



# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

*The Newsletter of the National Christian Council in Japan*

ISSN 0021-4353

Number 737

Fall/Winter 2004

## The Last Samurai? The Christianity and the Sword

The first instance of a samurai conversion in Japan must have occurred in the 16th century. The American movie, *The Last Samurai*, depicts a samurai warrior facing the impending modernization of Japan in the late 19th century. He urges his former student, the Emperor Meiji, whose family symbol was the Chrysanthemum, to keep the samurai spirit (a faithful fighting spirit and strict loyalty to one's

master based on the code of *Bushido* as described in the English book by Inazo Nitobe, a prewar Japanese Christian diplomat), by giving him his sword as a symbol of that spirit. Even after that, Imperial Japan continued to foster the samurai spirit, which included an authoritarian elitism toward others, and the killing of many indigenous and other peoples in Japan and the rest of the Asia-Pacific with the "sword" – a symbol of Japanese violence. And, most of the churches in Japan supported Japan's war actions at that time.



*A statue of praying Christian samurai - Shimabara Castle, Nagasaki Prefecture*

After WWII, the "sword" was taken up again by the government under the ruling Chrysanthemum party (LDP) in alliance with the U.S. military. An American anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, wrote in her famous book on the Japanese, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, that the Japanese tend to feel "ashamed" while Westerners tend to feel that they are "sinful" when they do something wrong. But, in a sense, the Chrysanthemum is the symbol of human authority in Japan that Jesus would hate most of all. The book of Isaiah says, "[t]hey shall beat their swords into plowshares" and "nation shall not lift up sword against nation" (Isaiah 2:4). And Jesus said that "all who take up the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). He taught us to be humble, love our enemies and take up our cross (not the "sword") to follow him. Whether Christians in Japan feel ashamed or sinful over what they have done wrong, Jesus calls us to repent and believe in the good news. Are we to give the "sword" to the Emperor and to God the things that are God's? The following articles should help you to reflect further on this question. (*Hisashi Yukimoto*)

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# Christianity in Japan

## An Interview with Prof. Yasuo Furuya

Samurai mentality is a barrier to the spread of Christianity in Japan, says theologian

*Why has Christianity in Japan remained about one percent of the whole population? Professor Yasuo Furuya of the Graduate School of Seigakuin University, who had taught at the International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo and served as a chaplain of the ICU Church for forty years, makes this claim in his recent book *Nihon-no-Kirisutokyo* (Christianity in Japan), published in May last year by Kyobunkwan Publishing Co. JCAN asked him how he came to this conclusion. Excerpts follow:*

**Prof. Furuya:** Japanese Christianity has a samurai mentality. That's the problem. Historically, it started from a samurai group that was opposed to the Meiji Government. So this defined Japanese Christianity's characteristics: it is anti-Japanese government, and it is still "samurai." The samurai class was the so-called elite. They looked down on others—farmers, merchants and so on. When ordinary Japanese are asked, "Why don't you go to church," they say, "Oh, *shikii ga takai ne*" (the entrance is too high). It's very strange. The enemies of Jesus were scribes, scholars and Pharisees. But Japanese churches are mainly an elite group—churches of scholars and Pharisees. They are spiritually proud of themselves. They look down on others, the masses.

But the question is, where are the masses now? Pre-war society consisted of elite intellectuals and the masses. Now, democratization and the spread of university education means that the elite no longer exists. But still Japanese Christianity has this kind of elite mentality. Japanese churches used to be full of young people. But now that the student activism of the 1960's and 1970's has calmed down, young people don't come to church any more.

The whole atmosphere of society has changed. Christian weddings are very popular, and so is Christmas. So why don't people come to church? I think that the problem is with the church, not with society. People are now willing to come to church, but they don't come. Why? It's because of the attitude of the church. That's why I say the samurai mentality is still there.

**JCAN:** Historical studies show that the evangelism in Japan has centered on the intellectuals, as you mention, in urban areas. How do you see the history and the current state of evangelism in the rural areas there?

**Prof. Furuya:** According to the late Dr. Mikio Sumiya, who had studied the sociology of Christianity in Japan, in the early Meiji period, not only samurais but some rich land owners in local areas of Yamanashi and Gunma prefectures were Christians. That's true. But when Japan had the Meiji Imperial Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education and became nationalistic, then Christians in

Japan were only urban people who were free from their old traditions. And since then, only so-called upper-middle class people became Christians. In a way, it's okay. But the problem is that it doesn't go to the masses.

So my point is this: look at the so-called masses today. The mass today is not the mass of yesterday. It has been changed and Americanized. The majority of the Japanese people think that they are middle class. Most people go to universities and colleges. In older times, university students learned French, German and English. All Christians were theologians and young people used to read Barth, Tillich and Niebuhr before they came to church. But today, Japanese have become more Americanized. They are not the elite people. That's the mass. And young people don't read those books any more. Even at ICU, they don't read them. They have their encounters with Christianity through work camps in Bangladesh, the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) and so on. That's more important than the books now. They are not interested in theology any more. They are more what I call experimental. That's more important, good and more healthy. But Japanese churches as a whole cannot adjust to this.

**JCAN:** And they still follow the German theologians of the 1960's, '70's and '80's.

**Prof. Furuya:** Yes. I'll tell you a good story. About 20 years ago, we invited Max Barth, the son of Karl Barth, who is a professor of the New Testament at Basel. He was invited with his daughter. She was interested in Zen Buddhism. She never read the Bible; she never read her grandfather's books. Her father was teaching at ICU, and she remained in Kyoto. She visited many Zen temples. But fortunately, her interpreter was a Christian. And she realized that the Zen in the books like Suzuki Daisetsu was different than the Zen in town. So, for the first time, she became interested in her own religion, Christianity. She began to read the book of John. Then she found, "Oh, Christianity has something!"

Anyway, young people today are different from the old generations. But the church must know this: why are they interested in Christian weddings? It's because what the min-



*Prof. Yasuo Furuya, speaking to JCAN at ICU on February 29, 2004*

isters say at the weddings is understandable. And it's also very relevant to the couples, because they talk about love. At Shinto and Buddhist temple weddings, they don't understand what they are talking about. When they come to church, it's very different.

Young people are more expressive and adjusted. And I think that music is very important. It's not just an intellectual thing. It's an emotional thing. But the music in churches here is too old now. Young people have been brought up with rock music and jazz. Then why do they have to come to church and listen to Bach?

When the participants of the Asian Rural Institute came to Japan, I sent them to church, and they said, "We don't need to go to church any more. Japanese church services are like funeral services." When the minister says, "Praise God and rejoice," they look down. In America and Korea, when they say, "Praise God and rejoice," they really rejoice. But not in Japan. Japanese can't do that. Samurai's emotional expression is indirect or sometimes the opposite.

**JCAN:** Looking back the 50 years of the ICU Church, which will have a 50-year anniversary this year, what were your successes, opportunities and challenges in your evangelism as a former pastor and a present member here? And what about the future?

**Prof. Furuya:** My vision is that we just keep going. We especially have to know the problems in Asia; countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar are so poor now. We have to do something. But Japanese churches are not interested in these. We forgot what we had done to the Asian people during the wartime. We only remember that we had victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki [atomic bombings]. Prime Minister Koizumi visited the Yasukuni Shrine. He completely forgot what we had done. Terrible!

I said that, in this book, we have a wonderful theology like Kitamori's *A Theology of the Pain of God*. Yes, the pain of God is fine. But we forgot the pain that we gave to the Asian people. So, Japanese churches are not interested in what the NCCJ is doing. Korean churches are stronger and the Christian population is 30 percent of the entire people. So, I said that Christians in Japan have to be at least 10% of the whole population. Quality and quantity are inseparable. If we say that our quality is better than the quantity of Korean churches, that's a religious pride. But still some church groups say that they are not interested in quantity because they have quality. It's terrible! It's against the Christian idea. They are like Pharisees.

**JCAN:** In conclusion, you mention that evangelism in Japan should be aimed at the masses more than ever. What strategies would you suggest to the churches in Japan for that purpose?

**Prof. Furuya:** As I said, we have to see the new reality of the masses. The mass in Japan is different than the mass before the war. They are more informed. So, we have to speak to the masses and preach sermons that are understandable to them. At Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, they emphasize that what we preach is more important than how to preach. But I think you can't separate what and how, just like we can't separate quality from quantity. We have to reach a balance.

