

# Japan Update

Spring 2019 Number 76



"Mission & U" Youth Gathering at JEA Mission Forum @ Tokai (photo provided by Christian Shimbun)

## History of Mission Collaboration in the Tokai area



**Samuel Uchimura**

*Pastor,  
Nagoya Shinsho  
Christ Church*

In 1951, a missionary and I joined the Nagoya Christian Council (NCC), which was birthed out of the Stanley Jones Ministry. Most of the NCC members were United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) pastors,

but they welcomed us saying, "We thank you for coming here. Please do your best." I was encouraged by those predecessors to have a bigger vision to evangelize this region. In 1955, I started church planting with the missionary who had joined the NCC with me. Four pastors including myself had started a missional prayer meeting, and we jointly invited crusade messenger Rev. T. L. Osborne to Nagoya. Later we invited Rev. Koji Hon-

da for a 10-day crusade. But the results were not very good despite our efforts. Nagoya was said to be "the valley of the gospel" between Tokyo and Osaka, and that was true. Nonetheless, through those crusades some of the key leaders of following years were saved. The numbers were small but the Holy Spirit worked to save souls.

Two decades after the Nagoya area crusades of the 50s, through the Revival Crusade of 1975 and the Billy Graham International Crusade with Dr. Leighton Ford in 1980, an important legacy was left behind—pastors prayer meetings were formed in each



**Yuichi Kawano**

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Christ Church*

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region and this served as an infrastructure for mission collaboration. In 1987, the first Tokai Congress on Mission and Evangelism was held, and in 1989 a regional fellowship organization for Evangelicals called the Tokai Evangelical Fellowship (TEF) was established.

The formation of the TEF was a significant event for churches in Tokai area. For one thing, we realized that the Tokai region really is “the valley of the gospel.” There is only one church per 20,000 people in Gifu, Aichi, and Mie prefectures. That is far below the national average. We cannot get good results by imitating ministries in the Kanto or Kansai areas. We learned to value realistic collaboration in daily church activities that aims towards multiplying churches rather than throwing large amounts of money and manpower toward hosting big crusades.

One of the key concepts in Tokai-style mission collaboration is being aware of commitment levels.

Level one

Engage in activities with almost no commitment—just gather regularly and network. Get to know each other. This includes regional pastors’ prayer meetings, and regional Christmas and Easter events.

Level two

Engage in activities with a common objective, such as the Tokai Evangelical Broadcasting Network, Tokai Holiness Fellowship, and TEF Earthquake Committee.

Level three

Engage in activities that require a common theological background, such as Tokai Bible Theological Institute.

Tokai Bible Theological Institute is the crystallization of prayers that we want to raise pastors directly out of this region. When the Institute was established, many pastors, including me, came from outside, but we wanted to raise up local pastors from our local congregations who know the area well. This spirit is starting to soak in.

The *yuruyakana* (gentle) mission collaboration that has been birthed in the Tokai region through the TEF has contributed much to the advancement of the gospel in this area, but I also feel that we are in need of change now. We should not restrict ourselves to just the Tokai area. We need to seek to grow and find other collaborative relationships.

Christian Shimbun, October 7, 2018

translated by Kenichi Shinagawa

photos provide by Christian Shimbun

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## Cultivating organic connections

*Atsuko Tateishi* Assistant Editor of *Japan Update*

Three student ministry organizations in the Tokai region joined hands in 2017 to plan and execute Mission & U, a gathering to network local youth. In September 2018, a second Mission & U was held in conjunction with the 2018 JEA Mission Forum @ Tokai (Mission Forum 2018). A few weeks after the event, Japan Update connected with the three executive staff members on a conference call, to explore how the collaboration worked.

Atsuko (JU): Please tell us who you are and what organization you belong to.

Takeshi (T): I’m Takeshi Moriyama of Japan Campus Crusade for Christ. I’ve been living in Nagoya since I was

assigned to work here in September 2005.

Ai (A): I’m Ai Umezawa, I’ve been a part-time staff member of hi-b.a. since January 2017.

Yūya (Y): I’m Yūya Kawano of Kirisutosha Gakusei Kai (KGK). This is my fifth year since having been assigned to KGK’s work in the Tokai region.

JU: How did the collaboration among your three organizations come about?

