



JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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Empowered by the Spirit: Unity within Diversity

Editorial

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the Holy Spirit came as tongues of fire as depicted in this picture by Sadao Watanabe. The fire of the Spirit burned within the disciples' hearts and inspired them to go forth to preach the Good News. God broke down barriers that divided people on that day and although each person was different, they could understand one another. There was unity within the diversity.

Within Japan there is diversity. This issue of JCAN includes a number of articles on unity within diversity. There is an article on Asian Rural Institute where people who are quite diverse in culture and background work together building community while practicing organic sustainable farming methods. The article on the Niwano Peace Prize shares how a group as diverse as the rabbis of human rights can work together for the common goal of peace among all people. The article on the the Kyodan Buraku Liberation Center shares information on the Center's work for ending discrimination against people of buraku origin and against other minorities abroad. Working together brings about hope for change. Let the wind and fire of the Spirit usher in a new, domination-free order.

We ask the Holy Spirit to empower all people's efforts to build communities of faith and justice. (C.G.Y.)



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The “Goliath” of “Buraku” Discrimination in Japan: “David”, in the Form of the Buraku Liberation Center, Takes on the Giant.

While discrimination against minorities is a problem in all societies, the prejudices held against Japanese who come from a “buraku” background are rather different from what is typical in most countries. This is because it is not based on any outward differences — racial or otherwise, but on a politically inspired division in ancient times that still persists today. Perhaps the closest comparison in another culture would be the history of discrimination of the “dalit” (“untouchable” caste) of India.

The term “buraku,” in its non-pejorative usage, simply means “hamlet” or “village”, but interestingly, the characters used for this word literally mean “division, group” and “fallen.” Whatever the actual etymology of the word, however, this combination is highly suggestive of the reality of both the people who suffer discrimination and the society that produced it.

Though the roots of prejudice go back much further, the formal institutionalization of buraku discrimination dates from the early Edo period (1603-1867) and is closely tied with the persecution of Christians by Japan’s feudal rulers. For centuries, people who engaged in “unclean” occupations, such as leather tanners and other occupations related to animal death, had been considered “unclean.”

For some 50 years following the coming of western Christianity in 1549, the faith spread quickly. But because the “shogun” came to believe European powers planned to colonize Japan, he decided to completely isolate Japan from the outside and eradicate Christianity through severe persecution. A family register system was established that required everybody to register with a local Buddhist temple. It was this system that resulted in the institutionalization of buraku discrimination as well, requiring people designated as “buraku” to remain in their status and others to discriminate against them. Even though both the ban against Christianity and the official sanction of buraku discrimination were ended shortly after the beginning of the Meiji Era in 1873, people’s ingrained attitudes did not change so quickly. The influx of western missionaries and the tremendous social good that they accomplished won the respect of Japanese society in general, and so even though relatively few embraced the faith, Christianity was soon no longer viewed negatively.

When it came to buraku discrimination, however, there was no similar catalyst to cause a radical shift in people’s perception. Even though the government has invested considerable funds into improving the 6000 or so buraku areas in Japan, civil rights legislation that criminalizes direct dis-

crimination is still lacking. The net result is that the 3 million people of buraku origin still face discrimination, particularly in employment and marriage. The family-register system guarantees that those who want to avoid association with anyone with a buraku origin can easily do so, since their family register includes the fact that their family came from a buraku area.

Christians, of course, should work to end this discrimination simply as a civil rights issue, but the historical relationship Christianity in Japan has to buraku discrimination gives a special added impetus. The United Church of Christ in Japan (the Kyodan) established the Buraku Liberation Center in 1981 to educate its own members concerning discrimination issues and to work for the elimination of such discrimination. Several missionaries have worked with the center over the years, with Bob Stieber being the last one. His term of service abruptly ended, however, with his untimely death in 1999, and BLC has been hampered by the lack of missionary support since then. The work of the center took another huge blow in 2004, when its director of 20 years, Heiichi Sumihi, became ill and died at age 51.

Presently, the staff consists of 2 full-time staff working under the direction of an interim, part-time director, Makoto Higashitani. Terumi Igarashi has been with BLC for 24 years, almost from its inception, and her experience and drive is what gives BLC its continuity. New to the staff is Miki Tanimoto, who has brought new energy to the work since coming aboard last year. There is also a management committee with representatives from each of the 17 districts of the Kyodan nationwide. Rev. Sanji Higashioka, a pastor in Hiroshima, is the chairperson of the committee, the purpose of which is to act as a conduit to the local churches to encourage their support and involvement.

The main activities of the BLC focus on educating and sensitizing the public through literature and seminars, etc. Likewise, BLC makes an effort to contact and support discriminated against minorities in other countries, to learn from them as well as share with them their own struggles and strategies.