*Editor's note: The English website of the ICU Church, an associate member church of the NCCJ, can be found at <http://www.icuchurch.com/icuchurche.html>. Prof. Furuya is also the chairman of the board of directors of the Asian Rural Institute. See website: [www.ari.edu](http://www.ari.edu).*

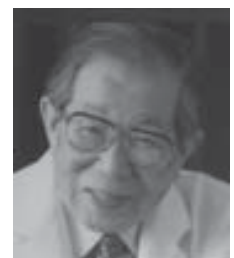
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## Christian Doctor Writes Book on Prescriptions for Life

Over the past few years, Dr. Shigeaki Hinohara, a 93-year-old Christian medical doctor and the President of the St. Luke International Hospital in Tokyo, has been also sought after by many of the general public in Japan for the other side of his work: writing books and lectures on how to live a long and fulfilling life.



Born in 1911, Dr. Hinohara, a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), has impressed not just Christians but a wider range of people here, young and old, through the recent series of his bestseller which sold over a million copies, *Ikikata Jozu (How to Live Well)*. He surely is a doctor of life to all. (H.Y.)

## Catholics and Lutherans Have Service Together Marking Publication of Joint Japanese Translation of Justification Declaration

An historic worship service was held by the Catholic Church in Japan and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) on October 31 at St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Tokyo to commemorate the publication of the Japanese translation of the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification of 1999*.

The service took place with its theme, "For Reconciliation and Unity," exactly five years later than the day when the original declaration was signed by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Augsburg, Germany, on October 31, 1999. The Catholic Church in Japan and the JELC have worked together on the translation since the declaration was signed, after sending their comments on the draft declaration text to the two world church bodies. Catholics and Lutherans had been divided over the issue of whether Christians can be justified by doing good works or by faith alone since Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses ignited the Reformation in 1517.

In his sermon at the joint service, Rev. Yoshikazu Tokuzen, a JELC pastor and a professor emeritus of Lutheran studies at Lutheran Gakuin University in Tokyo, said, "As we journey toward the end of times, we are entrusted to build the theological foundation to witness together to a way of life grounded in the humility and meekness of Christ. This is to be shared and realized among ourselves and the rest of the world amidst the disorder of the early 21st century, when humans have lost sight of how to live," referring to the Dogmatic Constitution of the

Church of the Second Vatican Council and biblical words of Jesus in Matthew 5:3-5 and 11:29.

"The times have changed," said Rev. Tokuzen, a former Moderator of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ), looking back at the developments of ecumenical work in the past decades through dialogues between Catholics and Protestants in Japan. These, he noted, have included joint wedding ceremonies, the joint Japanese translation of the Bible in 1987, Christmas services held together at local communities, and a popular Japanese book called *Catholics and Protestants – What are the Similarities and What are the Differences*, that he wrote with a Catholic theologian in 1998.

The service was directed by Tokyo Archbishop Takeo Okada, the Vice Chairman of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Japan and Rev. Masatoshi Yamanouchi, the Moderator of the JELC, who co-signed and exchanged the original Japanese translation texts of the declaration during the service.

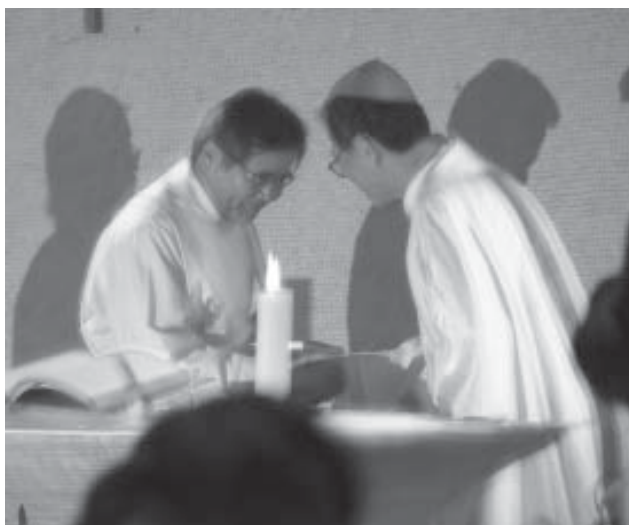
"Unity among Christians once again has seen its time," said Archbishop Ambrose B. De Paoli, the apostolic nuncio to Japan who spoke as a guest speaker at the service, referring to biblical verses in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and John 17:21. "This joint witness service this evening is in itself a testimony of progress made in the relationship between the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches."

"May the spirit of our Lord's prayer to the Father continue to guide the efforts of all Christian churches towards the unity that Jesus hoped for among his followers," he added.

At a press conference following the service, Archbishop Okamoto said, "We hope that we would work together not only for dialogues among Christians but also with people of other faiths."

"We should take this as a mirror to see the truth," said Rev. Yamanouchi. Asked what their future plans are, Rev. Naozumi Eto, one of the translators of this declaration from the JELC, told journalists that "joint worship services and study meetings at local levels and theological education following on this document will be encouraged."

"This is a significant step not only for the Catholics and Lutherans but also the ecumenical movement in Japan as a whole," said Rev. Renta Nishihara, the Vice Moderator of the NCCJ who attended the service representing the NCCJ. (Hisashi Yukimoto)



Lutheran moderator Rev. Yamanouchi (left) and Catholic Archbishop Okamoto shake their hands after signing and exchanging the original Japanese translation texts of each other in the joint worship service held in Tokyo on October 31.



## Church Representatives Debate Reunification of North and South Korea

A consultation, hosted by the National Council of Churches in Japan (NCCJ) and under the auspices of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and

the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), gathered at the Tozanso YMCA conference center in Gotemba, Japan from October 17-21, 2004. Fifty-five church leaders and consultants from nine countries of Asia, Europe and North America met to commemorate the 20th anniversary of a similar ecumenical gathering 20 years ago that brought together church leaders from 20 nations of Asia, Pacific, the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe and North America. This historic ecumenical consultation between Christians of the Democratic People and the Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) on the theme "Peace and Justice in North East Asia and Prospects for Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts."

In 1984, this consultation launched a series of first-time events that included face-to-face meetings between Korean delegations from North and South, visits by churches and ecumenical agencies to both the DPRK and the ROK, as well as visits by delegations of the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) to churches in Asia, North America, Europe, and other parts of the world. Collectively, these initiatives have come to be known as the Tozanso Process, and widely regarded as the precursor of rapprochement on the Korean Peninsula.

(Excerpts taken from the WCC Update) <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/pu-04-50.html>

This three-day WCC-CCA consultation focused on the stalled initiatives towards peace, unification, and a resolution of the conflict on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, it sought to encourage and inspire churches in both the North and South towards greater people-to-people contact, mutual exchange of ideas and confidence-building, easing regional tensions, and to facilitate meetings of churches

A list of WCC member churches and ecumenical organizations is available at <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/who/mch-e.html>

and civil society to run parallel to the Six-Party Talks of the major political stakeholders.

"We also want to find ways to encourage WCC-CCA member churches in consultation with churches in Korea to reflect together on and engage in common prayer to reinforce their advocacy efforts for a just and lasting peace," noted WCC International Affairs programme executive Clement John.

The October consultation also sought to encourage greater economic and cultural cooperation for North Korea by extending developmental aid and lifting sanctions against Pyongyang.

In his welcoming remarks, CCA General Secretary Dr Ahn Jae-Woong said that a divided Korea is a tragedy and painful reality for people living on both sides. "The unification of Korea is neither rhetoric nor a slogan, but a permanent mandate to be achieved by peaceful means," he said, adding that the Korean people cannot achieve unification alone but need the help of the global community. The final communiqué of the consultation is available on our website: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/tozanso2004.html>

The executive committee statement on Korea is available at: [http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/press\\_corner/korea-korea.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/press_corner/korea-korea.html)

Additional information: Juan Michel: [media@wcc-coe.org](mailto:media@wcc-coe.org)



Midori Shibata, Hokkaido, "Kibo" which means "hope"

## Death Not in Vain: Son of Japanese Christian Parents Kidnapped and Killed by Militants in Baghdad

A son of Japanese Christian parents in Fukuoka was found murdered in Baghdad on October 31 after the expiration of a 48-hour deadline set by a group of extreme Islamic militants. Shosei Koda, a 24-year old backpacker, had been captured by the group, which had then given the Japanese government two days to accept its demand for the withdrawal of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) from Iraq. Despite the threat of the terrorists to behead the hostage, the government was unwavering in its rejection of the demand.