T: It started when we began planning for the 6th Tokai Conference of Mission and Evangelism (TOCOME6), which was held in September 2017. Our three organizations were represented in the executive committee. As part of an effort to increase momentum toward TOCOME6 and in

particular to attract the youth, our three organizations were commissioned to organize a pre-event in July 2017, which became the first Mission & U. When we were hoping to continue our collaboration, the JEA Mission Commission approached us and asked us to organize a youth gathering as part of Mission Forum 2018. I was involved in the planning process for both Mission & U and Mission Forum 2018.

Y: I helped with Mission & U a little and was involved in



the preparation and planning in 2018.

A: I also helped a little in 2017 and sometime after the planning for the 2018 event had begun became involved in the preparation process.

JU: What joys and challenges did you experience through working together for the last several months?

Y: I guess we had to coordinate the differences in each of our organizational cultures in an effort to keep a balance among the three organizations.

T: In the meantime, we were grateful that the JEA pretty much gave us a free hand to organize this year's Mission & U. The three of us come from three different organizations, with different styles and methods. We tried not to impose one organization's style on Mission & U. It was both a challenge and joy to work through our differences. It had more to do with not knowing each other well than our coming from different organizations.

A: As the three of us got to know each other, the initial awkwardness faded. I suppose it was hard at times to coordinate our schedule to meet together.

Y: We had to be willing to do some hard work, as the Mission & U event was in addition to our ongoing assignments.

T: It was a definite challenge to work out some of the

logistical issues. For example, we had to figure out how to serve dinner to everyone within the limited space of the venue. The final count of attendees was 113, ranging from junior high students to the late thirties. People in their 20s and 30s accounted for 50% of those in attendance. I sensed great needs among these age groups, and felt challenged about how to meet their needs.

JU: Is there anything God is teaching you or anything you've learned through working together?

Y: One of the meanings of "U" in Mission & U is unity. We are one large family of God, united in Christ. That is the message we wanted to get across. I believe we had modest success in that regard. I hope the connections that were made through the event will produce more connections, and bear fruit in the years ahead.

T: We assigned each attendee to a small group formed of eight or nine persons with varying ages and backgrounds. People stayed together in the same group from the icebreaker, to the meal, and to the sharing. We received some positive feedback about how they felt it was like being in a family.

A: I believe such a small group is something that you



cannot usually experience within your own church. I would like to see collaborative events like this in other areas of Japan as well.

T: I want to continue this collaborative partnership. Events like this are a good way to reach out to the entire local community. Yes, it's hard work, but we managed to work with joy.



## Report of Seki City

*Masamichi Murakami* *The Chairman of Relief Commission, JEA*

As a result of information about torrential rains in western Japan I received from Toshio Nagai of CRASH Japan, I went to Seki City, Gifu Prefecture, to research on behalf of the JEA Relief Committee.

In the northern part of Seki City, Tsubogawa River flooding before dawn on July 8 resulted in severe damage in the Kaminoho and Toyaichi districts. As soon as Reverend Hidenori Hashitani and his wife (Seki Christ Church, Reformed Church in Japan) saw the actual damage, they started support activities.

First they went door-to-door to determine the needs of each family, as many of the residents could not get to the evacuation center to share information about what they needed. Providing practical help, such as getting a cane for an elderly woman with walking difficulties who had lost her own cane, or providing information about photo restoration services to people whose photos had been soaked in muddy water, made the people in trouble happy. They were even able to help some families with mud removal from under their floors. Some volunteers also came from neighboring congregations of the Reformed Church in Japan and the Tokai Evangelical Fellowship.

On the second day of my research trip, Reverend Hashitani and his wife took me to visit houses where they had been involved in support activities. I was impressed that most of the people we met expressed great appreciation to the Hashitanis. During the course of our visits, we met an elderly woman who had learned dressmaking skills from a Christian teacher who had told her stories from the Bible. As a result, we were able to talk about faith for a while. Another afternoon, I was able to help with cleaning out mud from under floors. Rev. Hashitani commented about our work, "It's meaningful to be able to support people in small villages in the mountains where no young workers are available to help."