When asked what their hopes and dreams are for the future, their first answer is, of course, that all such discrimination against people of buraku origins (as well as all other minorities) would come to an end. In order to see that day come, however, the biggest need of the BLC is for a new

(Cont'd on p. 3, col.1)

The Sacred Art of Living and Dying: A Workshop-Retreat

Dr. Richard and Mary Groves, the co-founders of the Sacred Art of Living Center for Spiritual Formation in Bend, Oregon, U.S.A., introduced this topic for the first time in Japan from June 1st to 3rd at the Lutheran College and Seminary in Mitaka, Tokyo. It was, in fact, a first in Asia. The seminar was 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. each day and in English with Japanese translation. The 50 mostly Japanese participants were pastors, counselors, nurses, church workers, Sisters, students in hospice ministry, and people interested in the topic. Sponsored by the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association (JELA), the Groves also gave a lecture at the JELA Center in Tokyo on June 4th followed by a two-day workshop on the 6th and 7th in Kumamoto, Kyushu. It was also their first experience of working with translators. After a few days of touring around Kyoto, they headed for Hong Kong on June 12th to give another workshop there.

The focus was "Understanding Spiritual Pain", which, stressed Richard, is as important to diagnose as it is to diagnose the source of physical pain. "Once the origin is known, there is hope for relief." (cf. *The American Book of Dying: Lessons in Healing Spiritual Pain*, by Richard F. Groves

and Henriette Anne Klauser, Berkeley, California (2005). Celestial Arts, Pub.)

Richard spoke of his research on the history of death and dying in western culture, the history of the Hospice Movement in medieval times and its recent revival in 1967 by Dame Cicely Saunders, M.D. in Britain. He wove in stories and strands from the Celtic, Coptic and Native American traditions. A key role in many non-western traditions, Richard explained, was that of a kind of "end-of-life midwife" called the **anamcara** or "soul friend" who is called to help others die well.

Mary, an experienced grief counselor in hospice, assisted gracefully in the rituals which began and ended each session and which drew from the life-sustaining streams of diverse religious and cultural traditions. Presentations, videos and rituals gave participants many opportunities to learn how to recognize and respond to sufferers of spiritual pain as well as their own, and that in order to die well we need to learn how to "live well". (Sr. J.M.)

Website <http://www.sacredartofliving.com>

Interfaith Dialogues at German Church in Tokyo

The German Protestant Church (*Kreuzkirche*) is one of the associate member churches of NCCJ. The church hosted an Interfaith Meeting on June 11th. Clergy and laity of the German Catholic and Protestant faiths gathered for a discussion on "Buddhism in Jewish and Christian Eyes". The Rabbi from the Jewish Community Center in Tokyo presented the Jewish perspective on the panel of clerics. This was the first in a series to be conducted on Interfaith dialogue. Contact the German Church for more information. website: <http://www2.gol.com/users/ektokyo/> or email: kreuzkirche_tokyo@gol.com

Buraku... (Continued from p. 2)

full-time director with a vision for the future and a new missionary to help with the work. They ask for our prayers that these goals will soon become reality.

(by Rev. Dr. Tim Boyle, PCUSA/UMC missionary)

(Editor and Mano-san's notes : There is a relationship between Christianity and the Buraku liberation movement. In the Suiheisha Declaration in 1922 they cried "The time has come when the martyr's crown of thorns will receive blessings". The declaration, which is deeply inspired by Christianity, is moving. Even today, the Alliance for the Buraku Liberation uses Jesus' Crown of Thorns as their symbol. I believe this is a very good example showing that it is not necessarily the "Christians" who can hear the word of God, but that the word of God reaches and works within the people deprived of justice.)

The 3rd National Conference of Buraku Liberation Workers was held on June 19 and June 20 in Osaka at the Kyodan (UCCJ) Buraku Liberation Center.

The overall theme at this Conference was on "Solidarity" in the struggle against all forms of discrimination. The keynote speaker was Dr. Randy Day, General Secretary of the UMC General Board of Global Ministries who participated at his own request to show his support of the BLC. Rev. Higashioka Sanji was the Chairperson. For information or to send donations to the BLC contact:

Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Buraku Liberation Center
2-16-14 Midorigaoka, Daito-shi, Osaka, 547-0073
Tel. 072-875-8470; Fax 072-875-8471; Email: blc@nyc.odn.ne.jp

Postcolonial Theological Perspectives

On April 25 at a church across the street from Tokyo Tower known as St. Andrew's Anglican Church, a diverse and ecumenical community of 66 people including clergy, lay, Catholic Sisters, and many who were feminists, gathered to hear the well-known feminist theologian, Dr. Kwok Pui Lan speak on "Theology and the Church from a Postcolonial Perspective". This lecture was co-sponsored by the Seikokai (Anglican/Episcopal) Diocese of Tokyo and the National Christian Council in Japan. Her talk was in English with Japanese translation (done by a woman chaplain). The opening prayer was by Rev Toshi Yamamoto, General Secretary of NCCJ, and closing thanks by Bishop Jintaro Ueda of the Tokyo Diocese. The M.C for the event was Rev. Hiroko Kayama, one of the chaplains at Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, a Seikokai related university in Tokyo.