The young man's parents had appealed for his immediate release. But days later he was found dead near a hospital in Baghdad, his severed head and body wrapped in an American flag. The militant group, which is affiliated with the al-Qaeda network and believed to be led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility on November 2 for the murder of Koda in a Web posting that included gruesome video footage of his death, while repeating the demand that Japan pull its troops out of Iraq.

Koda's parents released a statement through city officials saying that they wanted to thank the public for their support and apologize for causing trouble. They also expressed hope that "Iraqi people would find peace as soon as possible."

Rev. Koichi Kimura, pastor of the Japan Baptist Convention (JBC) in Fukuoka, who has visited Iraq three times since he first went Baghdad last spring as a human shield during the war on Iraq\*, told journalists on October 31, after paying his visit to Koda's family upon the news of his death, that his father, Masumi Koda, a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), said that he "would choose a way of life not to make his death in vain." He was named Shosei, meaning "to live and witness" in Japanese.

Shosei Koda's funeral was held in Fukuoka on November 5 following his wake on the previous night, as the Bible was read aloud by a pastor and hymns were sung by the people there for his rest in peace. Services proceeded after his body was flown home via Dubai and brought to the police for an autopsy, sources said.

Bishop Goro Matsuura, Chairman of the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace (JCCJP), issued a statement to Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on November 2, in which he expressed his condolence to

Koda's family and urged the government to withdraw the SDF so that Koda's tragedy will not be repeated.

On November 4, the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) petitioned to Prime Minister Koizumi that Japan withdraw the SDF and appeal to the United States to stop its war on Iraq, with an expression of strong protests against both the atrocity by the militant group and the government's rejection of the withdrawal of its troops.

"We Christians believe that peace cannot be built by arms. Jesus rebuked his disciples by saying, 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword' even when he was captured," the petition said. "In the message issued by the Koda's family in such an unbearable sorrow and pain that they 'pray that Iraqi people would find peace,' we see their posture to follow Jesus Christ."

"Jesus Christ risked his life for his wish that no little one may perish. In order to realize that wish in the present world, we should firmly keep Koda's death in mind and make efforts in Japan, Iraq and America for people around the world to live in peace and at ease," the petition added. Some churches, Christian individuals and organizations in Japan had urged the government since October 27, before Koda's death, for an immediate withdrawal of the SDF and rescue of Shosei Koda.

The UCCJ had issued an urgent statement of protest to the government at its 34th General Assembly in Tokyo. "The one who has been taken captive is a youth related to the United Church of Christ in Japan," the statement said, urging the government to order "an immediate withdrawal of the SDF to rescue this brother as soon as possible."

The statement was echoed by the Christian Network for Peace, the JCCJP, the JBC, the Japan Baptist Union (JBU), and the NCCJ, all of which had urgently demanded the withdrawal and his rescue. "So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost," said a NCCJ statement supporting that demand, quoting the word of Jesus in Matthew 18:14.

Cautions had been issued by the NCCJ and other supporters of Koda that the fact his parents are Christians should not be made known to the militant group through foreign churches and mass media, as this knowledge could have increased the danger. Christians have been subject to terrorist attacks in Iraq and other countries in the Middle East. (*Hisashi Yukimoto*)

\*See also JCAN no. 734, Spring/Summer 2003, *Japanese Baptist Pastor Acts as "Human Shield" in Iraq: Questions War and Criticizes "Pax Americana" in Baghdad.*

## The Empowerment Center

The Empowerment Center, in Kansai area, was started in 1997. The founder and director Yuri Morita is an activist, author, *taiko* player, film producer, mother, educator, and a Catholic who conducts training workshops, seminars, and lectures for national and local governments, the National Diet members, business and NPOs. She has trained thousands of professionals on child abuse, domestic violence and human rights for the last 7 years in Japan. She is a consultant to Ministry of Health and Labor on the policies of child abuse prevention. Yuri Morita is responsible for training over 5000 specialists for the CAP (child assault prevention) program in Japan. These specialists trained over 800,000 children and 600,000 parents and teachers in schools children's rights and ways to prevent violence. She is responsible for developing "MY TREE Parents," an educational/healing group program for parents who have abused children and need to be reunited with children. Yuri herself is also a mother of three children and her husband, United Methodist missionary Rev. Dr. Richard Stinson, teaches multiculturalism and diversity issues at Kwansai Gakuen in Nishinomiya.

Yuri Morita also has published 18 books, some of which are:

- *Diversity Awareness Training Guide* - University of California (English) and Kaiho Press (Japanese)

- *Children and Violence* - Iwanami Press
- *Breaking Silence of Sexual Abuse* - Tukiiji Press
- *Domestic Violence: When Love Turns to Anger* - Syogakukan
- *Empowerment and Human Rights* - Kaiho Press
- *Take a Walk in My Shoes: Guide Book for Youth on Diversity Awareness Activities* - University of California

Her book on helping children to become aware of molestation issues, *Keep Safe Your Body and Your Mind*; received the Sankei Children's Culture Award in 1998 in Japan and "Sacred Soul: a life of the leader of Native Americans" won the Asahi Journal Nonfiction Award in 1988 in Japan. She has produced a number of videos including:

"*Meeting the Challenge of Diversity*"

"*Youth in Action for Diversity*"

"*Our Voices: Youth Speak Out on Race and Gender*"

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## Are You Caring for Life? - Bilingual CDs Published by the NCCJ Women's Committee

In response to the Decade to Overcome Violence that is called for by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Action Plan adopted at the Fifth Solidarity and Exchange Meeting of Korean, Japanese and Korean Resident Women in Japan which was held in Okinawa by the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) Women's Committee in November last year, the Committee has published compact disks of bilingual songs with its title, "*Are You Caring for Life?*"

The CD contains three songs in Japanese and Korean, including *Caring for Life*, *The Start Line*, and *The Beautiful Sea - Life is the Treasure*. Each of these songs has *karaoke* accompaniments. It has a jacket picture of a butterfly flying in a sunny field in Okinawa, in which the participants of the meeting imagined the soul of an Okinawan child who died in a dark cave while hiding to escape the fierce battle between the United States and Japan there during World War II.

Orders of the CD can be placed through the NCCJ office at the price of 1,200 yen for domestic purchases or US\$ 20.00 for international orders. A portion of the purchase price, 200 yen or 2 dollars, will be used to support an Okinawan group called the Society to Protect Life, which is opposing the construction project of the U.S. military base in Henoko, Okinawa (see the JCAN article on the Henoko base construction on page 14 of this issue).

For more information and to place an order, contact Ms. Mikako Nishihara, the Executive Secretary of the Committee at the NCCJ office: mikako@jca.apc.org. (H.Y.)



*Inochi Itooshinde Imasuka*  
(Are you caring for life?)

