



# *Japanese Church History*



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*Please note that event details are subject to change.  
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Latest info: <http://www.karuizawaunionchurch.org>

## October

### WIM Fall Day of Prayer Plus

October 12, 2023  
Rose Town Tea Garden, Ome, Tokyo



## January

### WIM Winter Day of Prayer

January 17, 2024  
Venue details later



## February

### JEMA Connect

February 19–21, 2024  
Ochanomizu Christian Center

Details about future JEMA events can be found on the JEMA website:  
**jema.org**

Also see our magazine online: **japanharvest.org**



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The editors welcome unsolicited articles. Non-JEMA members are also welcome to submit.  
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# History helps us understand the bigger picture

History was one of my favourite subjects at school, alongside maths. How I ended up a writer and an editor is possibly something that my high school teachers might like to hear! In any case, I still love to learn about history. In the last year or two, I've geeked out on the "Undeceptions" podcasts by Australian Christian historian and apologist John Dickson. I've learned about C.S. Lewis, medieval science, Christianity and the Vikings, and Emperor Constantine, and there was even an episode that included a discussion with Japanese artist Makoto Fujimura.<sup>1</sup> I love this podcast and hope someday that they'll do some episodes on Christianity in Japan!

Over the last ten years, I've worked on various publishing projects that have meant I've had to learn more about the history of the Japanese church and of mission work in Japan. It's been wonderful to be able to learn these things while doing my job, and what I've learned has been a help to my understanding of my role as a missionary in the bigger picture of reaching Japan for Christ. Understanding history truly is important in helping us understand ourselves and the world around us.

In the call for article proposals we sent out in February to the JEMA email list, I wrote: "What can we learn from history that will help us as we move forward from here? History is important to missiology; it is more than an inspirational biography. Gary Corwin of SIM wrote, 'If handled properly, history provides a picture of both what was done well and what was not. It also has a way of showing us quite explicitly how God often achieves his purposes without us, and even in spite of us. History is the great revealer and the great adjuster of applied missiology.'"<sup>2</sup>

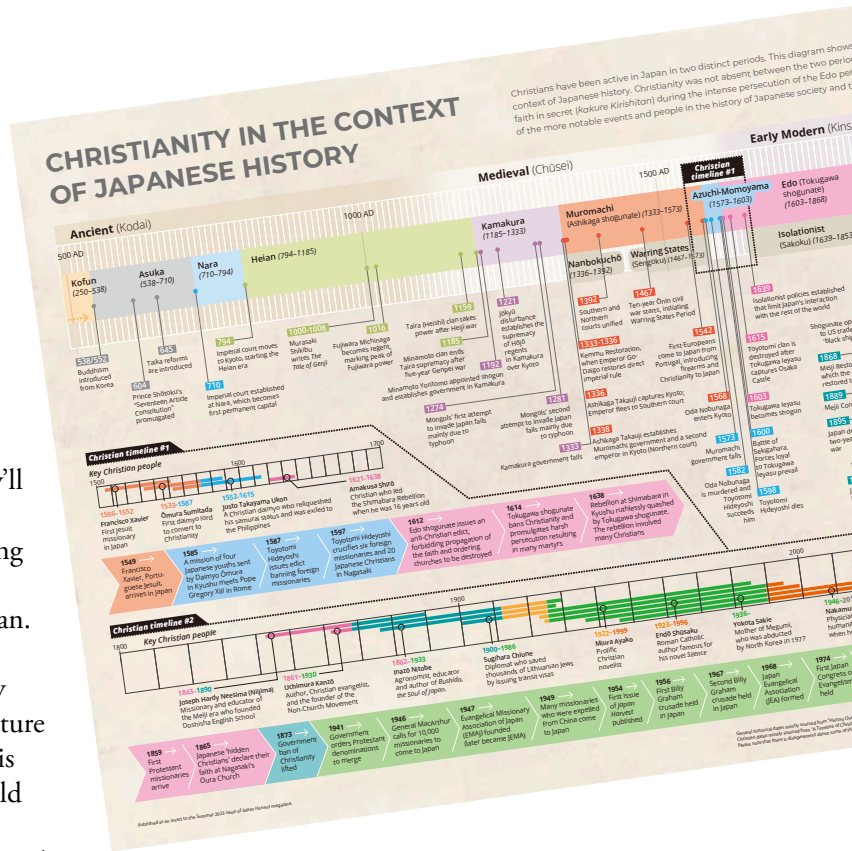
My husband and I are about to go on our fifth home assignment, and we're saddened that we, again, have to report the percentage of Christians in Japan has barely changed since we first visited many of our supporting churches in 1999 and 2000. This fact is what drives us to continue to serve in Japan, but it can also be depressing and discouraging. It is, therefore, encouraging to know that it hasn't always been this way. In this issue, we can read with excitement about God's faithfulness over many decades in Japan, about revivals, and learn of various faithful Japanese and foreign Christians who have lived and ministered in this land. Simon Pleasants, vice president of JEMA, has provided us with a special addition to this issue: a detailed poster showing an overview of Japan's history and how Christianity fits into that. It's our hope that JEMA members will be able to refer to this in the coming years as we continue learning more about this land where we serve.