Born in Hong Kong, Dr. Kwok is a Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. She has pub-

lished extensively in Asian feminist theology, biblical hermeneutics, and postcolonial criticism. She teaches courses on Christian theology, world Christianity, spirituality, religion and culture, Asian religions, women's studies, and postcolonial criticism. She and her spouse were traveling in Japan on the way to Hong Kong, Philippines and Malaysia as part of her sabbatical.

During her lecture, Dr. Kwok shared how postcolonial theory was first introduced to the field of biblical studies in the 1960s and has lifted up the voices of women, suppressed groups, and issues related to empires. It challenges the dominance of Western interpretation, pays special attention to the hidden and neglected voices in the Bible, places the Bible in the multifaith context of the world today, encourages and welcomes contributions from marginalized groups e.g. the dalits, the indigenous peoples, the migrants, people in diaspora, and voices of women in all these communities). Insights are also drawn from postmodernism.

Kwok Pui Lan closed her lecture stating that Christianity would, "... not speak only the language of the Empire, but also the language of realization of peoples' hopes and desires and the flourishing of all creation... We have to be aware of the grave impact of globalization...." She closed stating, "Most important of all, we must be catalysts and instigators of change, playing our part in bequeathing a more just society for generations to come."

*(Editor's note: Books by Kwok Pui Lan include: *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*; *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*; *Chinese Women and Christianity*, *Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse*; *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century* and most recently, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*.)*



Dr. Kwok Pui Lan with Bishop Jintaro Ueda (right) and Rev. Toshiyama Yamamoto (NCCJ General Secretary)

Ecumenical News International

Ecumenical News International (ENI) was launched in 1994 as a global news service reporting on ecumenical developments and other news of the churches, and giving religious perspectives on news developments world-wide. ENI distributes religious news in English and French on a daily basis electronically to international and religious media, church leaders and organisations and to others who are interested. These daily news stories are assembled in a printed bulletin which is published every two weeks. In presenting religious news stories, ENI attempts to be especially sensitive to the differences in language, culture and traditions that mark the global Christian community.

The joint sponsors of ENI, which is based at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland, are the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the Conference of European Churches, which also have their headquarters at the Ecumenical Centre. Hisashi Yukimoto is the ENI Japanese correspondent. See website for more information: www.eni.ch.

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International Bible Forum 2006

Examining the Bible, Now

The Japan Bible Society hosted the first-ever “International Bible Forum” in Tokyo from May 3-5, 2006. The event was held at the Hotel New Otani in Yotsuya, Tokyo.



Lecturers from abroad were:

- Dr. Emanuel Tov (Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication): “Controversies in Modern Research of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Part 1 and 2”
- Dr. Adrian Schenker (Professor Emeritus at University of Fribourg and President of the Editorial Committee of Biblia Hebraica Quinta): “The Edition of Biblia Hebraica on Behalf of the German Bible Society: the Origin of the Project, the Principals, and Present State of Realization”
- Dr. Klaus Wachtel (Research Associate at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, University of Munster Project manager of “Nestle-Aland 28th edition”[Digital Nestle-Aland]): “The History and Principals of the Latest Nestle-Aland Edition”
- Dr. John Dominic Crossan (Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies, DePaul University and former Catholic monk): “Jesus and the Kingdom of God” and on “Paul and the Justice of Equality”
- Rev. Dr. James M. Robinson (Professor Emeritus of Religion, Claremont Graduate University): “The Evangelists as Authors” and “From the Apostles’ Creed to Jesus’ Own Trust in God”
- Dr. Lourens de Vries (Professor of Bible Translation, the Free University of Amsterdam): “Translations of the Bible and Communities of Believers: A Historical and Functional Perspective on Translating the Bible”
- University): “Scenes with Scripture:from the History of Japanese Bibles”
- Dr. Yoshihide Suzuki (Professor of Humanities at Niigata University): “The Old Testament as a Book on Theodicy”
- Dr. Akio Tsukimoto (Professor at Rikkyo University): “The Old Testament as a Classic”
- Dr. Shigeo Hashimoto (Professor at Doshisha University): “Biblical Greek for beginners: As a Tool to Reread Japanese Bibles”
- Fr. Masahide Haresaku (Parish Priest at Koenji Catholic Church): “The Bible Declares: Church that Declares, not Comments”
- Dr. Toshiyuki Machida (Head of Bible & Art Ministries): “Bible and Art: To Restore Belief and Beauty”
- Fr. Alexis Yasuhiro Matsudaira (Archpriest of Japanese Orthodox Church in Sapporo): “Bible Translation by the Japanese Orthodox Church”
- Dr. Shuji Miyazaki (lecturer at Rikkyo University): “Biblical Hebrew for Beginners”
- Dr. Makoto Yamauchi (President of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary): “Recent Trends of the Study of Paul”
- Sr. Kazuko Watanabe (Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Notre Dame Seishin School Corporation): “The Bible and I: A Good News”

Lecturers from Japan were:

- Dr. Takashi Onuki (Professor at Tokyo University): “Jesus ‘From Within’ and ‘From Without’: A Perspective in the Study of Jesus”
- Rev. Tsuneaki Kato (Presidency of Sekkyo-Juku) who spoke “Another Look at How to Read the Bible”
- Dr. Daijiro Kawashima (Visiting Researcher at Christianity and Cultures Research Institute, Kanto Gakuin University): “International Backgrounds of the Permanent Committee’s ‘All the New Testament’ (1880) and Chinese Bibles
- Dr. Teruo Kuribayashi (Professor at Kansai-Gakuin University): “The World of Bible in American Cinema”
- Dr. Norihisa Suzuki (Professor Emeritus at Rikkyo University): “Influences of Chinese and Japanese Bibles on Korean Translation”
- Daud Soesilo (UBS Asia Pacific Area Translations Coordinator) “A Brief History of Bible Translation in Asia with Focus on China, Korea, and Japan”
- Rev. Iwao Makabe (Pastor of Soai Church, United Church of Christ in Japan) who led a “Bible Quiz” seminar
- Yu Suee Yan (UBS Translation Consultant, Asia Pacific Area) who shared his paper on “A Brief History of Bible Translation into Chinese and its Contemporary Implications”



Introducing the New NCCJ Moderator

JCAN questions to Rev. Koshi-ishi.

Where were you born?

A: Korea (in 1945).

All Saints Church, Urawa, Japan

Provincial Office of Nippon Sei Ko Kai

Where did you grow up?

A: Kofu-shi, Yamanashi.

What difficulties, joys did you encounter?

A: It is still difficult to deal with Christian institutionalism. It's a joy to encounter people who are willing to reexamine the contents of their own faith.

When did you become a Christian?

A: November 3, 1957.

Where are you a pastor now?

A: Sei Bo (Holy Mother) Church, Shiki, Saitama Japan.

Were your parents Christian? A: Yes. My mother was.

Where did you go to college? What was your major?

A: Meiji University, Tokyo. Major in Economics.

How long have you been involved with ecumenical work?

A: Since I was a college student. However, from 1985 until 1997, I was involved in ecumenical work as a member of the Ecumenism Committee of NSKK. Then, as the Provincial Secretary, I continued this work until the end of May, 2002.

Where did you go to seminary? Dissertation topic?

A: Went to the Central Theological College (Anglican) in Tokyo, but dropped out. Went on to study at the graduate school of Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, Tokyo. After receiving the degree of MTh there, went on to study at the graduate course of Toronto School of Theology (Trinity College) for two years. Finally completed the Doctorate Course of Rikkyo University. Dissertation topic was "The History of the Development of the Tradition of the Promised Land in the Old Testament."

How long have you been involved with NCCJ?

A: Probably I have been a NSKK delegate to NCC since around 1990 and one of the standing executive council members of NCC until May 2002.

How did you decide to become a Christian minister?

A: A young pastor, sent to my local parish when I was a juvenile, inspired me in many ways to be involved in church activities and urged me to consider the option to be ordained.

Positions you now hold in the Sei Ko Kai (committees you are on, etc.)

A: Secretary of the Executive Council Theological and Doctrinal Commission .

What influenced you most in this decision?

A: Various experiences in the Anglican Student Christian Movement, and spiritual and intellectual influences of the then bishop of my diocese.

The names of books you have translated.

A: Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic – Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. 1973), published in 1997. Board for Mission and Unity (of the Church of England), *The Priesthood of the Ordained Ministry*, (Church House: England, 1986), published in 1993. Wesley Friendsdorff, "Ministry and Orders: A Tangled Skein," (Education for Mission and Ministry, ECUSA, 1985) and John T. Docker, "Office for Ministry Development," (Education for Mission and Ministry, ECUSA, 1990), published in 1995. Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, Virginia Report (Anglican Consultative Council: London, 1997), published in 1997. Laurie Green, *The Impact of the Global: An Urban Theology* (Urban Theology Unit: Sheffield, 2000), published in 2003). Riah Abu El-Assal, *Caught in Between – The Extraordinary Story of an Arab Palestinian Christian Israeli* (SPCK: London, 1999), published in 2004.

How long did you live in the US?

A: Two summers (6 months).

You were ordained by the Episcopal Church in the US. When and where were you ordained?

A: In 1976, at the Chapel of Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA, on the occasion of the Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania of the Episcopal Church, Bishop Stevenson ordained me to be a priest for the Bishop of my home diocese in Japan.

What churches have you served? And where?

A: The Chapel of Penn State University, PA, USA
St. Barnabas Church, Toronto
St. Augustine Church, Takasaki, Japan

Any books or articles you have written.

A: "The Nippon Sei Ko Kai today and its future task," Andrew Wingate & others ed., *Anglicanism-A Global*

Communion, (Mowbray: London, 1998). Pp. 369-371. "Some remarks on issues of Urbanization in Japan", compiled by James M. Rosenthal and Margaret Rogers, The Communion We Share - Anglican Consultative Council XI, Scotland, (Morehouse: Harrisburg, 2000), pp. 259-292. More articles on Old Testament Study and others written in Japanese.