## Churches and Organizations Supporting Quake Victims in Niigata

### CHURCHES

#### A. Member churches of the National Christian Council in Japan

1. The Japan Baptist Convention (JBC) - Northern Kanto Regional Union. No English website.  
Japanese information: <http://niigatashien.baptist-church.net/041027zenkoku.htm>
2. The United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) - Kanto Diocese Committee on Social Affairs  
Japanese information on its relief efforts in the Niigata Chuetsu regional earthquake: <http://kantoukyouku.cool.ne.jp/social/socialtop.html>
3. The Anglican-Episcopal Church in Japan (Nihon Sei-Ko-Kai: NSKK): Chubu Diocese  
English/Japanese homepage of the NSKK: <http://www.nskk.org/>  
Japanese information on its support to quake victims: [http://www.nskk.org/chubu/news/index\\_news.html](http://www.nskk.org/chubu/news/index_news.html)

#### B. Other Churches

1. The Salvation Army Japan  
English website on SAJ: <http://www.salvationarmy.or.jp/english/index.html>  
Japanese website on emergency support on the earthquake: <http://www.salvationarmy.or.jp/news/chuetsu/index.html>

### ORGANIZATIONS

1. The National Council of YMCAs of Japan  
English website: [http://www1.ymcajapan.org/fcsc/content/01\\_home](http://www1.ymcajapan.org/fcsc/content/01_home)  
Japanese website on quake victims: <http://www.ymcajapan.org/>  
YMCA objective: to support victims of the typhoon no. 23 and the earthquake in Niigata, by:
  - a. supporting volunteers dispatched from local YMCAs in Japan
  - b. supporting volunteer centers, Christian churches, social welfare councils that are helping those victims in areas that suffered from the typhoon and earthquake
2. World Vision Japan  
English website: <http://www.worldvision.or.jp/English/index.html>  
Japanese website on victims: <http://www.worldvision.or.jp/headlines/niigata/index.html> and <http://www.worldvision.or.jp/notice/page15.html>
3. The Japan Emergency Team  
English website on JET: <http://www.jhelp.com/en/jet.html>

Japanese website on quake victims: [http://www.jhelp.com/jpn/index\\_j.html](http://www.jhelp.com/jpn/index_j.html)

4. Caritas Japan  
Emails in English: [secretariat@caritas.jp](mailto:secretariat@caritas.jp)  
Japanese website on quake victims: <http://www.caritas.jp/2004Niigata2/index.html>
5. Second Harvest/Food Bank Japan has also responded by delivering food to the quake victims.  
[www.foodbankjapan.org](http://www.foodbankjapan.org)

### Support the UCCJ Ainu Center by Buying a Calendar!

The UCCJ Ainu Tribal Information Center (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Hokkaido Kyoku Ainu Minzoku Joho Senta) is selling calendars for 2005 with photos of beautiful embroidery of Ainu indigenous people depicted at various locations in their land of Hokkaido. Please send 1500 yen by postal transfer 02700-2-13485. For international orders, email [oron@jade.plala.or.jp](mailto:oron@jade.plala.or.jp) or fax 0164-43-0216.



*Pictures of artwork in Ainu Calendar*



## Quake-stricken Church Rebuilt in Kobe

Kobe Eiko Church, a local congregation of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), has seen the completion of construction of a new church building on September 30. This comes nearly 10 years after it was totally destroyed by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in January 1995, which killed more than 6,000 people and devastated thousands of buildings in the western part of Japan.

The church, one of the architectural symbols of the international city of Kobe, had been well-known for its red bricks and 37-meter tower. Originally built in 1923, it escaped without being destroyed during World War II.

The first worship service since the reconstruction was held there on October 10. At that service, Rev. Soji Kitamura, former pastor of the church at the time of the earthquake, reportedly gave his sermon to more than 500 people, saying, "We have come back here, thanks to the encouragement of many people."

"It was like the way that Martha, the sister of the dead Lazarus, whose name means 'God has helped', appealed (to Jesus) by saying, 'already there is a stench' (John 11:39)", he noted in the church's pamphlet on the reconstruction, recalling how he felt after the church was destroyed. "Since then, we have been led to believe what the Lord Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life' (John 11:25)."

"For Kobe Eiko Church, the nine years and nine months since the day of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake until the reconstruction of the church building was a God's time," wrote Rev. Kazuo Aiura, the senior pastor of the church.

The congregation had prepared for the reconstruction through prayers and donations by church members and the public while worshipping at a temporary tent at the church site and other places. A dedication ceremony of the new church building was held on November 23. The word "eiko" means "glory" in Japanese.



*The Kobe Eiko Church, rebuilt nearly 10 years after it was destroyed (photo taken on October 18, 2004, courtesy of Kobe Eiko Church)*

## Churches in Japan Affected by and Respond to Disasters

Over the past four months since July, many churches in Japan have been no exceptions to those affected by series of torrential rains, typhoons and earthquakes in Japan. No death or injuries among the church members have been reported in any of these disasters.

On July 13, churches and their members in Niigata, Fukui and Fukushima in northern part of Japan were seriously affected by torrential rains, and some of them, especially those of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), the Japan Anglican-Episcopal Church (NSKK) and the Catholic Church in Japan were flooded after some river banks were broken down. Donations for victims of the flood were collected and more than a thousand volunteers gathered from other churches and the YMCAs at some local churches and a NSKK kindergarten that served as support centers for the victims.

In southern Kyushu Island in the southwestern part of the country, churches of the Japan Baptist Convention (JBC)

were struck by a series of typhoons in September. Catholic churches were also among those hit by one of the typhoons. Some of their church roofs were blown away.

In Mie Prefecture in central Japan, a UCCJ church and seven houses of its members were reportedly flooded by a typhoon in late September. The Japanese online edition of *The Lutherans* reported in October that church buildings of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) in Kyushu, Kansai, Shikoku, Chugoku and Hokkaido regions have been damaged by these typhoons.

In Niigata, churches of the NSKK and the UCCJ and houses of their members were distorted inside in particular by a series of earthquakes including four of them with intensity of more than 6 in Japanese scale. Some of them have been evacuated. Many messages of prayers and solidarity and pastoral visits have been accepted by the local churches. There have been no relevant damages being reported from JBC.

## September 11 World Peace Rally and Parade at Meiji Park, Tokyo



5000 people were in attendance throughout that day at the September 11 World Peace Rally. Members and Supporters of Christian Peace Network are shown here preparing to walk with other groups for peace.



"A Symbol of Peace" September 11 World Peace Rally and Parade, Meiji Park, Tokyo.

## The 60th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Next year will mark sixty years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US armed forces. During these past sixty years, rather than abating, the threat posed by nuclear weapons has instead increased to become a significantly more complex and serious issue. The partial nuclear disarmament after the close of the cold war at the end of the 1980s saw little more achieved than storage and disposal of outdated nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation and tests continue unabated, and the threat of nuclear terrorism draws ever nearer. The progress made in the US development of small scale nuclear weapons for land war, and the construction of nuclear powered war bases in space are of special concern with the potential risk of nuclear pollution becoming increasingly more possible. We Christians in Japan must renew our determination to struggle for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

After the end of the war, churches in Japan confessed their responsibility for their complicity in the war and advocated anti-nuclear arms and peace, based on the Peace Constitution and their firsthand suffering from atomic bombings. But these efforts were not enough. We have not been able to change the fact that, since the end of WWII, Japan has continuously existed under the US nuclear umbrella. Furthermore, for the past eight years Japan has collaborated in developing a missile defence system, which is an important part of US nuclear war strategy. Moreover, the US has been causing widespread radioactive contamination amongst the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq through

the use of depleted uranium shells. Japan, through following the lead of the US military by sending warships to the Indian Sea and troops to Iraq, is supporting the US in the use of these extremely inhuman and evil weapons.

The National Christian Council (NCC) of Japan must return to its anti-nuclear arms and peace origins and announce its clear opposition to the production, possession and use of nuclear weapons. Even small scale nuclear arms link to the massacre of civilians, the extermination of peoples, the creation of a prolonged and widespread hell on earth and irreversible damage over successive generations. The mere act of preparing for this kind of war is sin against God and crime against humanity. Churches and Christians cannot therefore remain in a neutral position with regard to these weapons. We Christians have no other option but to clearly assert an anti-nuclear stance and "choose life" (Deut.30:19) for both ourselves and all the people of the world. We must call upon all Christians in Japan to stand firm in this regard, and clearly advocate to our Government the way of peacekeeping without nuclear arms. We must also contact Christians in the United States of America and other countries and appeal to them for prayer and action towards the creation of a nuclear free world.

By Rev. Tsutumo Shoji, former NCCJ General Secretary and member of NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee. (Translated by Ian Laidlaw)

## General Secretaries of Asia NCCs Meet in Chiang Mai

*Excerpts from CCA Asian Ecumenical News*



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### Chiang Mai Meet Calls for Reclaiming “Prophetic Heritage”

CHIANG MAI, Thailand – A meeting of ecumenical leaders held here has called on Asian Christians to resist violence, poverty and marginalization, and to “reclaim our prophetic heritage and calling as a response to the emerging issues of our time.”

The meeting of the general secretaries of the national council of churches and Christian councils (NCCs) in Asia called on them to affirm local Christian communities as communities of justice and peace and added: “Christians be equipped as peacemakers in their societies.”