What will you learn as you read this? I pray that you are encouraged, and that you are both humbled and infused with hope. All of us are writing history with our lives, though few of us will be remembered by many people, and indeed it isn't our job to make names for ourselves. Rather, let's pray that by God's grace his name will be glorified by our lives and the lives that we touch while we serve him here.



Blessings in Christ,  
Wendy  
Managing Editor

1. Episode 70, "The Artist," *Undeceptions*, <https://undeceptions.com/podcast/the-artist/>  
2. Gary Corwin, "The Importance of History to Missiology," *Mission Nexus*, <https://missionnexus.org/the-importance-of-history-to-missiology> (October 2, 2014).



**The themes for the upcoming issues are:**  
**Autumn 2023:** Singleness  
**Winter 2024:** Discipleship (proposals due by July 31)  
**Spring 2024:** Triumphs in Ministry (proposals due by October 30)  
**Summer 2024:** Children and Youth Ministry (proposals due by January 31)



# Revival in Japan:

history and hope for today

By Sue Plumb Takamoto

*Examining the history of revivals in Japan provides great encouragement for weary laborers today!*

NBC headline news on February 16, 2023 read: “A nonstop Kentucky prayer ‘revival’ is going viral on TikTok, and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part.”<sup>1</sup> Thanks to the power of social media, the world learned about a revival that was happening in a small town that boasts only two stoplights. I read every article and blog I could find; I was sad that my plans to visit the Asbury campus were one week after they closed the campus to outside visitors. Yet students from over 260 universities and 50,000 people from across the country (and world!) were able to make the trek to Asbury University within a one-month window!<sup>2</sup>

Simply defined, revivals are times of “divine visitation when God the Holy Spirit quickens and stirs the slumbering Church of God.”<sup>3</sup> There seem to be two main purposes: to set Christians ablaze with the Holy Spirit and to bring many unsaved to repentance. In these politically polarized and war-filled last few years, Christians throughout the world find ourselves spiritually weary. We long for a fresh touch of the Spirit to revive our homes, our churches, our beloved Japan. I believe

that examining three historical cases of revival in Japan will encourage us to anticipate and prepare for a fresh work of God’s spirit.

## 1881-1889

The beginning of modern Christianity in Japan saw rapid expansion of the church due to a significant revival between 1881 and 1889. The fervor that existed among the Christians during that time mirrored the characteristics of other Christian revivals: unity among believers, social and private prayer, public confession of sin, and a joy in witnessing to unbelievers. As in the other seasons of revival in Japan, God’s spirit touched and unified both the missionary community and the Japanese Christians.

One story during this time of revival recounts that three laymen and one pastor met following the defection of many of their members; they were discouraged and hurting. After a time on their knees, Bishop Lambuth (an American Methodist Episcopal missionary) began to pray.

*His voice began to fail because he seemed to be disturbed by*

a sense of the actual presence of God. God seemed near and mysteriously visible to him. As his voice after a while began to return, what seemed to be an upward tide swept the room and carried away the burdens that had rested so heavily for months, liberating their hearts into joy so great that they scarcely knew whether they were in the body or out of it. And from that time onward, each of these men knew a vaster power, lived at a deeper level, and God wrought vast deeds through them.<sup>4</sup>

Letters home from missionaries during this time were filled with stories of revival.