When and where did you meet/marry your wife? What does your wife do?

A: While studying in the Master's Course of Rikkyo University, she was working for the University as a staff person for the student welfare office. We got married in 1973. She is practicing counseling in a public counseling section and in an NPO counseling service.

How many children and what ages?

A: Two boys and a girl. The oldest son is 30, the second one, 28, and the youngest, my daughter, is 26.

Special interests and/or hobbies?

A: Playing hymns on an electronic organ in a self-taught way.

Your greatest concern for Japan ? (for example, the increasing nationalism, keeping the peace constitution, removal of bases, lack of spirituality of young people, or whatever...)

A: The effects of global capitalism which may be the very cause of the issues you mentioned in the question above as examples.

What about the churches' response?

A: Unfortunately, the churches don't seem to be very keen on those issues, though they seem to be aware that there is incredible confusion in our society now.

After the General Assembly, what are your hopes for NCCJ?

A: The 36th NCC General Assembly adopted the following 6 items as its priorities: extending unity and dialogue among churches; working to promote reconciliation and peace in Okinawa and north-east Asia; working to maintain the present constitution; to develop leadership training programs for youth, women, teens, and children; to review the finances and the structure of NCC; to set out the process to edit the history of NCC. As mentioned above, there must be a common cause under the issues prioritized by NCC, except for the final two, that is, the outcome of global capitalism which has also caused the gap between the rich and the poor both at the domestic and international level, and a deteriorating natural environment almost everywhere throughout the globe. I do hope that those who have engaged in the works of NCC may continue to work on each prioritized issue while connecting them with other issues by deepening and widening their understanding of the commonality of those issues.



We welcome Sister Jean to the editorial staff of JCAN!



We have a new editorial assistant at JCAN and her name is Sister Jean Michalec, a Maryknoll Sister from New Westminster, B.C. Canada. She was missioned to Japan 40 years ago. She graduated from U.B.C. with a degree in biochemistry. Now living in Tokyo, she has done parish ministry in Mie Prefecture, studied and taught at Sophia University (from which she received her Masters and Doctoral Degree in Biochemistry in the 1970's). Over the past 16 years Sr. Jean has worked in prison ministry with non-Japanese inmates at Fuchu Prison and volunteered at HELP, an Asian Women's Shelter, in Tokyo. She lives at the Maryknoll Convent with four other Sisters in Kichijoji, west Tokyo. No longer teaching fulltime, she continues to explore the field of ecology, bioethics and religion, from the perspective of a Christian woman scientist. She now helps JCAN with proofreading and some translation of articles from Japanese to English; she is also liaison for Catholic news in Japan, and helps us keep our sense of humour!

NCCJ's Chernobyl Project

On April 26th, 1986 the world's worst nuclear power accident occurred at Chernobyl in the former USSR (now Ukraine). The nuclear power plant located 80 miles north of Kiev had 4 reactors and during testing of reactor no. 4, numerous safety procedures were disregarded. At 1:23am the chain reaction in the reactor went out of control creating explosions and a fireball which blew off the reactor's heavy steel and concrete lid. About 50 people who had battled the blaze immediately after the accident died because of exposure to radioactivity. As a result of the high radiation levels in the surrounding region, the 4,000 square kilometer (20-mile) radius area is still off-limits. It covers parts of the Ukraine and Belarus and is about as large as Kyoto Prefecture. Roughly 400,000 people, including those living in Russia, had to be evacuated. The survivors are having a hard time living in resettled areas and health problems are rampant. Between 600,000 and 800,000 people complain of health problems. About 4,000 children have developed thyroid cancer. There have also been some reports of specific cancers increasing in certain populations living in contaminated areas and among liquidators (those who helped with the clean up of the accident). International cooperation is needed to help the survivors.

NCCJ's chairperson for the Chernobyl Project is Ms. Yoshiko Bannai. Below is a brief interview with her.

Questions:

1) *How long have you been the Chernobyl Project (CP) chairperson?*

A: For only about 3 years, after the death of Mrs. Ayako Sekiya, the former chairperson. I've been a CP member for 15 years.



2) *Why did you become interested in Chernobyl?*

A: This is rather difficult to answer directly. There are a few reasons.

- I had worked as a secretary of ABCC (the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission), Tokyo Office and saw very many severe photos (for instance skin cancer on the hands and/or around the neck and face). I came to know the effects of atomic energy then (after my graduation from junior college).
- When I was a secretary of FORJ (Fellowship of Reconciliation, Japan) I became aware that there are entirely opposite opinions among the board members: there were supporters and opponents of the use of atomic energy for "peaceful purposes", while some scientists said "Don't say 'No' without any chemical knowledge". I felt we need to know and be able to explain why we can't support the use of nuclear energy, even for "peaceful use". At that time, I was asked by Mr. Yamamoto to join the Chernobyl Project of NCC, and I wanted to know more about the Chernobyl problem. All of this may be why I became interested in Chernobyl.