The 21-23 September meeting organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) also affirmed and encouraged the use of the resources of the Decade to Overcome Violence and its focus on Asia in 2005 for peace building initiatives. The 27 participants of the meeting were general secretaries from 15 out of 18 Asian member countries, resource persons from India, Switzerland, Thailand and the CCA staff.

The three-day meeting began with an opening worship. Rev Salvador Martinez from the Payap University delivered a sermon. The two bible reflections by Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto (NCCJ) and Rev Ipe Joseph (NCCI) were the highlights in the two following morning worships.

“We are now witnessing widening gaps between societies, and within societies. Individuals and communities are marginalized, and success seems to be measured by the ability to squander resources in unsustainable ways,” a communiqué issued at the end of the meeting said. It acknowledged that Christians are also responsible for perpetuating violence in this world and expressed the need to repent of their part in creating division and separation in the society.

The leaders urged the Christian community to identify all structures that legitimate and perpetuate violence and injustice within the churches, like discrimination based on age, caste, disability, ethnicity, gender, economic disadvantage and abuse based on inequality of power sharing. The ecumenical leaders confessed the “growing ecumenical amnesia and lethargy,” which meant that “we are not living up to the demands and challenges of our time.” According to them, “the strength of ecumenism is in its involvement with the ‘grassroots,’ a strength that the institutions we create must serve.”

In the violent world we live, “peace remains a quality of life that is more often expressed by its absence than by its presence,” the communiqué noted. The participants recommitted themselves to actively involve in peace making by cooperating with peoples of other faith and no faith. They recalled the efforts of people, including many Christians, around the world in creating peace in their societies, and added that “now it is up to the generations who follow those pioneers to make sure these advances are not lost.”

#### Ecumenical News International (ENI)

<http://www.eni.ch/highlights/news.shtml>

A good website featuring a newsletter that shares international news of Christian related events from all over the world, including Japan.

The Tozanso Consultation held in Japan is at <http://www.eni.ch/highlights/news.shtml?2004/10>

Homepage <http://www.eni.ch/>

ENI is sponsored by the:

- †World Council of Churches
- †Lutheran World Federation
- †World Alliance of Reformed Churches
- †Conference of European Churches

## The Danger of Japan's Nuclear Recycling

Stop the operation of the nuclear reprocessing facility at Rokkasho, Asia's largest plant! It is designed to reprocess the spent nuclear fuel from 52 nuclear reactors from across Japan. The total amount of spent fuel it will process is estimated to be about 900 to 1,000 tons of uranium per year. The Rokkasho plant is scheduled to begin uranium testing in June 2004. One of many serious matters of dispute is the plant's ability to produce nuclear weapons. People are concerned about the situation in North Korea, but what about Japan?

In addition, more nuclear facilities and an interim storage plant are being planned as part of the plutonium separation cycle in this area of Shimokita Peninsula in Aomori Prefecture. All the nuclear facilities are closely linked together. The potential danger increases with each new construction. Why is the project progressing? Because there is money involved. The electric companies have offered billions of yen as compensation to residents, created job opportunities, and a provided a support fund for local festivals.

This has set off a number of serious phenomena, such as the division of local people into groups that oppose and hate each other, widening the gap between the rich and the poor, and the construction of odd or inadequate facilities that will be financially unstable. There is a taboo against speaking out. Only a few are candid about their stances. It could be said that this is another foul act of building a Tower of Babel. A simple question arises: Why here, far

from the city; why not there, the place nearest the need? From what I have learned, the chosen and imposed locations for nuclear plants all over the world are in degraded and impoverished areas. This similarity is obvious throughout the world in the industrialization process.

The history of the Shimokita area reminds me of the indigenous people of the United States, Taiwan, and Australia, who are also victims of nuclear industrialization. I especially remember the stories about the aboriginal people living near an Australian uranium mine that were shared by a group of International Peace Pilgrims at a meeting sponsored by the National Christian Council in Japan at the end of April 2004. On that occasion, participants from Protestant as well as from Zen and Nichiren Buddhist backgrounds, transcending their racial and religious differences, gathered to offer prayers and share experiences with one another. During the gathering, a torch lit from a fire kept burning from the time of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was placed in the center of the circle. As participants representing various religions, and those of no religious affiliation, shared prayers, songs, messages, and tears, each one of us began to experience a sense of hope.

Naoto Ikesako, Tanabu Church, in Ou District.

*Condensed from the Kyodan Newsletter, Issue #328, June 2004. For full article and photo contact the Kyodan (UCCJ) office: Email knl-c@uccj.org*

## Carillon Children's Center

Ms. Setsuko Tsuboi is a Christian lawyer who is also an advocate of children's rights. (She is a member of Yumimachi Hongo Church, UCCJ.) On January 19 she gave a well-received talk to the NCC-J Center for Religious Education on the topic "Stop the revision of the Basic Law on Education, from the viewpoint of protecting children's rights." Ms. Tsuboi shared many examples of abuse in Japan and her concerns for children, including some from her own life and her experience of raising her own daughter. The full text of her talk is published in Japanese in issue 393 of the magazine *Kyokai Kyoiku*.

Ms. Tsuboi has been providing legal support for troubled juveniles for more than ten years. Together with other lawyers and child welfare experts, she is planning to open the nonprofit Carillon Children's Center as a private temporary shelter for about five teenagers.

In Japan there are 182 public child-care guidance offices nationwide that provide temporary protection for children and youth under 18 who need special care but the

priority is put on serious cases. Those whose problems are not so severe often fall through the cracks as there is no place for them, despite the fact that juvenile delinquency and child abuse is on the rise in Japan. It is this group Tsuboi is most interested in helping.

The Carillon Children's Center will take in minors who do not have a place to stay for the night or need a lawyer. Some may have been abandoned by parents or have been abused. Minors looking for shelter and those who know youth needing help should contact lawyers through the free consultation service of the Tokyo Bar Association. If a lawyer determines the youth needs shelter, then the Center will offer free short-term stays. The Center is more like a home than a shelter, housing only four or five people at a time. Although it can offer only short-term stays, Tsuboi also hopes to find long-term accommodation for the young people it takes in. She believes that public understanding of the need to support troubled young people is increasing, and that the Carillon Children Center will be able to help fulfill this need. (C.G.V.)

## Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, Encourages Faith-filled Justice Seekers

OCTOBER 7

On October 7th, Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, founder and President of the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue, gave a presentation entitled "The US Presidential election 2004 and Religion" at Nicola Beret in Yotsuya. Approximately 65 people attended the presentation. Sr. Sylvester outlined how the role of religion in the Presidential election process has evolved historically, from playing a minimal role in the founding years of the US nation, to playing a defining role with the strength of the Evangelic vote in the current election. Sr. Sylvester claims that President Bush, who calls himself with the most conservative Evangelical group, giving the Evangelicals great power. Turning to the Catholic role in the election, Sr. Sylvester says that Catholics are fairly evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans, but 18% are still undecided. President Bush is focused on this 18%, and is emphasizing the issues of abortion, same sex marriage, and stem cell research, hoping to wed the Catholics with the Evangelicals. Sr. Sylvester concluded her presentation with an introduction to "Engaging Impasse" - a contemplative movement to create a new way of being and acting to strengthen our ability to resist. (*Helen Rafmussen*)

OCTOBER 9

Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, gave a talk on "Globalizing" on October 9 at St. Ignatius Church in Yotsuya for the 30th Anniversary of the National Bishops' Peace and Justice Council. In spite of the typhoon that day, more than 350 were in attendance for the gathering. (The Justice and Peace Gathering lasted throughout the weekend. On Sunday and Monday, Oct 10 and 11, it was held at the Tokyo Cathedral where there were more than 1200 in attendance over the two days.)

Beginning her talk with her own personal history of how she became involved in justice and peace issues over the years, she stated that she believed we are living in a time of crisis and, like the Chinese character, it has two meanings—danger and opportunity. The danger is that "Globalization today has a very Western and US face which is causing dissent, resentment and anger throughout the world." She shared how the exportation of US consumerism and culture threatens traditional lifestyles and values of many tribal, ethnic and religious groups. Sr. Nancy said this worldview has "...brought us to the brink of disaster especially in relation to the health of our planet earth which has been raped and exploited in the name of progress."