By 1881, the katakana term *リバイバル* (*ribaibaru*) had become commonly known across Japan. Stories of revival were reported in Osaka, Nagasaki, Kyoto, Sendai, Fukushima, Tokyo, and Okayama. The fledgling church grew from about 4,000 to 30,000 adult members in this seven-year period.<sup>5</sup> **If he could do it then, he can do it now!**

## 1930

Another major season of revival in Japan was in 1930, which seemed to



begin with the gathering of about 30 missionaries with the Japan Evangelistic Band. During their gathering, with no specific agenda, a few began to confess their own spirits of criticism and disunity. On the third day, they focused on a desire to better love their Japanese partners, “that they would see the Japanese Christians as His servants and members of His body, breaking their own alabaster boxes of ointment over these ‘His feet.’”<sup>6</sup> I found a 1930 newsletter sent out by Irene Webster Smith, my favorite missionary heroine, in which she quoted one missionary member:

Wonderful days! March 26–31st have been for many of us a real Pentecost! Oh! Wonderful Days! Our mouths are filled with praise and our hearts ablaze with fire. The Fire of God’s love has fallen at least upon us as a missionary body, in a new and deeper way than ever before. Hallelujah! . . . I never heard such singing, we sang and sang again. There was no leader . . . Everybody saw “Fire” in the Bible wherever they opened it.<sup>7</sup>

Some months following this, a spirit of revival swept through the Holiness Bible School. Revival meetings began in Tokyo, with crowds reaching 2,500 people. There was an emphasis on prayer and the second coming of Christ, and revival spread to other places, where many were healed, and missionaries were transformed. **If he could do it then, he can do it now!**

## 1953

In 1953, after months of discouragement with many Japanese abandoning the church, members of various missions across Tokyo began gathering for early morning prayer to ask God to bring revival. As about 100 missionaries of The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) at a conference began to pray about financial needs, the

prayer turned to a time of confession. Darrell Thompson writes, “Everyone was broken before God and his fellow workers.”<sup>8</sup> They were filled with new joy and power, even as revival was breaking out in other missions. I love a little side comment by Thompson that husbands who had been away came home to find their wives revived. The Spirit’s work of revival happened in a broad, beautiful, and sweeping way. Revival meetings were held every night in Karuizawa. And, as we have seen in recent events in Asbury, there was no designated leader apart from the Holy Spirit. Thompson reported that until almost midnight every night, there was prayer, singing, testimony, confessions, and praise. Missionaries touched by the Holy Spirit traveled to distant locations, where God continued to heal individuals and change hearts. **If he could do it then, he can do it now!**

*If he could do it then, he can do it now!*

## What can we learn?

Studying the history of revivals across the world reminds us that more often than not when the Holy Spirit powerfully touches a group or small population for his specific purposes, revivals will spread like wildfire to various parts of the world. And usually, the conduits are revived individuals or groups who intentionally take the Spirit’s flame to new places.

The revivals in the late 1800s that helped grow the fledgling Japanese church did not happen in isolation; in the previous decade, we see God’s special work across the world. After Dwight L. Moody experienced unusual activities of the Holy Spirit, he went

around the US and England, spreading revival and influencing many. The famous Cambridge Seven were propelled to serve the Lord with the China Inland Mission at this time, and their story inspired many others to dedicate their lives to foreign mission. The gospel spread with the spirit of revival.

The 1930 Japan revival coincides with a decade-long revival that started in China in 1927 through the evangelist John Sung and an evangelical band (much like the one in Japan at that time). They spread revival throughout China and southeast Asia, converting hundreds of thousands. There are also wonderful stories of revival during that decade in central East Africa and Australia. Similarly, the years following World War II in the late 1940s included a worldwide revival movement; we see God calling and uniquely touching young Christian leaders who would

influence the world: Billy Graham, Bill Bright, William Branham, Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, etc. Countries including Canada (1948), Scotland (1949), India (1954), and Argentina (1951) all had significant revivals in which the Holy Spirit did a remarkable new work.

We can be so encouraged by revivals happening across the world because, historically, revivals spread! One Japanese colleague serving in the Tokyo area, Tetsu “Tex” Watanabe, had a chance in February to visit the Asbury revival. He reflects:

*I was in line for about 2.5 hours at -1°C (31°F) and snowing, but I saw people either worshipping along with the public view livestream, or strangers telling testimonies and praying, hugging, and ministering to each other in love. The fruits of the Spirit were displayed in the people around me. . . . And finally, when I got in and sat at the Hughes Auditorium, there was this sense of unity with the 1,500 persons in there and in the worship. It was an unexplainable*





unison that suddenly gave me this great peace inside. It was like a “silent revival.” By the time I left, I could see in the faces of the people expressions of satisfaction and joy. Some were weeping, and some were excited. I believe each one had an encounter with the Lord and received according to how much they were seeking or asking from Him. My biggest takeaway was ‘hope!’ And the Lord is doing something amazing here in Japan and will do so much more when we come together in repentance and seek His face earnestly.