3) *What are some ways that the NCCJ Chernobyl Project has helped?*

A: CP has sent medical doctors, medicine and equipment (including personal computers) to Chernobyl, brought doctors from the Ukraine to Hiroshima, collected contributions (donations) for research activities and/or rehabilitation schools, visited disaster areas and made friendly relations, published an annual newsletter, held various lectures and dialogues, provided living and educational support for some foster children and cooperated in work with other groups and other NGOs.

4) *This is the 20th year anniversary of the world's worst nuclear power accident. What activities, programs, symposiums, seminars, etc. will Chernobyl Project be doing to help people become more aware of the Chernobyl disaster and the present situation?*

A: CP sponsors a study tour to Belarus (the 4th), publishes special edition newsletters, and cooperates with other NCCJ (peace and nuclear education) groups. CP is also considering holding a symposium with another NGO, a lecture or meeting and dialogue with video in Yokosuka City as well as a video demonstration for Sunday School children.

5) *What churches in Japan and in Chernobyl are involved with CP?*

A: The Anglican Church (Seikokai) of Japan in Tokyo, the United Church of Japan in Hiroshima and Osaka, Obirin University School of Religion, Musashino Gakuen Himawari

Kindergarten, and about 20 or more Christian members of other churches in Japan who make donations through our committee.

6) *How do we work with the Russian Orthodox Church there?*

A: Till several years ago, we were in contact with the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus. Recently we haven't had any contact with them. I myself strongly wish to work with the Russian Orthodox Church again (or any church there). I feel the churches' work is essential to provide daily support, help and backup, especially mental care, for the victims.

7) *Why is Japan so interested in Chernobyl?*

A: (1) Japan has the experience of Atomic Bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki where thousands of people were burnt by the radiation and fire of atomic bombs.
(2) The number of nuclear power generation facilities now operating in Japan is now 55. In this narrow land! Japan is a country of earthquakes where nobody can say the nuclear system is safe.

8) *How are things now in Chernobyl?*

A: It is over 20 years since the nuclear accident but even now the earth, grass, apples and mushrooms are radioactive. Houses in polluted area absorb radiation like a sponge. Some people live where permission is needed to enter the zone of exclusion. They refused to leave their villages after '86 and still eat food from their own gardens.

Newspapers report "populations of wolves and wild boars, fox and deer are occupying houses and sheds, and growing rapidly." Besides children, recently there are adults, especially among the liquidators, suffering from thyroid cancer and leukemia in increasing numbers. Some of them can't receive sufficient medical treatment because of their poverty. The Government doesn't help them. The people and the environment are still suffering today while politicians simply want to forget or declare it's over.

9) *What are your hopes for the future of Chernobyl and our world?*

A: We must not depend on nuclear power. Efforts to develop new sources of energy, such as solar, wind and fuel cell generation, must be promoted and continued more seriously. At the same time we must examine our life style.

We must not make land given by God a "ghost town" anywhere in the world. I want to say to the IAEA, "Do not recommend the use of atomic energy even for 'peaceful use'".

10) *What does the Chernobyl Project need funds for and how can people make a donation - through NJJC?*

A: As I wrote in Question 5, we receive many donations from many contributors who read our newsletters. We must use them as best we can.

Editor's notes: The Asahi Shimbun editorial on April 28, 2006, stated that Japan has 55 nuclear reactors, making it No. 3 in the world in terms of nuclear reactors. In 1999, a critical accident occurred in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture causing two deaths. In 2004, a pipe ruptured at a nuclear reactor at the Mihama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture killing five workers. There have been numerous problems at the older nuclear power plants yet the power industry pushes to prolong the life of the facilities to 60 years. Looking at Chernobyl and at these accidents in Japan, there is a lesson to be learned in respect to God's creation and all life in this world.



Farewell to Nishihara-san from NCCJ!

After eight years, Mikako Nishihara will leave NCCJ and we will miss her warm smile and enthusiasm for her work. She has been the Executive Secretary for the NCCJ Women's Committee and the Nuclear Issues and Peace Committee. During the time Nishihara-san has been at NCCJ, the Christian Peace Network and the Interfaith Peace Network was formed.

Mikako will continue at NCCJ until the end of July after which she would like to take a break before... then she is not sure what she will do but would like to take a break before undertaking a new task. She may study or she may

find other employment—perhaps in the church or with a peace organization.

Her husband has been the NCCJ vice moderator and is a priest in the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, teaches at the Anglican/Episcopal Seminary and Rikkyo University. They have three children: daughter Mana (16 years old), son Mugi (age 11), and son Aki (age 9).

We wish her many blessings and are grateful for her time at NCCJ. May the Holy Spirit guide her in a new direction.