*Sr. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, at Nicola Baret, Yotsuya, Tokyo*

### So what is the challenge?

Sr. Nancy said that "...as activists on both side of the globe we have much work to do. We must continue in our work of protesting, advocating and demonstrating for and against policies that are not just or move us toward peace. We must continue educating on the critical issues facing us. But I no longer think that is enough. We must come to our work with a new way of being, one born out of our communal contemplation and dialogue." She closed with encouraging all of us, as faith-filled justice seekers, to become the people God desires us to be. We may need to face our fears. There is a new world emerging and "we need to draw on the best of our faith tradition together with that of other major religions so that we can address those fears and walk with each other into the future."

Nancy Sylvester is founder and President of the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue. The Institute's first major project is Engaging Impasse: Circles of Contemplation and Dialogue, of which she is Executive Director. She recently completed her three year term in the Presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. She is the immediate past vice president of her religious congregation, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, Michigan. Prior to her position on the IHM Leadership Council, she served as National Coordinator and board member of NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby, from 1982 through 1992. She has recently completed her term as advisor on the United States Bishops' International Policy Committee. She has served on the National Board of Mary's Peace, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice where she was a founding member, the National Board of the Africa Faith and Justice Network, and eleven years on the Board of Trustees of Marygrove College. Nancy has lectured widely on a number of topics including societal shifts in the world and church, leadership for transformation, women's issues, the new cosmology, the political process, political responsibility, economic justice, globalization, eco-feminism, and Catholic social teaching. (*Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto*)

## Christians in Japan Urge Government to Stop US Base Construction in Okinawa

Christians and other citizens have continued to sit-in on and off the coast of an Okinawan village called Henoko since April 19 to protest and stop the construction of a new US military airbase in one of the southwestern indigenous islands of Japan. These sit-ins have been echoed by Christians and other activists who have held protests everyday since August 2 in front of the Diet of Japan in Tokyo.

However, in early September, Japan's Defense Facilities Administration Bureau officials initiated an underwater drilling survey for the construction. On November 16, the government began construction of a platform at a planned seabed drilling site. One platform has already been set up, harming many parts of local coral reef. The protesters have tried to stop the construction by putting canoes and small boats in the path of the survey and drilling vessels and around the platform.

The US and Japanese governments had agreed in 1996 to return the land of the US Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, presently located in the central Okinawan city of Ginowan, to the local community with the condition of building a new airport. Local residents in Henoko, including many elderly, have opposed this relocation plan.

In Washington on October 6 this year, Lt. Gen. Wallace Gregson, the commander of US Marine Corps forces in the Pacific, reportedly said the 1996 agreement between Japan and the US on the relocation of the MCAS Futenma should be kept intact, as the government of Japan asked the United States to shift some of its military units based in Okinawa overseas as part of a global realignment plan.

Concerns have been raised by conservationists and protesters about damage to the remaining coral and marine life at the construction site, which is the home of the endangered Dugong (sea cow) and critical to the livelihood of the local residents.

In 2003, an international petition to protect the Dugong was issued in English and Japanese by many individuals in Japan, including some church leaders in Okinawa and Tokyo (<http://sea-dugong.org/Petition-Dugong1.doc> and <http://sea-dugong.org/english/syomei-e.htm>).

In the United States, on the other hand, many conservationist groups including the Christian Environmental Association and the United Church of Christ Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility, issued a statement on September 7, calling on President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to "save the

Okinawa Dugong as the planned new airbase would destroy essential dugong habitat." (<http://www.commondreams.org/news2004/0907-04.htm>)

The NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee and the Christian Political League, an associate member organization of the NCCJ, submitted their petitions on September 6 to the chiefs of the Defense Agency and Defense Facility Agency of Japan, as part of their weekly protests, strongly urging them to stop the drilling and cancel the new construction plan. At the same time they expressed their grave concerns about US military aircraft accidents that have occurred earlier this year in Okinawa.

The Committee, together with the NCCJ Women's Committee, is also asking people for their financial support to charter fishing vessels for the protest in Henoko.

Rev. Aika Taira, a UCCJ pastor from Okinawa and a member of the Committee on Peace and Nuclear Issues, recently reported on his visit to Henoko in September, quoting the words of Jesus in John 16.33, "I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

"Christ must be in Henoko now," he quoted another pastor as saying.

\*Web photos of activists including Christians who are opposing the base construction at Henoko can be found at [http://dugong2003.fc2web.com/04\\_10\\_4.html](http://dugong2003.fc2web.com/04_10_4.html) and [http://dugong2003.fc2web.com/04\\_10\\_3.html](http://dugong2003.fc2web.com/04_10_3.html).



*Protesters on four canoes facing defense facility employees on two survey and operation vessels, trying to stop the construction of a platform launched at a seabed drilling site off Henoko, Okinawa. Photo taken on November 17 (Courtesy of Association to Protect Northernmost Dugong, English website: <http://sea-dugong.org/english/index.html>).*

## Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB Visits Japan

### “...to be a real leader, learn to rebel”



*From left to right Mikako Nishihara -Executive Secretary of the NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee, Junko Matsuura -NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues committee, Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB, Reiko Suzuki -Moderator of NCCJ, Rev. Shigeko Yamano - Anglican/Episcopal priest (NSKK)*

Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB spoke on September 24, at the Tokyo Union Church about the Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders Sr. Joan is the co-chair.

The Global Peace Initiative of Women is based in the United Nations. When the U.N. Peace Summit convened in 2000, the Dalai Lama was not invited, in political deference to China. Sr. Joan said “I was furious and refused to attend. Kofi Annan himself — a rare and marvelous human being — says that war is illegal and immoral, and that there can be no peace without religious tolerance.”

Of the 2,000 delegates in Geneva, only 15 percent were women. “I cut down the number even further, but it’s important to make a stand. Look around. Leaders in power are male. On the ground they are women. It’s hard for women like us to move around in the global arena; we just don’t have the money.” So the solution was to hold a gathering of 600 women from 75 countries under the auspices of the U.N. in Geneva. Every major religion was represented and women who are bishops, nuns, rabbis, swamis, Muslims scholars as well as business and government figures gathered together for discussion and dialogue. One moving story Sr. Joan shared was about a Palestinian woman and an Israeli woman who were able to hold a conversation together - both out of their suffering and hardships - but both after their initial anger, who were able to come to terms with the common bonds that are shared by women who suffer.

The Global Peace Initiative of Women’s objectives was/is to mobilize resources, develop special peace building

activities in conflict areas, draw public attention to the impact of war, and highlight the ongoing violence against women. Sr. Joan said that women assume responsibility for the world and it is sad that it seems as if we raise one world to destroy another but war is wrong and “violence is a sin against the sacrament of life.”

Sr. Joan’s 10-day stay in Japan has involved a number of major commitments - a speech to the Pan-Asian Youth Leadership Conference in Hiroshima where she told the young people assembled, “If you want to be a real leader, learn to rebel.”

Joan also participated in choosing this year’s winner of the \$100,000 Niwano Peace Prize. The rest of her time was spent with women’s groups and speaking at Tokyo Union Church, a lecture sponsored by the NCCJ Women’s Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee and the Catholic Conference of Justice and Peace.

Joan Chittister, a Benedictine sister based in a monastery in Erie, Pa., is a best-selling author (30 titles and many more still to come. Joan’s latest book is “Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir”), and she is a well-known national and international lecturer. She is an active member of the International Peace Council, Niwano Peace Foundation, and The Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders. She is past president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Joan is co-chair of The Global Peace Initiative of Women, and founder and executive director of Benetvision, a research and resource center for contemporary spirituality (see [www.benetvision.org](http://www.benetvision.org))

She also writes a regular column for the National Catholic Reporter, “From Where I Stand (see the [nationalcatholicreporter.org/fwis/](http://nationalcatholicreporter.org/fwis/))

(C.G.Y.)



## NCCJ General Secretary to North Korea (DPRK) and South Korea

### South Korea

Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, NCCJ General Secretary travelled to South Korea from August 19-21 to attend a consultation organized by WCC (World Council of Churches). This was part of the many activities NCCJ is holding for their 80th anniversary. At this consultation which was part of the WCC Central Committee executive meeting in Seoul, the new General Secretary of WCC, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, attended along with many of the ecumenical leaders from northeast Asia. Among others, China Christian Council and Taiwan Presbyterian Church came to this meeting. Many of those who came met Rev. Samuel Kobia for the first time. This was his first trip to Korea as the General Secretary of WCC. The consultation held meetings on the importance of mutual exchange and shared what each church organization and the other councils had been doing in relation to Korea. Current issues and problems of Korea were discussed as well as visions for ecumenical network related to Korea in the future.