By the end of October the Hashitanis had completed their regular support activities, but during the Christmas season



they again visited those who had suffered from the flood and delivered Christmas cakes. The people were very welcoming to the Hashitanis. Looking to the future, I hope their regular visits to the devastated areas will make it possible for them to have continued relationships with residents. Although it is already more than half a year since Western Japan experienced the torrential rains, many people still deal with serious difficulties in their daily life in the devastated areas of Seki City. We should pray even more for the restoration of their daily lives.

Concerning support for sufferers, I was given some insights through my involvement with Reverend Hashitani. When governments respond to disasters, they make shelters, send relief supplies, or provide volunteers to meet various needs. However, it is hard to meet each individual need. I could not imagine the trouble experienced by the woman with walking difficulties because she had lost her cane. Moreover, only people who are able to get to where relief supplies are distributed can receive help. This means people who cannot get there cannot get anything. This suggests to me that as Christians, we are asked to go to places where governments cannot reach, ask people about their needs, report on those needs, and then provide for those needs.



## Ethnic Churches in the Tokai Region

*Toshio Nagai* A Cooperative Staff of Missions Commission, JEA

Usually, those who have come to Japan from overseas are called "foreigners." However, at JEA, we use the term "ethnic people" to describe this demographic in Japan. About twenty years ago, the population of ethnic people was about 1.6 million. Their number has grown significantly since that time, and now it is about 2.6 million. This number is more than the population of Nagoya, and is getting closer to that of Osaka. Currently one in fifty people in Japan are from outside of the country. The top five countries represented by ethnic people in Japan are China, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam and Brazil. Among the top ten countries, eight are in Asia. The exceptions are Brazil (5th) and the USA (7th).

In the Tokai region, foreign workers have traditionally been from China and Brazil. These days, however, the Vietnamese and Nepali populations are increasing rapidly. According to one statistic (Weekly Toyo Keizai, Feb. 3, 2018), in the past four and a half years, 12,559 ethnic peoples have moved to Nagoya either for work or study. This means that an average of 234 ethnic people have moved to Nagoya each month. In particular, there has been a sharp increase in students and technical interns (part-time contract workers) from Vietnam.

Last September there was a gathering in Nagoya for ethnic ministers from foreign countries. This included ministers from Brazil, the Philippines, Belgium, Indonesia, Canada, and Korea. Everyone enjoyed sharing meals as well as each other's presence. The gathering was held at a share-house (community living space) called Nagoya Grace House. Participants were deeply encouraged as they shared their hearts and their prayer requests with each other.

One couple who attended the gathering used to teach English in Belgium to stay-at-home Japanese moms whose husbands were staff members of a Japanese automobile company. This couple eventually felt the need to follow up with their former students, which led to their decision to leave Europe. Now in Japan, they are reaching out to more stay-at-home moms from the same company all around Japan. An Indonesian pastor in attendance shared about a

Japanese national who came to faith through an Indonesian Christian. A Japanese pastor shared his vision to start worship services that would include interpretation into multiple languages.

This January, another small gathering took place at Nagoya Grace House. We listened to a minister from an English-speaking church. He told us about several Asians who were coming to his church regularly.

Last year I came in contact with a Japanese man who has a heart for Vietnamese people in Japan. He has sent Vietnamese Bibles to about 35 local churches in Japan. This man has a dream of seeing more Bibles (not only Vietnamese, but also other Asian languages) distributed to more Japanese churches. He sent a copy of a Vietnamese Bible and Vietnamese translations of two books by Ayako Miura to friend of mine. That friend showed the books to those of us who were at the gathering.

When we think of churches in Japan, we should not forget to include believers who are non-Japanese speakers as well. They get together at various locations, such as homes and community centers, to praise the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way we do at more established churches.

We often hear of ethnic Christians having a very difficult time finding a venue to hold worship gatherings. We must ask the question, "How does God want us to serve them?"

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Of course, there are many stories of churches sharing their blessings and hospitality with non-Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ by opening up their church buildings to them. We celebrate the fellowship and welcoming posture of those churches. Perhaps we can say that foreign Christians are instrumental in bringing the fervent passion of God's love and peace to local Japanese churches.

There are no statistics about ethnic Christians in the Tokai region, nor nationwide. There are two main reasons for this. Most local churches have not focused on ethnic ministries in Japan—yet. Ethnic churches are born, change

locations, or die out before we are aware of their existence.