That We May Live Together: The Asian Rural Institute Transforming the World One Village at a Time

April 17, 2006. The taxi ride from Nasushiobara Station to Asian Rural Institute seems faster than usual, perhaps because it's dark and I can hardly wait to get there. I am coming this time with a new responsibility—that of being a member of the Board of Directors of American Friends of ARI (AFARI). The welcome from those working late in the Main Building is as warm as ever, even from Mitsuko-san as we meet for the first time. Over the next several days, new staff members become friends, along with four young German volunteers and almost thirty participants gradually becoming familiar with new territory, the 24/7 use of English language, and some chores previously—but no longer—divided along gender lines back in their home countries. *Our mission is to build an environmentally healthy, just and peaceful world in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential. This mission is rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.*

Participants are engaged in farm work teams with those whose mother tongues and customs differ substantially from their own. Za Khar, a Baptist pastor from Chin State in Myanmar cooperates with Domi, a Roman Catholic priest from Tanzania, and Tutu, a Bangladeshi project coordinator who works with rural poor people. They share responsibility for a garden plot which they must plow and fertilize (with bokashi, an organic fertilizer created at ARI) before planting seedlings. Until a bolt attaching the engine to the plow disappears into the soil, they use small-scale modern technology to try to dig straight rows, but it's a happy surprise for all (or maybe not) that doing the same job by hand is easier, faster and far more accurate. *To carry out this mission, we nurture and train rural leaders for a life of sharing.*

A few weeks into the curriculum, classes are in full swing. Participants are divided into groups for orientation to the agricultural and livestock mosaic that nourishes the



60-or-so persons of the ARI community. Starting at the aerial map of the campus, Nagashima-san guides the group from the small fishponds that have just been scrubbed down, whitewashed and painted in readiness for fresh water and fry (tiniest fish) which will get off to a good start in this well-protected environment. The group walks to larger ponds where the fish will be moved as they mature, and then up to an area where paddy fields (*tambo*) soon to be irrigated and planted with rice seedlings lie waiting. *Leaders, both women and men, who live and work in grassroots rural communities primarily in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, form a community of learning each year together with staff and other residents*

At this point the concept of integrated farming really starts to kick in. We learn that once the *tambo* are planted, baby fish and ducklings will be set loose to enjoy their new but separate home fields. Both will live on weeds and insects as they grow, thus precluding the need for pesticides or herbicides to protect the crop. When fall approaches and the rice reaches its peak height, the husks begin to droop from their weight and whet the ducks' appetite for new fare. It is then that, yes, the *ducks* are harvested, a sad day for those who tenderly cared for them even before they hatched. Fish come next (no sad faces about rounding them up for dinner!) and finally, the rice is harvested by the entire ARI community with intensive labor, delight and deep satisfaction in knowing they are reaping the grain that will feed the community through the coming year.

In the 1990s, local schools began sending their lunchroom waste to ARI each day. At the pig house halfway up the hillside, a huge metal drum is heated up and the uneaten food is cooked to eliminate any possible accumulation of food bacteria. Later, it is fed to the pigs. Both pig and chicken pen floors are layered with a fermented mix of rice husks, microbes and daily doses of manure. The denizens of those pens do a thorough job of mixing the ingredients either by rooting or scratching, and when that mixture is shoveled or swept out, it is composted to become fertilizer to be used on the fields. In stark contrast to the school food leftovers, the kitchen waste at ARI may add up to a few inches in a plastic bucket after any given meal. Only on "chicken days" do the bones add to the bulk of what's scraped into the bucket if they haven't already been claimed by Go-chan, staff member in charge of the kitchen, for the next day's soup.

Sometimes I visit a seminary near our home in New Jersey, often at mealtime because I like the food in the dining hall. There I always see students of the same color sitting together and wonder why that happens at a seminary, of all

places. At ARI, the tables are mixed, with a Camerounian sitting next to a citizen of Myanmar or Nagaland, a Sri Lankan with a Haitian or Tanzanian. A Japanese member of the community is often found at each table. English is the common language; working with or caring about and for the poor in one of any number of ways is the shared vocation. Appreciation for food - beginning with its planting or pre-natal experience and throughout its growth cycle to harvest and meal preparation - also unites this multi-national group of people who discard almost nothing because they are so personally involved with the food's production from the beginning. At ARI, this is called "foodlife" because life is totally dependent upon having enough food to sustain it.

At chore time after morning exercise, I see the director, Isao Nozaki, doing the most menial of tasks in the Main Building. While I am there, it is his turn to chair Morning Gathering, and he asks the community for understanding of his somewhat less-than-predictable schedule because of medical treatments necessary for his wife at a nearby hospital. Following his position on ARI staff from 1974-1991, Nozaki-san and his wife worked for Japan International Cooperation Agency (JAICA) for 12 years, living and working in Jordan, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. He graciously accepted the position of director when Toa Tasaka retired this March.