### North Korea

Rev. Toshi Yamamoto visited DPRK (North Korea) from August 24 to 28 as part of a delegation of NGOs which help give aid to Korea. The purpose of this trip was to hold a children's painting exhibition in Pyongyang. The paintings were drawn by Japanese children (including Korean children in Japan), South Korean children, and children from the DPRK. During this trip, Rev. Yamamoto also visited the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), the organization that NCCJ works with in donating food aid to North Korea.

As part of the delegation, there were four children and two teachers from the Korean school in Japan. The children and teachers enjoyed meeting and playing with the North Korean children. Children are similar everywhere in that they like playing and making friends. The paintings were similar as well. This was true peace education to see pictures of nature and their families drawn by the children. Each piece of art work also included a short message to their counterpart friends so that everyone could read these heartfelt messages.

A major Japanese network, TBS, sent a crew from Japan along with the NGO delegation to North Korea. This was important as most of the information coming from the media in Japan is negative. Both Japan and North Korea are guilty of propaganda and sharing negative images of each other. But looking at children playing together creates a positive image for both countries.

### South Korea – NCCJ General Assembly

A third trip found Rev. Toshi Yamamoto returning to South Korea for the NCCJ 53rd General Assembly. Below are remarks he delivered to the Assembly on November 15.

On behalf of the officers, staff and members of the National Christian Council in Japan, I extend to you all warm greetings on this occasion of 53rd General Assembly of the National Council of Churches in Korea, with the celebration of the 80th anniversary of its foundation.

*We rejoice with you on God's blessings on the NCCJ for the past 80 years. I am very thankful for the long-time partnership between NCC -Korea and NCC-Japan. When we look back at our history, it was in 1967, that the Kyodan, the largest Protestant denomination in Japan and also a member church of the NCC-J, issued a "Confession of Responsibility during World War II" which stated that "In the name of Kyodan, we issued a statement at home and abroad in which we approved of and supported the war and encouraged prayers for victory. Indeed, even as our country committed sin, so we too, as a church fell into the same sin. Now, with deep pain in our hearts, we confess our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness. We also seek the forgiveness of the peoples of all nations, particularly in Asia, and of the churches therein..." In addition to the "Confession of Responsibility" by the Kyodan, many member churches and organizations of the NCC-J have repented and confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness from God and our neighbors in Asia. It has been a clear mandate that churches in Japan are seeking to live the gospel of reconciliation with sisters and brothers in Korea.*

*I also realize that the "Emergency Christian Conference on Korean Problems" was organized in Japan by Rev. Nakajima Masaaki, then NCCJ General Secretary, during the democratization process in 1970's. This year, in March, we had a Christian Seminar between Korea and Japan in Tokyo. Last month, WCC and CCA organized the Tozanso Consultation to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Tozanso process in Japan. The main theme of the consultation was "Korean Peninsula- A Flashpoint in North East Asia"*

*I am here, together with ecumenical friends all over the world, to confirm our solidarity and joint actions with you in the areas of reunification of the Korean Peninsula, human rights, peace and justice, and mutual exchange programs between sisters and brothers of Korea and Japan.*



continued from p. 16....

*We live in a world, where people are suffering and dying due to war, terror, poverty, disease, disasters, political oppression, religio-cultural discrimination and communal conflicts. People are overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness and helplessness, and as a result they seem to be losing their identity and meaning of life.*

*I sincerely hope that your deliberations, discussions, and decision-making would be meaningful for enriching lives in today's uncertain world and will bear good fruit in order to lift up the ecumenical movement in our time.*

*Many blessings upon us all.*

Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto.



## “On the Contrary, Indispensable” – Christian “Disabled” Persons from Korea and Japan Hold Joint Seminar in Hakone

Thirty two “disabled” persons from Korea joined their Japanese counterparts in Hakone for a joint seminar on Christianity and “disabled” persons from October 5 to 7 with the biblical theme, “On the contrary, indispensable” (1 Corinthians 12:22).

In his keynote address, Rev. Hiroo Sekita, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), said that the weaker are indispensable for a community in order for it to be a blessed community. “Looking back the history of the world, the qualitative renewal of culture has always been made by ‘the weaker’ and the few,” he said.

Rev. Yang Dong-Chung, the vice chair of the NCC Korea’s Committee on “Disabled” Persons, shared the current situation of the movement on “disabled” per-

sons in Korea, stating that while the “disabled” persons have come to have their seats in the National Assembly of Korea, their right to education, employment and mobility has not been fully achieved. He also said that the “disabled” persons are among those in the churches in Korea, have not yet come to worship together with the “disabled” persons.

“The very fact that the ‘disabled’ persons from the country (Japan) which once ruled over the other (Korea) have come together to be blessed, praise God, join their voices to pray and sing hymns proves that the kingdom of God is here,” reported Hisashi Shibusawa, former chairman of the NCCJ Committee on the “Disabled” Persons, who attended the seminar. *(Hisashi Yukimoto)*

## Scriptures Going High-Tech: The Japan Bible Society

In the midst of a trend for electronic networking worldwide, the Bible in Japan is increasingly going high-tech.

The Japan Bible Society (JBS), an associate member of the NCCJ, has produced electronic scriptures, ranging from “i-Bible” made readable on the mobile phone to “e-book” New Testament and “Jnet” Bible, downloadable on the Internet. And now a portable audio Bible machine called “Bible Talk” has been on the frontline of the bookshelves at Christian bookstores here since early June.

JBS, which provides the contents of the Jnet and the e-book, says that these Bibles, particularly the Bible Talk and the “i-Bible”, are intended to “provide opportunities not only for existing Bible readers but also other people to read the Bible”, as are the Art Bible and the Study Bible that was published by the JBS recently.

“We would like to come up with various products from such a viewpoint in the future,” the JBS says.

Photos of the Bible Talk: [http://www.bible.or.jp/bible\\_talk/index.html](http://www.bible.or.jp/bible_talk/index.html). The English website of the JBS: <http://www.biblesociety.org/bs-jan.htm>

## “Mary and Martha” – Book & Sermon by Japanese Feminist Theologian

Dr. Satoko Yamaguchi is the author of *Mary and Martha: Women in the World of Jesus* (Orbis Press, Maryknoll, New York, 2002).

Her book provides a new and creative way to look at the story of Mary and Martha from a feminist perspective. The book received a 2003 book award from the U.S./Canada Catholic Press Association.

Below are excerpts from a sermon about Mary and Martha given on Nov. 7, 2004, All Saints Sunday, at West Tokyo Union Church: [www.tuc.org](http://www.tuc.org)

“Since today is an All Saints Sunday, I would like to invite you to remember Mary and Martha as the saints of the earliest churches. In church, we had been taught that all the disciples, apostles, and church leaders were male. Only recently have we learned that women also played significant leadership roles in Christian beginnings. We have just begun discovering what had been lost for almost 2000 years of our history, and I am one of those who are thrilled by these discoveries.

Even if it means to discover the history of ‘the socially weak’ or ‘the oppressed poor,’ it is not merely the history of ‘the victims’ but that of ordinary people who suffered, shed tears, got angry, loved, struggled, laughed, and lived with many hopes and wishes. It means to restore the history of our spiritual ancestors much more inclusively than before. Mary and Martha of Bethany are among those spiritual ancestors whose profiles are recovered only recently.

We have two texts of their stories in our Christian Testament: in John (11:1-12:11) and in Luke (10:38-42).

Now, at church, the Lukan text of Mary and Martha has been frequently read, and we feel that we already know them quite well. While Mary is a silent listener, her sister Martha is an active woman in the kitchen who was chided by Jesus because of her complaint. Yet we all know that we need Martha at church as well as at home.

The Johannine text tells us a very different story of the sisters. The text has been read as the story of Lazarus, and little attention has been paid to the sisters in the story. However, this is the text that opened up a new path for me to meet the sisters again for the first time. Here I briefly share with you some of the findings of my study.

