

Japan Update

Spring 2020 Number 78



Joint worship of Ethnic Ministries Network Japan, 3 November 2019

Ethnic Ministries Network Japan



**Takashi
Fukuda**

*Spiritual
Ambassador,
Wycliffe Global
Alliance*

Japan's Statistics Bureau shows the number of five significant groups of foreign national residents as follows:

Chinese	730,000
Korean	450,000
Vietnamese	262,000
Filipino	260,000
Brazilian	190,000

In 2017, the number of all foreign national residents totaled 2,560,000. However, recently about 200,000 have been added each year, so by now the number has reached around 3,000,000. The global Christian percentage is 20%, so about 600,000 foreign national residents could be Christians.

The questions that come to mind are as follows:

Where do those Christians worship on Sundays?

1. Do they organize their worship gatherings according to their ethnicity, language, or cultural identity?
2. Do they go to international churches, where people from various nationalities come together to worship in English?
3. Do such churches have connections with Japanese churches?

There are a number of international churches in major cities in Japan. The Catholic church actively welcomes foreign nationals, especially Filipinos, Brazilians, and Vietnamese. They realize the number of Catholic Christians in Japan has doubled. Since Catholic churches are organized in dioceses and parishes, each bishop is responsible for every Catholic member in his diocese. It is the same for parish priests and parishes. Also, every Catholic member knows where to go to get help or to attend Mass because of clear boundaries between dioceses and parishes. But it is not as simple for evangelical Christians.

(continue to page 3)

<http://jeanet.org/>

Inside

Ethnic Ministries Network
Japan 1&3

Vietnamese people in Japanese
churches 2&3

An introduction to the
Christian Data Book website
4&5

Light through the darkness 5

News and notes 6-7

Prayer/Editorial 8

Vietnamese people in Japanese churches

Hideto Ohshio, Representative of the Vietnamese Bibles to Japan (VBTJ)



Hello! My name is Hideto Ohshio. I have been running a mission called Vietnamese Bibles to Japan (VBTJ) since August 2018. My Vietnamese wife and I live in Ho Chi Minh City and have been cooperating with four other members in Japan in this outreach. By December 2019, we had sent Vietnamese Bibles and two Ayako Miura novels translated into Vietnamese to 115 Protestant churches out of the 8000 in Japan. But to be honest, I do not think that is enough.

In June 2019, 370,000 Vietnamese lived in Japan. The number of Vietnamese in Japan has been increasing by 40,000 every six months. Following the Chinese and the Koreans, they are the third largest foreign group in Japan and most are technical intern trainees. When these trainees come to Japan, each of them is likely to be carrying an average debt of 1,000,000 yen and shouldering great expectations from their families. Unfortunately, once they arrive, they face a lot of either power or sexual harassment. As a result, many of them escape from their work sites and then the media reports on them as being a social problem. The Vietnamese are innocent and easy-going people—with some weak points of course. But for me, they are my family and relatives. That was the starting point of VBTJ. It was easy to pretend not to know the situation, but I finally remembered what the Bible says. We Japanese are Gentiles in this world also, and our citizenship is in heaven.

In contrast to Japan's current situation, in Vietnam Japanese business people say, "It's just like the late 1950s and early 1960s in Japan. How energetic it is!" As a reflection of this energy, young trainees, between the ages of 19 to 30 are sent to Japan—but through malicious systems that burden them in the ways that have been mentioned already. However, they are human beings, not machines. As most of them are from big families, they feel very isolated but have to fight with the pressure of debt in a country with a language they do not understand well. Although one out of every 300 residents in Japan is a Vietnamese person, Japanese churches know almost nothing about them. Why? Since 2% of Vietnamese are Protestants, 2% of 370,000, or about 7,400 must be looking for a church in Japan. It is impossible for them, however, to understand pastors' messages or to have a chance to worship without Japanese churches preparing for them.

