohoku relief, and as they worry about unseen victims in conflicts and disaster affected zones. Indeed, many of them want to help others rather than just to be a recipient. So I want to treat these signs of their love toward others with great care. I feel these open spaces are places where faith in Jesus will grow. I have come to the realization that God does not divide the world, as I did in the past, by creating a dichotomy between developed and developing societies, donors and recipients, and believers and non-believers.

As an aid worker, I used to—and still do unconsciously—value outputs and changes in circumstances. Judging performance through productivity and measurable outputs is so prevalent in my profession. But now I find more value in the process, and more precisely, in each moment I spend with a person as I trust in Jesus’ presence.

## Statement on the National Political Climate and Challenges to Churches in Japan

by **Masaru Asaoka** Director and Charter Member of Association of Pastors

*Against the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets; Pastor, Tokumaru-cho Christ Church*

The current political climate in Japan presents some grave concerns. Nationalism has been on the rise since the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. With Prime Minister Abe assuming office in December 2012, nationalistic ideas have been gaining ground even faster. As a result, the foundation for peace and democracy, which has been built up during the 70-year postwar period, is beginning to be shaken. The current political climate in Japan may be summarized as paving the way toward a Japan that is able to engage in war in partnership with the U.S. under the banner of security. The National Security Council was formed in November 2013. The following month saw the enactment of the Tokutei himitsu no hogo ni kansuru hōritsu (“Specially Designated Secrets Act,” or SDS), overriding the resistance and deep concerns of many people. Then, in April 2014 the cabinet revised the long-standing Three Principles on Arms Exports policy, which was followed in July by a cabinet decision authorizing the exercise of collective self-defense through a reinterpretation of the Constitution. In the meantime, some politicians have been solidifying their connections with State Shinto. In general society, historical revisionists already are rewriting negative events from the past, while racial discrimination and nationalism are beginning to increase.

As we, a group of pastors, saw this development not just as a political and social issue, but as an issue which potentially affects our confession of faith and missional work, we formed Tokutei himitsu hogo-hō ni hantai suru bokushi no kai (Pastors Association Against the Specially Designated Secrets Act) in December 2013. As of today, nearly 600 pastors have joined the Association and are engaged in various initiatives. Historically, some churches in Japan were persecuted by the State for their beliefs during the days of imperial militarism. Around the same period, other churches yielded to the pressure of the state, either compromising or going along with state policy, thereby committing the sin of supporting the war of aggression into Asia and the sin of idolatry by worshiping at Shinto shrines. After World War II, these churches officially repented of their sins. Churches in Japan have since been endeavoring to equip themselves not to commit the same sins. They have also been playing a prophetic and priestly role to speak up to the State. As we view it, the Secrecy Act can be exercised in such a way that the Christian Church is again regarded as a body resistant to state policy. If and when that happens, is your church going to remain silent for fear of sticking out and becoming a target of the state? Or will it keep witnessing as the Lord’s church? The time is here already when the Church is being tested for its true nature.

First, these times will put the Church to test in regards to the authenticity of its fellowship. The Secrecy Act can lead people to fear punishment for accessing “designated secrets,” to cower from opening their mouth to talk, and to become paranoid with suspicion. Worse, it can produce a surveillance society, and unspoken pressure against speaking up against State power. When such a time comes, if believers keep and build authentic fellowship in which people are willing to openly speak truth to each other in the Lord, pray, and support each other, the Church will be tested. When pastors and even lay people begin to be attacked for their faith, authentic fellowship will enable members of the Church to continue to help and support each other.

Second, these times will put freedom of conscience in the Lord to test. The State will extensively investigate the thought background of those who handle “designated secrets” as well as their families, including their religion, ideology, and involvement in political activities. Being a Christian will certainly be an item of interest in any investigation. As the scope of fellowship in a local church often transcends social strata, a church with non-Japanese members might come under government surveillance. In such times, the Church will be asked even more to demonstrate a lifestyle of freedom of conscience in the Lord. Even now, in the midst of the battle against the imposition of rituals relating to the Hinomaru national flag and the Kimigayo national anthem, some Christians in Japan are already going through the test of freedom of conscience.