He’s doing it now!

We recognize that revival starts and ends with God. He determines the timing and seasons. So what is our role?

- Pray! Let us determine to seek more of Jesus and of his Spirit. The mystic Evelyn Underhill has said, “The new life, when it comes, I think, will not be the result of discussions, plans, meetings, etc., but will well up from the deepest sources of prayer.” Each revival that we have examined started when believers were gathering to pray.
- Be humble. Contrite hearts (Psalm 51) seem to be God’s favorite entryway for the Spirit of revival. These stories were not about perfect

missionaries or extraordinary pastors but rather Christians who had chosen humility.

- Practice unity across denominations. One of God’s primary purposes of revival has been the unity of his church. What better place for Japanese society and the world to see the realities of God’s transformation than in Japan, which historically has been splintered among denominations and groups?
- Let us be intentionally creating structures, so that we are ready to disciple many and multiply when the Spirit brings revival and widespread conversions! My husband, Eric, often talks about the need for us, the church in Japan, even while still small, to be ready for when revival comes and the church needs to swell quickly.
- Believe! I am ready and can’t wait. Let’s believe together in our God

who does not change: **If he could do it then, he can do it now!** JH

1. Jake Taylor, “A nonstop Kentucky prayer ‘revival’ is going viral on TikTok, and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part.” NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/asbury-university-revival-college-kentucky-going-viral-tiktok-rcna70686> (February 16, 2023).
2. Sara Weissman, “The Aftershocks of the Ashbury Revival”, Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/03/02/asbury-revival-comes-close> (March 2, 2023)
3. Colin C. Whittaker, *Great Revivals*, (Springfield, MO: Radiant Books, 1984): 21.
4. William Bray, “Renewal of Church Leadership in the Japanese Context”, Seventh Hayama Missionary Seminar “New Life for the Church”, (January 5–7, 1966): 112. <https://www.horao2020.net/documents/Hayama/Hayama1966.pdf>
5. Darrell Thompson, “History of Christian Revival in Japan”, Seventh Hayama Missionary Seminar “New Life for the Church”, (January 5-7, 1966): 60. <https://www.horao2020.net/documents/Hayama/Hayama1966.pdf>
6. Thompson, “History of Christian Revival in Japan”, 61.
7. Irene Webster Smith’s personal newsletter, *The Sunrise*, no. 70, (August 1930).
8. Thompson, *ibid*, 63.
9. Simon II. Baynes, “The Place of Prophecy in Revival”, Seventh Hayama Missionary Seminar “New Life for the Church”, (January 5–7, 1966): 41.

Asbury revival photos by Tetsu “Tex” Watanabe

*Sue Plumb Takamoto has served with A3 (previously Asian Access) since 1990. She and her husband have been serving in Ishinomaki with the Be One Network. Sue and her team started the Nozomi Project, a social enterprise for women.*



# 50 martyrs and 47 ronin

By Roger W. Lowther

*Drawing parallels between history and our faith*

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ [the Lord] died for us” (Rom. 5:8 NIV).

## 50 martyrs

On December 4, 1623, 50 followers of Christ were marched from Nihonbashi at the center of Edo (old Tokyo) to a hill just outside the city gate, where they were bound to wooden poles and burned. On Christmas Day the horrific slaughter was repeated, when 37 others—including the wives and children of the 50, and some who had helped them in some way—were also executed.<sup>1</sup> It was one of the largest public execution of Christians in Japanese history and also one of the largest displays of loyalty to God.

On a cold winter morning almost 400 years later, I followed their path with a group of Japanese Christians and pastors. Snow blew in our faces as we endured the strong winds rushing between the buildings. Each of us held a piece of paper with the name of one of the martyrs from that day. My piece of paper read “Peter” Shozaburo. After eight hours, we approached the end of their journey in what is now Shinagawa, walking along the tracks of the

noisy Yamanote Line and what used to be the coastline of Tokyo Bay. My body shivered. My feet ached. How much worse it must have been for the men on that day! All that remained of the city gate was a large stone foundation. All that remains on the martyrs’ hill is a small memorial stone hidden in the shadow of a large office building.