In closing, I want to share one final thought. There was a session focusing on ethnic ministries at JCE6 in Kobe. There was also a gathering in Tokyo last November in which about 100 ethnic participants gathered to praise the Lord. Local churches have space available to worship the Lord. At the same time, ethnic Christians are looking for venues where they can worship the same Lord as ours. The question we can all ponder is this: What kind of cooperation might God want to see in the churches of Japan?

## NEWS and NOTES

### How Experiencing A Natural Disaster Made Me Optimistic: The Fourth Machida/Sagamihara Disaster Prevention Festa

On the July 15, 2018, a week after the peak of the “Heavy rain of July, Heisei 30” (a historic series of rainstorms that began in late June 2018 in western Japan and resulted in devastating flooding and over 200 deaths—Ed.), the fourth Machida/Sagamihara Disaster Prevention Festa took place at Keihin Christ Church, situated in Sagamihara, Kanagawa. The main speaker was Akira Sato, pastor of First Bible Baptist Church, who gave a talk on how to prepare oneself for a natural disaster and how to take care of one's mental health when experiencing one.

Pastor Sato named a number of natural disasters that occurred in Japan in the last century, and said that “it wouldn't be surprising if another occurred anytime soon.”

Based upon his own experience of the Great Tōhoku Earthquake, he said that before experiencing the earthquake he was extremely pessimistic, whereas after experiencing it he became optimistic. “Before the earthquake occurred,



I made a manual for the church of how to act in worst case scenarios, such as where to gather and which methods of transport to take should an earthquake occur. Old buildings had to be rein-

forced so they would be earthquake-resistant. Even if it was in vain, protecting one's life was first priority.”

“But after the earthquake, I started thinking optimistically and told myself ‘It's going to be all right.’ At first we had to think quickly and take action at full speed, then gradually we changed gear to long-run mode. We just dove in without

preparation. We need to be reminded that even in a disastrous situation God loves us, and through Him we can do anything.”



“It is also important not to focus on the things we have lost, but rather on the things that we have gained. We need to switch to our ‘new’ self.”

Staff of the Sagamihara Fire Department were also present at the meeting to give a demonstration on how to use an AED (automated external defibrillator) and how to make candles that can be used in times of disaster.

Christian Shimbun, August 5, 2018

Translated by Grace Koshino

### Holding on to the Promises for the Next Generation

The 3rd National Conference of the 4/14 Window Movement Japan, an international evangelism movement focusing on children between the ages of 4 and 14, was held on September 8, 2018 in Chiba. Various facets of its work were introduced through performances, projects, and breakout sessions. Participants raised their awareness of the coming generation and engaged in deepened exchanges with each other.

The meeting opened with gospel hip-hop performances and worship led by teams from Shin-Matsudo Revival Church and Good Samaritan Church.

Iwao Tanabe, pastor of Immanuel Chiba Church, preached from Hebrews 11:11–12, relating the situation of today's Japanese churches to that of Abraham and Sarah,



who for years weren't blessed with a child. "It may seem we are out of everything due to aging congregations—no kids, nobody to dance or perform music. But Abraham believed God's Word to the end, and that's the key. God is always searching for those who trust His Word and walk according to His will. So let us hold on to the Word and pray to be given one 'Isaac,' from whom everything starts."

Then, Yukimasa Otomo, pastor of Shiogama Bible Baptist Church (SBBC) and chair of the Japan Conservative Baptist Association, gave a lecture on the same issues of aging churches with fewer children. Based on the results of the association's 2016 survey "Efforts to Cultivate the Next Generation" and SBBC's programs, he shared five proposals—that churches:

- 1) discover the needs of their community and respond to them, such as provide weekday programs like English classes and a "children's cafeteria" (which provides meals to children living in poverty or those eating alone),
- 2) not cut off connections—especially with middle- and high-school students, such as have evening meetings once a month and connect through LINE (a social networking service),
- 3) pray for and build up Christian homes, such as married couples providing good examples of loving each other to youth and young couples,
- 4) increase funding for the coming generation, such as having bake sales and supporting part of homestay costs, and
- 5) join denominational/interdenominational church networks and participate in their activities.