Third, the times will put the Church’s prophetic role to test. We often hear that the Church should refrain from making political statements, remain politically neutral, and be extremely careful in voicing any political opinion. If such is the general agreement today, what will happen when society becomes more conservative? I am afraid of the Church increasingly withdrawing from the world and huddling out of fear. I believe, however, the time has come when the Church should stand up to be the salt of the earth.

Is the Church, in its prophetic role, bold enough to say “yes” to “yes,” and “no” to “no”? This is a time when preachers are being put to test in the pulpit, and individual Christians are being tested for their lifestyle of integrity in the world.



*Pastors protesting near the National Diet*



## Civil Court Finds in Favor of Plaintiffs in Byun Sexual Harassment Case

On May 27, 2014, the Tokyo District Court affirmed the complaints of four female plaintiffs as victims of sexual harassment, and ordered the defending party, Jae Chang Byun, Senior Pastor of the International Gospel Christ Churches based in Tsukuba City, Ibaraki Prefecture, and the religious corporation Little Shepherd Training Association (hereinafter “LSTA”) to pay damages totaling 15.4 million yen. The defending party has since appealed to the Tokyo High Court.

Upon hearing the decision of the civil case, the Mordecai Group, a support group seeking relief and restitution for damages inflicted by LSTA, posted a statement on its website ([http://www.mordecai.jp/doc/20140527\\_seimei\\_en.pdf](http://www.mordecai.jp/doc/20140527_seimei_en.pdf)). They appreciate “that the Court has handed down an extremely fair decision, as a result of extensive research into the background of the incidents at issue,” and hope that the decision “will set a precedent” in similar incidents in Japan where there is too much of an emphasis on pastoral authority.

## Back to HIS Love: The Lausanne Movement in Japan Symposium

The 3rd Symposium by the Lausanne Movement in Japan was held on June 7 at Ochanomizu Christian Center. The theme was “Back to HIS Love—Aiming to Become a Church That Walks in Faithful Love” with reference to Section IIE of the Cape Town Commitment, “calling the Church of Christ back to humility, integrity, and simplicity.” Issues of relationships and marriages were considered as the speakers looked into how the church should have an impact in this area.

Kiyoshi Mizutani (Associate Pastor of Kasugai Bible Church and former president of Pro-Life Japan) spoke from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. He pointed out that through the Internet, Japanese society has become even more open to lustful desires as he emphasized: “The arrogance of using God-given sexuality in selfish ways, the unfaithfulness that breaks the mutually exclusive relationship of marriage, and the greed that affirms unending desires, are the opposite mindset of humility, integrity and simplicity. And these mindsets can be found within the church.”

He also said regarding young people’s sexual sin that there are three possible outcomes: 1) to fail without knowing it is sin, 2) to sin and therefore leave the church, and 3) to carry on in such a lifestyle without repentance. He then shared, “to bring about repentance, conviction, healing, and to prevent young people from leaving the church, teaching in advance will be effective.”

Chieko Suzuki (Staff of High School Born Againers) shared the current state of high school students from the answers of questionnaires taken by 128 Hi-b.a. students. Mostly, they consulted their friends regarding relationship issues, and what they sought in a listener was someone who: “simply listens” “is not negative,” and “is tight-lipped.” Also, in the act of sharing they felt they could “right wrongs.”

Naoto Yoshimura, a university student with a Christian upbringing said he rarely learned about relationships and

marriage at church. It was probably at a camp he went to as a high school student where he first heard such teaching. Though it helped him deal with his temptations, the once a year teaching at camp was not enough.

“The detail of the teaching is important, but so is the continual support. For this, fellowship at church is useful. With good fellowship, we will be able to talk of many subjects including this one.” He also said, “I want older Christians to be good role models.”

Sayaka Shimotori, who works for an evangelistic organization, said, “as churches have a holy feel, it is hard to discuss sexual issues and battles there. If older Christians will not only talk about the blessings of being married, but also talk of the problems and battles they faced when they were single, then it should be an encouragement and help for those currently facing these problems.”

There were also times of table discussion and presentations from each table.

## The 4/14 Window Movement Starts in Japan

Dr. Luis Bush, who at one time proposed the 10/40 Window, which focused on the mission to reach people living between latitudes 10 and 40 degrees north, was the main guest speaker at the 4/14 Window Leadership Summit on July 2 at Ochanomizu Christian Center, Tokyo. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Bush has been proposing a 4/14 Window movement, which aims to involve children from ages four to fourteen as mission partners. Bush’s supporters in Japan from several churches and mission organizations that focus on children set up a Shimobe (Servant) Committee and held this summit.