First of all, in the text they are depicted as Jesus’ friends and disciples. In this gospel, only the siblings



are depicted as Jesus’ friends whom Jesus loves (11:5). At the same time, Martha and Mary are disciples. The gospel identifies the teacher-disciple relationship by having the disciples use two terms for Jesus, ‘teacher’ and ‘lord’ (13:13). The disciples in general are described as using the two terms in chapter 11 (11:8, 12). Other than these, Martha (11:28, 21) and Mary (11:28, 32), as well as Mary Magdalene (20:16, 18) are described as such in the gospel.

Next, Martha’s faith confession in 11:27 echoes the faith confession which the Johannine gospel wishes to lead the audience. Chapter 20, verse 31, the original ending of the gospel reads, ‘these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.’ Martha thus takes on the role of the spokesperson who testifies to the faith of the Johannine communities. Here we see that Martha is assigned the representative leadership role that is assigned to Peter in all the other canonical gospels (Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20).

Martha's diakonia (service) also merits our special attention. The word diakonia refers to ministerial service as well as to service at the table. In the Johannine gospel, however, this word is used only twice: for Martha's activity here (12:2) and in Jesus' discourse on true discipleship (12:26) in the same chapter. This very limited use of the word implies that the word is used as an important theological term, meaning a ministerial service.

On the other hand, we learn that Mary's foot-washing is praised by Jesus as the model discipleship, and that even Jesus himself followed her practice. Scholars also found out that a careful analysis of the text reveal that Mary was a leader of a group of Jewish followers.

Thus, the gospel tells us that both Martha and Mary were remembered and told as great leaders or saints in the earliest Christian communities, when they founded our spiritual traditions in the midst of political and religious hardship. Furthermore, critical analyses of the Lukan text also reveal Martha's profile not as a complaining kitchen woman but as a woman called into ministry, and Mary's profile not as a silent listener but as a learned leader of the earliest faith community.

I would not say that the image of Martha as "the active woman in the kitchen" is the problem. However, I would say "No!" to the later interpretations that distorted her image of a representative community spokesperson into the image of a complaining woman in the kitchen. Also, I would not say that the image of Mary as a silent listener is the problem. However, I would not agree with the attitude that praises women only for their passive silence but not for their own voices and actions.

Martha and Mary should be justly remembered as saints in our faith communities.

I believe this kind of historical recovery after almost 2000 years of ingratitude is truly a miracle and good news not only for women but for all the children of God. Actually, such miracles are happening more and more in biblical scholarship these days, since women and men of all colors and of all walks of life around the world have began participating in the biblical and theological fields. Isn't it wonderful to live as Christian women and men at this time of our Christian history? Therefore, today, on the All Saints Sunday, we would like to gratefully add these two women saints, Martha and Mary, into our special communal praise and remembrance."

*Dr. Satoko Yamaguchi is the co-director and co-founder of the "Center for Feminist Theology and Ministry in Japan." She teaches biblical studies and feminist theology at Central Theological College (Anglican), Japan Biblical Theological Seminary (UCCJ), and Keisen Women's University. Dr. Satoko also teaches Biblical course for Catholic sisters who are on Sabbatical leave. She is a member of UCCJ Oizumi Church but works ecumenically. Her book published by Orbis Press called Mary and Martha Women in the World of Jesus, recieved a 2003 book award from the US-Canada Catholic Press Association.*

You can order the book from [www.maryknoll.com](http://www.maryknoll.com).

To become a member of the "Center for Feminist Theology and Ministry in Japan" please contact: Dr. Hisako Kinukawa, [hkinukawa@nifty.ne.jp](mailto:hkinukawa@nifty.ne.jp) and Dr. Satoko Yamaguchi, [satoko125@u01.gate01.com](mailto:satoko125@u01.gate01.com).

## "Do Not Visit Yasukuni Shrine": NCCJ Committee Urges Tokyo Governor

The NCCJ Committee on Yasukuni Shrine Issues released a statement on August 5 to Tokyo Governor, Shintaro Ishihara, against his 5th visit for worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine, a controversial Shinto shrine in Tokyo that honors 2.47 million Japanese war dead along with 14 leaders convicted after World War II as Class-A war criminals by the Tokyo War Tribunal. The statement said that a visit for worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine by a public official was "apparently an unconstitutional and illegal act", based on a clause on the separation of religion and the state in the Japanese Constitution. "It is clear that a visit by Governor Ishihara will not constitute an expression of regret for the war of invasion and aggression (by Japan) but follow the same line as the government for building a war emergency system," the statement said.

Despite the statement, however, Ishihara, a prominent nationalist, did visit the shrine on August 15. Asked by journalists whether he visited Yasukuni Shrine as a public official or a private individual, Ishihara said, "That's a very silly question. I came as Ishihara who is also the Tokyo governor. Each person has various identities."

The Committee had published a Japanese book called, *Kokka ni yoru Tsuitoh wa Naze Mondai nanoka – Kokka Tsuitoh Shisetsu Q&A (Why Mourning by the State is a Problem: Q&A on the Issue of Building a National Facility for Mourning for the War Dead)* on August 1. (*Hisashi Yukimoto*)

## NCCJ Calendar Highlights 2004

### August

- 2 Demonstration began in front of National Diet against the seabed drilling study in Henoko, Okinawa
- 5 Joint meeting of CSOs/Submission of statement against the official visit of Ishihara Tokyo Metropolitan governor to Yasukuni Shrine
- 13 17th National Conference of NCCJ URM Committee in Nagoya
- 25-28 NCCJ General Secretary visited DPRK as a head of delegation of Japanese NGOs for the exhibition of drawings of children of Japan, ROK and DPRK
- 30 9th submission of signatures by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from Iraq

### September

- 1 Gathering to keep in memory the Koreans killed by Japanese citizens during the aftermath of Great Kanto Earthquake at the Korean YMCA in Japan
- 3 Interfaith prayer meeting to abolish the death penalty at the headquarter of Oomoto-kyo in Tokyo
- 13 The NCCJ Chernobyl Disaster Committee issued a statement on the occasion of the accident on the nuclear power plant no.3 in Mihama, Fukui Prefecture. The statement demanded a halt to the operation of power plants of the same model, prevention of the reoccurrence of similar accidents, the closing down of all of old nuclear power plants, fundamental revision of policy on the facilities for interim storage of spent nuclear fuel, the plutonium-thermal project, and a thorough revision of nuclear safety policy with a system for a shared responsibilities
- 14 The NCCJ issued a statement protesting death penalty and against the executions of two criminals in Japan
- 16 NCCJ 4th Executive Committee Meeting
- 23 Ecumenical gathering on Palestine, receiving a delegation from the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem
- 27 10th submission of signatures by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from Iraq
- 28 Protestants - Catholics Dialogue Meeting

### October

- 4-5 Interfaith meeting to question Japanese atomic energy administration
- 5 the Interfaith Forum for Review of National Nuclear Policy, for which the NCCJ serves as the Secretariat, issued a statement on the government's new Long-Term Nuclear Program of 2004, urging the government to revise its national policy

- 5-7 Joint seminar of persons with disabilities by NCCJ and NCCK
- 17-21 WCC-CCA Consultation to Commemorate the 20th Anniversary of Tozanso - "Korean Peninsula - A Flashpoint in North-East Asia"
- 29 11th submission of signatures by Interfaith Peace Network to the Cabinet Office to demand the withdrawal of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from Iraq

### November

- 11 NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto, Annual Lecture on "Japanese Christianity in the Context of Interreligious Dialogue—On Ebina Danjo and Takizawa Kazumi"
- 19 Lecture Series of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto, on "Christianity and Funerals," part 1: "The Beginnings of Christian Funerals in the Old Church" and "The beginnings of Christian Funerals in Japan"
- 16, 22, 30 Seminars on life ethics

### December

- 3 Lecture Series of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto on "Christianity and Funerals," part 2: "Funeral Customs in Japan—A Perspective from the Studies of Folk Religion"
- 3 Evening for NCCJ Supporting Members, at Waseda Hoshien Sho Hall, 6- 8 p.m.
- 6-9 NCC Korea-NCCJ Joint Consultation at the Korean YMCA in Japan
- 17 Friday, Christian Peace Network Annual Caroling for Peace, Franciscan Chapel Center, Roppongi. 7:30 p.m. carolling begins.

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