Otomo concluded: "If you imagine churches will no longer exist in 50 years, that's not evangelical thinking at all.



We will exist to the end of the age, and serving the children in front of us will result in building the future Church."

Next year, the 4/14 Window Movement's Global Summit will be held in New York from September 25 to 29.

Christian Shimbun, September 23, 2018  
translated by Nobue Tachiki

## Embracing and Living Out Our Faith from a Kingdom Mindset

The 2nd Youth Mission Congress (NSD2 = Nihon Seinen Dendokaigi 2nd) organized by JEA Youth Commission

took place from November 21 to 23, 2018 in Tokyo. The three day event consisted of three parts - the first day focused on youth mission collaboration, the second day was a festa for youth and young adult Christians featuring many different topics such as music, dance, sports, relationship, career and so forth, and on the third day participants were divided into each generation - junior and senior high school students, college students, and young adults.

The theme, "Embracing and Living Out Our Faith from a Kingdom Mindset" (「神の国マインドに生きる」) came out of a long term effort of JEA Youth Commission to rebuild trust between church and mission organization in



youth ministry context. In the first session focusing on mission collaboration, Rev. Kenichi Shinagawa, the general

secretary of JEA, said, "We need to have a Kingdom mindset in order to overcome the wall between church and mission organization and pursue the common goal that the reign of God's love (Kingdom) reaching every youth in Japan."

The theme of "Kingdom mindset" was further expanded throughout the congress to encourage youths and young adults to embrace and live out their faith in their community outside of church. Shinagawa continued, "The image of Kingdom is not a land surrounded by border, but rather a reign spreading from the king in the center. According to Mark 1:14-15, the Kingdom of God is preceeding our ministry. We experienced this through serving people in devastated areas of 3.11 East Japan Great Earthquake and Tsunami disaster. God is already at work in our local community, our school, our workplace. The Kingdom starts in the center of our hearts when Jesus' love touched and transformed our hearts and it spreads around us as we live out our faith in the community."

Among the six hundred participants, 38% were young adults, many of whom came from outside of Kanto area. Rev. Yasumichi Sano, the Executive Director of NSD2, said, "The most important message we received through NSD2 was that there are so many committed young adult Christians all over Japan who are isolated from fellow young adult Christians and longing for network among their generations. We really need to support them."

Christian Shimbun, December 9, 2018  
Translated by Kenichi Shinagawa

## Please pray for Japan

1. That the local church network in the Tokai region will be encouraged and strengthened by the Holy Spirit and that the name of Jesus will be glorified through the churches in the Tokai area.
2. That all Christian youth will be empowered by the gospel to reach out to their friends and every young person in Japan will be touched by the Holy Spirit and get to know Jesus as their personal Savior.
3. That God will raise up the next generation of Christ-centered, gospel-driven leaders among young Christians in Japan.
4. That God's love will touch the hearts of those who are suffering from recent natural disasters in different areas of Japan through the Christian disaster response.

## JEA-related schedule

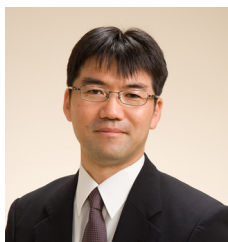
<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
May 20	Mission Research Summit	Tokyo
June 3-5	JEA Annual Plenary	Kakegawa
June 24-26	Women's Retreat	Kobe
June 25	JEA Disaster Reduction Forum	Tokyo
July 5	JEA Young Adult Meeting	Tokyo

## Editorial

As of this April I have been assigned to be General Secretary of the Japan Evangelical Association. I have taken over the post of chief editor from Rev. Kenichi Shinagawa, the former General Secretary and chief editor of *Japan Update*. First of all I would like to thank Rev. Shinagawa for faithfully serving the Lord and working hard on *Japan Update* for eight years. I also would like to thank Ms. Tomoko Kato for her work as a translator. Because of their commitment and efficient work, *Japan Update* has been issued and sent to our readers two times every year. Please pray for the new chief editor (me) so that I might be able to serve the Lord as they did, even though I'm inexperienced in this field.

Takahito Iwagami, Editor in Chief

<https://jeanet.org/>



## Japan Update

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Chairman : Kaoru Hirose  
General Secretary : Takahito Iwagami

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