At the summit, Bush first mentioned the sobering reality that in Christian church services in Japan, less than 6% of the attendees are under the age of 40. He added that this percentage also has been declining in the US and in Korea. On the other hand, riots, suicide, and a decline in morals have been worldwide trends among youth. “Because of the Internet, the conduct of young people cannot be controlled geographically. We especially need to pay attention to computer games, which have a negative effect on vital areas of the brain and take away young people’s thirst for God,” said Bush.

Bush used young Samuel and Moses from the Bible as examples of youth who were selected to work for God. “The vision of the 4/14 Window is that God can make use of the power of children to transform the world.”

The first national 4/14 Window Japan conference was held on November 24 and 25 near Kawasaki City (in Ota-ku) and more than 500 (including children) participated.

## Establishment of a New Support Group for Christian Families of Suicide Victims

On July 12, 11:00 a.m., a first meeting for Christian families of suicide victims was held at Tokai Bible College, Kanayama, Nagoya City. Ten people attended, packing the room reserved. People came from Okinawa, Hiroshima, Tottori, Shizuoka, and Nagano, with the other five from the local area. Some had attended support groups in their regions, whereas others were first-timers. This was probably the first



gathering in Japan for Christian families of suicide victims.

During the meeting, Mr Hideki Ōhama (Naha Baptist Church, Okinawa Baptist Convention) delivered a message titled “The widow from Nain” and spoke from Luke 7. He shared several points: Christ is a God who understands one’s pain and has feelings. The Bible does not criticize suicide itself. It is treated just like any other death, and the dead are buried. Even Samson, who took his own life is counted as one of the warriors of faith in Hebrews 11. (Of course, we are not trying to recommend suicide.) Reference: G. Lloyd Carr “Fierce Goodbye: Living in the Shadow of Suicide”

After the meeting, the group had lunch together and shared feelings and thoughts that they wouldn’t usually speak of elsewhere—the guilt and disappointment of those left behind, the regret of parents, the pain of children who have lost a sibling, the loneliness of a wife who has been widowed.

The group was named Nain no Kai after the “Widow from Nain.” A second meeting is planned in Nagoya next July. The first meeting just happened to be held in Nagoya, but if it were called Nain no Kai Nagoya, then there are endless possibilities to establish Nain no Kai Osaka, Nain no Kai Tokyo, and Nain no Kai Sapporo. Bereaved families who would like to meet with other people in similar situations just need to take hold of a little courage. There are people in similar situations everywhere.

One person who heard of the meeting and showed up after it had finished, shared with one of the organizers her sadness at losing a church friend to suicide. Not all people may be a “bereaved family member,” but still suffer pain from losing a friend. This link created by God is likely to keep growing. A booklet for families of suicide victims is being translated in cooperation with RBC Ministries.

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### Relief Operations for the Hiroshima Landslide

Yagi City, in Asaminami Ward, Hiroshima Prefecture, where Hiroshima Peace Christ Church (Rev. Takashi Ōtani, Japan Baptist Union) is located, experienced a severe landslide in the early morning of August 20. On September 11, it was reported there were 71 casualties, with 1 person still missing. Rev. Ōtani asked for prayers for the local people. Hiroshima Senkyo Kyoryoku-kai (Hiroshima Mission Network), in cooperation with Japan International Food for the Hungry (JIFH), started relief operations soon after the disaster.

Rev. Hiroshi Horikawa (Mitaki Green Chapel, Japan Assemblies of God) and 20 to 40 volunteers of Kirisuto Kyokai Hiroshima Doshasaigai Shien-shitsu (Hiroshima Landslide Disaster Christian Church Relief Operation Team), which was set up by Hiroshima Mission Network, began relief operations in cooperation with JIFH a week after the disaster. Another Christian church network, Hiroshima-shi Kirisuto Kyokai Renmei (Hiroshima City Christ Church Alliance—chaired by Rev. Yoshitaka Tsukishita, Hiroshima Tobu Church, the United Church of Christ in Japan) also joined them. Some church members lost their cars in the flood and the flood waters rose above floor level at some members homes in Asakita and Asaminami Wards. Rev. Makio Haitaka (Hiroshima Evangelical Free Gospel Church), Chair of Hiroshima Mission Network said, “Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, we have learned that churches must be one team as God’s citizens and give victims holistic care. We hope our

cooperation will be able to encourage victims and help them recover.”