In Japan, we have the dual problems of an aging society and depopulated areas. While churches in sparsely populated areas are desperate for newcomers because their young members have gone to the big cities, young trainees from Vietnam work quite nearby. What do you think this means? How can they get these young Vietnamese to come to these churches? Can they overcome the language barriers? Are Japanese churches able to accept these young Vietnamese? How can they make them find it easy to enter these churches? Besides sending them Vietnamese Bibles, there are so many problems piled up in front of us. Moreover, as a fundamental problem, Japanese churches seldom have any contacts with outer groups such as local companies, universities, local chambers of commerce, Japanese language schools, Asian restaurants, and organizations for foreign trainees. In other words, they do not have any contact points with Vietnamese groups in Japan. On one hand, there are Vietnamese who are looking for churches, and on the other hand, there are churches seeking newcomers to love. Why did Jesus walk around in Samaria? As Scripture teaches us, Japanese churches need to be brave to go out to find these potential members, instead of just waiting for them to come.



In Osaka, 15 Vietnamese Christians gather at Hirano Church, a Korean Christian Church in Japan. Their pastor, who has been in Japan for 19 years, is from Korea and the church members are Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, almost one third each. They primarily communicate in Japanese but three languages are available. This all started from the visit of one Vietnamese person four years ago. An elder's wife, cooking together with a young Vietnamese, said "All these young people here are my children. I thank God,

(continue to page 3)

(continued from page 2)

everyday!” Hallelujah! I thank God for their relationships in love beyond national borders.

VB TJ's present mission is:

1. To make leaflets to motivate churches to welcome the Vietnamese.
2. To organize gatherings several times a year at several places in Japan (in 5 or 10 years).
3. To increase the number of churches that cooperate with VB TJ, especially in depopulated areas.

In this corrupt world, there is a great deal of social injustice, but the problems of foreign workers are serious. Please pray for them and share with us your knowledge. How can we deliver Vietnamese Bibles and our leaflets to Japanese churches that suffer with a lack of young people? How can we get the Vietnamese in Japan to join Japanese churches? Free and flexible ideas are needed.

We pray many people will join VB TJ and that our branches will spread all over Japan.



The first Vietnamese worship in Tokyo

(continued from page 1)

The Japan Council of Philippine Churches (JCPC) has maintained leadership level fellowship and cooperation for many years. For the last six years, it has held the Bless Japan Conference where 200 to 300 Filipino Christians have gathered to worship the Lord and to pray for and bless Japan.



Bless Japan Conference, JCPC, 2019

There are other ethnic networks operating in Japan as well, such as the Nepali Network, Chinese Network, and Korean Network. Leaders of the JCPC, Nepali Network, Indonesian Network, Chinese Network, and others have met for fellowship for the last several years. As a result of sharing with each other their blessings, challenges, and prayer concerns, in 2018 they decided to hold the Joint Worship and Prayer

Time. In 2019, they held a second Joint Worship and Prayer Time. This group is called Ethnic Ministries Network Japan.

Some ethnic churches and Christians cannot be open due to security issues. So some ethnic churches tend to be isolated from each other. As they share about their challenges with each other, they come to know that they all face similar challenges, such as finding worship venues, educating their children, and so on. These evangelical Christians identify with their own national evangelical associations and alliances, but in Japan they want to be under the covering, or in association with the JEA. For Joint Worship of Ethnic Ministries Network Japan, in both events, the General Secretary of the JEA attended in order to serve the group.

Some well-established networks, such as the JCPC, the Chinese Network, and the Nepali Network are moving beyond their own ethnic groups to connect with Japanese nationals and even other ethnic nationals.

From the viewpoint of the mission of God, God's work is carried out not only by those who speak the Japanese language or who are Japanese nationals. It is inevitable that God's people in Japan, regardless of their nationalities, languages, and cultures have to be connected and working together for the building of God's Kingdom.

An introduction to the Christian Data Book website

Gary Bauman, Japan Update editor

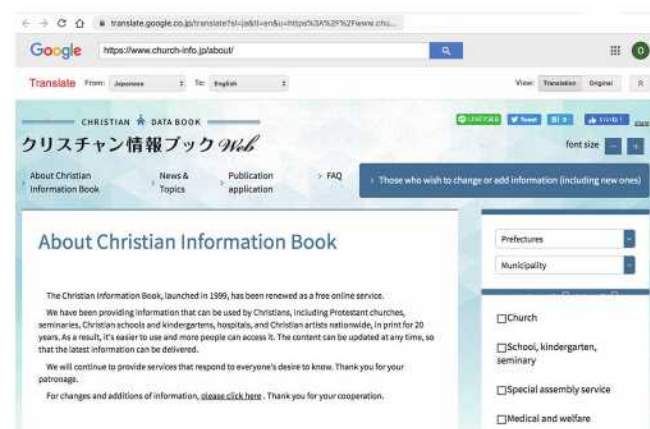
The Christian Data Book is a valuable resource to find contact information for Protestant churches, seminaries, Christian schools and kindergartens, hospitals, and Christian artists. Originally published in book form, it has been used by Japanese Christians for over 20 years. Now that it is freely available online, it can be used globally by anyone with access to the internet.