On the eastern side of the Big Pond, the American Friends of ARI (AFARI) are working with Steven Cutting, Ecumenical Relations staff person, in a new venture this year - a Northwest and Midwest (USA) speaking tour with Sri Lankan graduate ('95) and former Training Assistant

('04) Fr. Laksiri Peiris. Laksiri and Steven have spoken at churches, colleges, seminaries, and international service organizations as well as met with denominations' Asia desk people to update and inform them of current news from ARI. Fr. Laksiri, an Anglican pastor in a very rural area of Sri Lanka, shares ARI through narratives of his own experiences there and the transformative effect that ARI's servant-leadership training has had on his parish and the entire community. *Through community-based learning we study the best ways for rural people to share and enhance local resources and abilities for the common good.*

Have you visited ARI yet? You are most welcome there; just give ample notice to Tane-san at info@ari-edu.org. Become familiar with the ARI web site (<http://www.ari-edu.org>) and send it along to friends; email Steven (ecu@ari-edu.org) if you'd like to receive "Take My Hand," the AFARI twice-yearly newsletter and have a sample copy sent to your home church. Your prayers for the ongoing work of this extra-ordinary institution, its founders and supporters, participants, staff and volunteers, will have immeasurable value both for those who contribute *to* and benefit *from* its presence here in Japan and in the wider world God has created.

Statement in italics is the Mission Statement of the Asian Rural Institute.

Article and photographs contributed by Pam Hasegawa, Chair of the Board of Directors, AFARI. pamelarolande@mac.com

'Rabbis For Human Rights' Gets Niwano Peace Prize in Tokyo

The Niwano Peace Foundation awarded the 23rd Niwano Peace Prize to "Rabbis for Human Rights" (RHR) of Israel in a ceremony held in Tokyo on May 11. RHR received a medal and 20 million yen (roughly \$220,000). RHR consists of 130 Conservative, Reform, Orthodox and Reconstructionist rabbis from Jerusalem who work for the rights of Palestinians as well as the rights of Israelis.

Sr. Joan Chittister, an executive member, said this; "Founded in 1988, RHR is an organization of rabbis in Israel promoting the Jewish value that all human beings are created in the image of God and entitled to justice, equality and respect. Dedicated to this core Jewish value, RHR defends the human rights of everyone in Israel and in the territories under Israel control through public education, advocacy and direct service projects."

The Hebrew name of Rabbis for Human Rights is *Shomrei Mishpat*, which means guardians of Justice, com-

ing from the words of the Biblical prophet Isaiah: "Happy are those who guard justice, who do right at all times."

The Tokyo based Niwano Peace Foundation was initiated by the Japanese citizen Nikkyo Niwano, founder of the buddhist lay organization, Risho Kosei-Kai. (Nikkyo Niwano was one of the few non-Christian observers of the Second Vatican Council.) His son Nichiko Niwano is his successor as chairman of the movement, which is dedicated to the interreligious dialogue.

The Niwano Peace Foundation solicits nominations every year from people of recognized intellectual stature around the world, regardless of region or religion. Last year's recipient was Dr. Hans Küng, Germany and the 2004, Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), Uganda. In the nomination process, some 1,000 people and organizations, representing 125 countries and many religions, are asked to

(Cont'd on p. 12, col. 1)

NCCJ Calendar Highlights 2006

April

- 19 Submit petitions collected to the Japanese government demanding the withdrawal of the Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq
- Submit petitions to the Japanese government to oppose "Referendum Bill" to change the Japanese Peace Constitution
- 25 Lecture on post-colonialism by Dr. Kwok Pui Lan, St. Andrew's Cathedral
- 28 Luncheon Meeting with Ms. Bite Peterson, EMS, Germany

May

- 2-4 Participation in International Ecumenical Conference on "Peace in East Asia" in Seoul, Korea (organized by PROK, NCCK, WCC and CCA)
- 3-5 International Bible Forum (Japan Bible Society)

Niwano Peace Prize *(Continued from p. 11)*

propose candidates. Nominations are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize Committee. The Committee presently consists of 11 religious leaders from around the world, all involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

The Foundation hopes in this way both to enhance inter-religious understanding and cooperation and to encourage the emergence of still more people devoted to working for world peace.

The NCCJ General Secretary was the MC for a symposium held in Kyoto the following day on May 12. (C.G.Y.)

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Ronald Julian
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Volunteer
Reiko Fujino

- 6-11 Consultation of Asia NCC General Secretaries and Church Leaders on Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement in Asia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- 20 Seminar on Death Penalty organized by the Interfaith Peace Network to stop the Death Penalty
- 21-22 National Steering Committee Meeting of Christian Coalition on Alien Registration Law
- 23 Sayama Central Rally and Demonstration for Mr. Ishikawa (Buraku Discrimination)
- 27 Symposium on "Article 9 of Peace Constitution and Interfaith Cooperation" in Kyoto
- 28 Asia Sunday (focus on Nepal) and Prayer Meeting, Mejiro Anglican Church

June

- 6-9 URM Seminar on "Farming Villages in Japan"
- 19-20 Buraku Activists and Workers Nationwide Conference, Kyodan Buraku Liberation Center, Osaka
- 20-22 CCA Working Group on People Security and Peace in Northeast Asia, Seoul, Korea

July

- 22 NCC Central Committee Meeting



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