## 47 ronin

At the famous temple at Sengakuji, mere minutes away, lies the end of another march. On January 31, 1703, 47 ronin (samurai with no master) traversed heavy snow from the city’s center following the same route as the martyrs, carrying the decapitated head of their enemy in a bucket! They avenged the death of their master in what is now known as the Akō Incident. By order of the shogun, they committed seppuku (death by a self-inflicted stab to their bellies) at Sengakuji Temple, and were buried there on that hill. Today businessmen and women continue to visit the ronins’ graves to honor them for their loyalty.

Walking through the cold winter wind, I thought about these two groups of men, the 50 martyrs and the 47 ronin. Both marched to the edge of the city to show loyalty to their master.

Both climbed a hill to their place of execution. The 50 followers of Christ marched for their heavenly Lord. The 47 ronin for their earthly lord. The 50 martyrs are all but forgotten, but the 47 ronin continue to be immortalized in movies, books, and art.<sup>2</sup>

## Loyalty of Jesus

Walking that path, I thought about the similarities and differences with Jesus Christ. He, too, marched through the city and up a hill to his place of execution. He, too, was publicly displayed as a criminal. The crime of the ronin was murder. The crime of the martyrs was their faith. The only crime of Jesus was who he claimed to be. The martyrs and ronin gave their lives for the master above them, but Jesus gave his life for the sinners beneath him. Though Jesus is the master we should be serving, he lowered himself to serve us instead.

Jesus “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant . . . He humbled himself by becoming [loyal] to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7–8 GWT with author’s addition). The biggest difference of all is that the loyalty of Jesus personally changes our lives, because his loyalty to the point of death was for us. **JH**

1. “Kirishitan Sites in Tokyo,” The web site of Russ Stutler, <http://www.stutler.cc/russ/kirishitan.html> (accessed April 20, 2023), section “Site 7. The execution hill at Fuda no Tsuji.”

2. The group of men who stayed behind at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant to prevent further disaster were dubbed the “Fukushima 50” by the media. They were being compared to the 47 ronin, sacrificing their lives to regain lost honor.

Photo submitted by author

*Roger W. Lowther is the director of faith and art at Community Arts Tokyo, Grace City Church Tokyo, and the MAKE Collective (international network of missionary artists). He has served with Mission to the World in Japan since 2005.*



*Pastors and Christians walking the path of the martyrs*

# Uchimura and the Non-Church movement in Japan

By Louis Lau

## Founder of an indigenized Christian movement

Can one love Jesus and profess love for his or her own country at the same time? In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a fervent Christian leader, Kanzo Uchimura, founder of Mukyōkai—the Non-Church Movement—seemed to be denied such an option.

Kanzo Uchimura (1861–1930) was regarded as one of the most foremost thinkers and practitioners of indigenized Christianity since Protestantism entered Japan in 1859. In trying to make Christianity more indigenized, Uchimura expressed being hated by his countrymen and disliked by foreign missionaries for Jesus' sake, and that he was considered a "heretic and dangerous man among missionaries and their converts in this country."<sup>1</sup>

### Spiritual influences on Uchimura

Born into a lower-class samurai family on March 26, 1861, during the Meiji Restoration, as a young man Uchimura was fascinated with Western Civilization. He attended the Tokyo School of Foreign Languages, which prepared students to enter the prestigious Tokyo Imperial University. However, with the end of the feudal system and his father receiving only a small severance pay, Uchimura could not complete his studies there. He was transferred to the Sapporo Agricultural College (now Hokkaido University) which offered free education.

Dr. William S. Clark, a devoted Christian, helped establish this college. Although there for only eight months, Clark had a tremendous influence on the students, which included Inazo Nitobe and Uchimura. Senior students who signed a "Covenant of Believers in Jesus" with Dr. Clark, were zealous in reaching out to the juniors, and 16-year-old Uchimura, a young Chris-

tian, was also made to sign the covenant. Despite his immaturity at this point, in hindsight, he felt that this had great spiritual significance. This was the beginning of Uchimura's interaction with Christians and Christianity.

Uchimura was baptized in 1878 by American Methodist missionary Rev. Merriman C. Harris. He and the other baptized students organized meet-



ings in the dormitory, and when the missionaries were absent the students took turns to play the role of a pastor, teacher, and being a servant for the day. They focused on the ethical aspects in their Bible studies due to their Confucian and samurai backgrounds.