Although the website is only offered in Japanese, people with limited or no Japanese ability can still perform searches on it by using Google's translation function. Many of the menus translate reasonably well into English (and probably other languages as well, although I can only offer my observations in English). Note that 教派 (*kyoha*—denomination/sect) is rendered as cult by Google translate, since in Japanese the term refers to sub-groups of any religion. But that is a minor complaint compared to the multilingual website accessibility that Google translate provides.

Here's how to get started. The Christian Data Book website URL is: <https://www.church-info.jp/about/> Go to <https://translate.google.co.jp/> and paste the URL into the left window. Select the "Detect Language" as Japanese and the right window language as English (or your desired language). You should see the below image, or something similar. Click on the right hand link, and you will get a page translated into your selected language.



If you are searching for churches in a certain region, select the church box, then a prefecture.



For this example, we'll select Tokyo. Then select a municipality. (If you only select a prefecture, you'll get all of the churches in that prefecture.) Click on the red "Select" button at the bottom right of the web page. The page will reappear (in Japanese) with all nine churches that are listed in the Data Book in Tokyo, Chuo-ku.



(continue to page 5)

Light through the darkness

Sui Ling, Itabashi United Christ Church

Today, every local church in Japan should be prepared to embrace non-Japanese persons. They may be a student or an employee in Japan, or married to a Japanese person, and often are fluent in Japanese. Sui Ling Chew Goto, a member of Itabashi Church in Tokyo, shared her story with Japan Update, going back and forth between Japanese and English. Excerpts follow.



Japan Update (JU): Please introduce yourself.

Sui Ling (SL): I am from a Christian family in Malaysia. Growing up, I would go to church very reluctantly.

JU: What brought you to Japan?

SL: I came to Japan in the mid 80s to study Japanese. Then I landed a hotel management job here, and met and married a Japanese man. So I have been living in Tokyo ever since my early twenties.

JU: How did you come to attend Itabashi Church?

SL: It's a long story. Nine years ago, my husband was in a serious motorcycle accident. He was in a coma for two weeks. My older brother and his wife are pastors in Malaysia. Their church prayed fervently for my husband's recovery. Thanks to their intercession, my husband has recovered well.

As the eldest son, my husband was going to inherit his parents' house. It was on this assumption that we would eventually live with his parents. When my mother-in-law passed away, however, something went wrong within the family. In the end, my husband and I decided to give up the house. With financial help from my mother in Malaysia, we managed to buy an old house in a different neighborhood. One day, one of my two daughters told me that there was a church near us. Even then, it took me some time before I finally set foot in Itabashi Church in 2016.

JU: What made you stay at this church?

SL: It's a friendly church. I enjoy the fellowship with the Japanese members and a few non-Japanese members of the church. Pastor Ōi speaks English, which helps. I was pleasantly surprised when I learned that his daughter and son-in-law speak Malay as well as English.

I was baptized at this church in September 2016. God forced me to move out of our previous comfortable house, and led me to live near this church. Looking back, I clearly see God's hand working in each step of my life. Yes, I have gone through difficulties, but I thank God for his faithfulness in guiding me to himself.

(continued from page 4)



Although the church's addresses are in Japanese, they can be pasted into Google maps.

With a bit of practice, you should find this to be a helpful tool even if you don't have a person fluent in Japanese nearby to help.

Outreach through the Rugby World Cup

The Rugby World Cup Japan 2019 (“World Cup”) opened in Tokyo on September 20, 2019. Outreach teams from more than 10 countries came to Japan to take advantage of the 40-day football frenzy. Hosted by local churches in different cities, the members of the outreach teams—including professional rugby players and coaches—engaged in rugby clinics, community festivals, and international friendship events. They also watched the World Cup matches with local people.