Please continue to pray for survivors and pastors who are serving them with love of Christ in Hiroshima landslide disaster areas.



*Hiroshima Relief Operation Team*

### Heikichi Muraoka: His Faith and Accomplishments The Publisher That Spread the Bible Throughout Japan

Heikichi Muraoka—known as “Muraoka, the Bible Man,” was the father-in-law of Hanako Muraoka, heroine of the NHK TV drama series Hanako and Anne and translator of “Anne of Green Gables.” He established a printing company for Christian publications named Fukuin Insatsu (Gospel Press) in Yamashita, Yokohama. In addition to Japanese publications, he printed Bibles in English as well as Korean, Hindi, and Tagalog.

After working for the American Presbyterian Mission Press in Shanghai, China, Heikichi returned and started working for a company in Yokohama that printed hymn books. In 1883, he was baptized by missionary [George William] Knox at Yokohama Sumiyoshi Church (today known as Yokohama Shiloh Church). In 1894, he became one of the church elders and contributed significantly to the life of the church. In 1898, he established Fukuin Insatsu and went on to print Bibles, hymnbooks, and texts on philosophy and enlightenment.

Thanks to Heikichi’s stern yet sincere character and vitality, he successfully expanded his business, and in addition to the main office in Yokohama established branch offices in Tokyo and Kobe.

In 1919, Heikichi’s third son Keizo married Hanako. Then, in 1922 while the business was still prospering, Heikichi suddenly passed away—leaving Keizo in charge of the business and his fifth son, Hitoshi, as supporting director. The following year, Hitoshi lost his life in the Great Kanto Earthquake along with 70 other Fukuin Insatsu employees. As a result, the company went bankrupt.

Hideo Minegishi, a researcher in modern Japanese literature based in Yokohama, speculated that although it is taboo to use “if” for historical events, if the Great Kanto Earthquake hadn’t occurred and the business-minded Hitoshi (who had studied leading printing technologies in England) had taken over the business after his father’s passing rather than the academic Keizo, the company might have taken advantage of the benefits of *enpon* (a popular cost-cutting method used by the publishing company Kaizosha), and brought significant advantages to the business by undertaking the printing of general publications as well as Christian publications.

The impact Fukuin Insatsu had on the printing of Bibles and Christian literature in Asia and in Japan during this era was massive.

The graves of Heikichi, Hanako, and Keizo are in Kubo Cemetery in west Yokohama.

## Please Pray for Japan

1. That the lessons learned from the experience of Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster will be shared among churches outside of Tohoku disaster areas and transform the ministry and culture of churches in Japan.
2. That every Christian in Japan will respond to the challenge of trusting Jesus in their own sphere of influence—work place, school, local community, family—and be a catalyst for transformation.
3. That churches and Christians in Japan will embrace and follow Christ's way of life expressed in HIS (humility, integrity, simplicity) value.
4. That God will raise up the next generation of Jesus followers who will influence the culture and society with Kingdom values that come from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## JEA related Schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
Feb. 7	JEA Mission Symposium	Tokyo
Feb. 9	NSD Youth Seminar	Tokyo
April 20-24	North-East Asia Reconciliation Forum	Nagasaki
May	JEA Youth Ministry Seminar	Kobe
June 1-3	30th JEA Annual Assembly	Kakegawa

## Editorial

In September 2009, the 5th Japan Congress on Evangelism (JCE5) took place in Sapporo under the theme “Mission Collaboration in an Era of Crisis”. The extent of “crisis” has deepened as a result of the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster and subsequent nuclear power plant disaster. The socio-political climate shift towards militant nationalism is also alarming.

Yet through these crises, we are learning how God is working and touching people's lives outside of conventional church and Christian community. As you see in this issue, we are challenged to think and act outside of our “church box” to reach out for Christ. These lessons need to be shared and applied among churches outside of Tohoku disaster areas in order to advance God's kingdom here in Japan. Please pray for Holy Spirit's leading.

Kenichi Shinagawa, Editor in Chief



<http://jeanet.org/>

## Japan Update

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