Tokyo Baptist Church (TBC) hosted the Rugby Clinic and Festival on September 20–21. The Scottish team performed ceili dance on the first day, while the New Zealanders performed haka on the following day in the church parking lot. The audience took photos with the performers, and later were invited to join the dances. International foods were served.



Talks and demonstrations at TBC featured Lloyd Thomas, former Welsh Premier League player, on the 20th, and Sakaralia Labalaba, former trainer of the Fiji National Sevens, on the 21st. Thomas showed different types of effective kicks, and then proclaimed that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a victory far more inspira-

tional than any event that may occur during the World Cup. Labalaba spoke of a team he used to belong to, where the foundational principle was a Scripture passage: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13 NKJV). He shared that he’s learned a player’s success depends on his relationship with God. The outreach team and the audience watched a match on a screen in the sanctuary each day.

According to a report by Madoka Suzuki, a member of Hongōdai Christ Church, a Festival was held in two public places in Kamaishi, Iwate Prefecture on September 22–23. At Unosumai Tomosu on the 22nd, 100 people gathered as the Fijian team showed rugby skills and led games, singing, and dancing to a Fijian praise song. On the second day at Aeon Town Kamaishi, two Fijian players entertained a number of families who were visiting the



shopping mall.

In Kumamoto Prefecture, a Festival was held on September 21–23 at three local churches, Hitoyoshi Bible Church, Takamori Christ Church, and Kumamoto Nazarene Church. Michihito Kaneko, Pastor of Good Samaritan Church, reported that even with concerns about Typhoon #17, each Festival attracted a number of neighborhood children in an intimate and enjoyable atmosphere.

Christian Shimbun, October 6, 2019

Translated and summarized by Atsuko Tateishi

Website launch on heretical cults

In the face of the mounting threat of cult groups originally from South Korea and China, a website on heretical cults called “Itan Karuto 110-ban (Heretical Cults Helpline)” was launched at cult110.info (“Cult 110”) on October 3, 2019. On the day of the launch, over 100 attended a seminar and worship service in Tokyo to celebrate the start of the Cult 110 website. The site is managed by Nihon Kirisutokyō Itan Sōdanjo (Japan Christian Heresy Consultation Office). Chang Chun-Ik is the director of both the consultation office and Cult 110.



During the worship service, Chang spoke—out of gratitude to Japanese churches that had embraced him—on how he came to tackle the challenging issue of heretical Christian cults. He launched the consultation office in 2010, and now, with his partner and chief editor Yūki Nakahashi, has started Cult 110 in the hope of equipping Japanese churches against heretical cults.

Nakahashi then gave an overview of Cult 110. Having once been entangled in a cult group, Nakahashi warned Japanese churches about the fake news that is circulated on the internet by heretical cult groups. Cult 110 partners with not only Christian groups in Japan but also with Korean media and consultation offices dealing with heresy. Thus, Cult 110 is able to provide accurate information in a timely manner. Nakahashi expressed his resolve to help, through interdenominational partnerships, those suffering from cult issues.

The sermon was delivered by Takahito Iwagami, General Secretary of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA), one of the endorsing organizations of Cult

110. Using 2 Corinthians 6:11, Iwagami admonished those present not to be yoked together with unbelievers or people who have deviated from the essence of the gospel. Rather, he said, Christian communities grow stronger through love, reconciliation, healing, and recovery. In order to discern who to work with, and who not to, Iwagami noted that obtaining accurate information about heretical cults is the key.



A seminar session preceded and followed the worship service. Choi Sam-Kyung, a board member of the group Church

and Religions, lectured on groups associated with David Jang and issues relating to the Christian Today website. Jin Yong-Sik, President of the Consultation Office Association on Christian Heresy in Korea, presented about the current situation concerning Christian heretics in South Korea and measures being taken against them.

Christian Shimbun, October 20, 2019

Translated and summarized by Atsuko Tateishi

Dr. Tetsu Nakamura: Killed in a gun attack A man that not only befriended locals but 'lived' with them

On December 4, 2019, Dr. Tetsu Nakamura, head of Peace Japan Medical Services (an aid group known as Peshawar-kai in Japanese), was among the six people that were killed in a gun attack in eastern Afghanistan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan stated that they were deeply shocked and saddened, and offered their deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

Nakamura was dispatched to Pakistan in 1984 by JOCS (Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service). He treated Afghan refugees and Pakistani patients with leprosy or other medical needs. In Afghanistan, he also contributed to the building of canals and digging of wells. Nakamura remained in Afghanistan even after fellow Peshawar-kai member Kazushi Itō was abducted and killed. His work has been greatly appreciated and granted a number of awards (in some cases, sharing awards with Peshawar-kai). These

awards included the 1988 Foreign Minister's Commendation.



In September 2019, he gave a lecture at the Faculty of Okinawa Christian Peace Institute of Okinawa Christian University. Kiyoharu Uchima, head of the institute, shared

how Nakamura had explained that "As foreigners we do our best to help the locals, but never push our own values or sense of justice onto them." Nakamura was a man who not only befriended locals, but lived with them. "I see [through Nakamura] an example of how one lives as a Christian," says Uchima.

Tomoshi Okuda, pastor of Higashi Yahata Baptist Church also shared his experience with Nakamura. Their first acquaintance was when Okuda was a young pastor and preached at the funeral of Yūji Sato, the first executive director of Peshawar-kai. Sato battled an illness and passed away at the young age of 43. Mid-service, Nakamura, who had just returned from Afghanistan and was still wearing Afghan clothing, burst into the hall where the funeral was taking place and wailed for his friend. Okuda recalls that he was embarrassed that he wasn't able to preach well and only managed to mention some frivolous words. He later got to know Nakamura better and shared a few of Nakamura's words that influenced him:

If no one else is willing to go, I will. If no one else is willing to do it, I will.

The reason that no one is willing to go is because it is dangerous.

Okuda went on to say, "Nakamura said 'I will' and headed to Afghanistan, and this is a result of that. But without such a sacrifice, we cannot change reality. The way of Christ and the way of the cross is just like that."

"The whole world is mourning for Nakamura. But we mustn't confuse mourning with hatred. That is not something that Nakamura would wish for either. The best way for me to commemorate him would be to ask the question, 'Where should I go, and what should I do.' Thank you for your hard work Dr. Nakamura. Until we meet again in heaven.

Christian Shimbun, December 22/29, 2019

Translated and summarized by Grace Koshino

Please pray for Japan

1. Christian churches and Japanese society have been affected by the quick spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) all over Japan and throughout the world. Pray that Japanese churches will stand firm in strong faith and that God will protect all the countries affected by the infection.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work through foreigner-friendly ministries in Japan so that Japanese churches and ethnic churches in Japan might be united in the bond of love.
3. Pray that more "Kingdom-minded" collaborations will happen among different ethnic churches in Japan and Japanese churches. There are many opportunities including ministry to children of mixed marriages, etc.
4. Pray that God will raise up the next generation of Christ-centered, gospel-driven leaders among young Christians in Japan.

JEA related schedule

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>PLACE</u>
April 20	JEA Board Meeting	Tokyo
May 18-19	Mission Research Summit	Tokyo
June 1-3	JEA Annual Plenary	Kakegawa
July 28-Aug. 9	Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and Related Ministries	Tokyo
Sep. 29-Oct. 1	Tokyo Mission Forum for JCE7	Tokyo

Editorial

With the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19), our JEA churches and denominations have been responding to it according to their respective guidelines. Most denominations canceled or postponed their general conferences scheduled for February and March. Some churches canceled their meetings including Sunday services. Many churches have services, but are asking the elderly to stay home on Sunday. We are facing a difficult situation as never before. But we firmly trust that God is in control. Jesus is our hope. He has conquered all fear and despair by his resurrection. The *Japan Update* editorial team will be praying for safety and divine peace for our readers.



Takahito Iwagami, Editor in Chief

<http://jeanet.org/>

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Chairman : Kaoru Hirose
General Secretary : Takahito Iwagami

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Japan Update Staff

Editor in Chief	Takahito Iwagami
Asst. Editor	Atsuko Tateishi
Translation Editor	Gary Bauman
Translation Staff	Tomoko Kato
	Grace Koshino
	Nobue Tachiki
	Hiromi Kiuchi

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 admin@jeanet.org
website <https://jeanet.org/>

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