After graduating at the top of his class in 1881, Uchimura, together with his five classmates known as the "Six Brethren" or the Sapporo Band, stayed in Sapporo, attending the Methodist and the Episcopalian churches. However, after witnessing the disunity shown by these two churches, they

finally started their own independent church, removing the foreignness, creeds, and rituals associated with the two churches and making it as Japanese as possible. They retained the Apostles' Creed and Dr. Clark's "Covenant of Believers in Jesus" as their sources for teaching alongside the Bible. Making it as simple as possible, their conditions for those wanting to join were simply a confession of faith without the need for baptism and a commitment to serve in simple tasks or to preach or teach. Uchimura's church (which was later named "Independent Native Church") grew rapidly.<sup>2</sup> This was Uchimura's first foray into making the church Japanese without foreign help, which led later to the establishment of Mukyōkai, the Non-Church Movement.

### Spiritual awakening and disillusionment with Western Christianity

Uchimura spent four years in the States from 1884 to 1888 for studies and for work. Going to the States a broken man after his divorce from his wife in Japan, these four years were undoubtedly eye-opening for him. During Uchimura's time in the States, his idealism of Western Christianity was shredded to pieces. He supposed every Christian to be honest and upright, but the deacons of a church cheated his friend and him of their money. From among the Christians, he heard swear words and witnessed racial discrimination and the love of mammon, which drove him further from his impression of Christendom as heaven on earth!

However, the Quakers showed him loving care. He was impressed with their simple way of life and freedom from institutional church trappings.



His interactions with Dr. Julius Seelye, the principal of Amherst, and Dr. Clark (who was living in the US) also left deep and positive impressions on him. But his disappointment with the callous attitudes of seminary professors and students in Western theological education, along with Western imperialism, motivated Uchimura to contextualize Christianity for his beloved nation of Japan.

### Clashes with missionaries and clergy

Uchimura continued to have clashes with missionaries back in Japan. Working in 1888 as the president of Hokuetsu Gakkan, a government high school in Niigata run by Christians, he introduced controversial teaching methods, inviting Buddhist monks and Shinto priests to present their teachings to the students.

This riled up the American missionaries on the board of the school, and with the help of a Japanese clergyman, they collaborated and succeeded in getting rid of Uchimura as the president of the high school.

Indeed, one can see that Uchimura's patriotic Christianity was shaped by his many experiences during his early years in Sapporo, in the US, in Niigata, and in Tokyo. He never questioned his love for Christ, but his experiences caused him to question the Western church as the de facto model of biblical Christianity. His love for his beautiful Japan and for Jesus, coupled with his disdain for the Western church, with all its sectarianism and institutionalism being brought into a highly cultured Japan, were reasons for his rejection of western-style church.

### Contextualization and indigenization

He was way ahead of his time in contextualization—understanding how Christianity should be brought into a culture without importation of the alien cultural ways of Western denominations: dogmas and rituals, tithes,

the clergy as ministers, the sacraments of baptism and communion, institutional organizations, and an imperialistic leadership style. Coupled with his strong samurai and Confucianist background, Uchimura had a vision to create a church based on Japanese-style moral and intellectual education, which he esteemed highly. The Japanese could accept it as transcultural Christianity, void of all outside interference. It was through his own experiences that he felt a new paradigm was needed to make Christianity palatable to his countrymen. And for that, the Mukyōkai was born in March 1901.

In Uchimura's understanding, *ecclesia* was supposed to be a “people chosen and called by God” and in

“I love two J's and no third, one is Jesus, and the other is Japan.

I do not know which I love more, Jesus or Japan.

I am hated by my countrymen for Jesus' sake as yaso [Christian], and I am disliked by foreign missionaries for Japan's sake as national and narrow.

Even if I lose all my friends, I cannot lose Jesus and Japan.”

Kanzo Uchimura, *How I Became a Christian: Out of My Diary* (Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1895)

practice, merely “ordinary people meeting around Christ and seeking to do Christ's way.”<sup>3</sup> Simply put, the Mukyōkai sees church as a community of believers meeting and studying the Word of God regularly. This is contrary to the common belief that they do not meet at all. However, they do abstain from all organized forms of religious practices which were brought in from the West. The absence of these practices may count against them being considered a mainstream Christian group, but nevertheless, most evangelical churches do accept them as a Protestant group with solid and scholarly biblical teaching.

### Impact and legacy

Mukyōkai's services are conducted simply with praise and the study of the Word of God. The centrality and supreme authority of the Scriptures in all matters of faith is their foundation in their public lectures and the Bible study groups held in different cities in Japan. Most of the lecturers are highly intellectual, consisting of university professors and biblical scholars. Even

today, some evangelical pastors use Mukyōkai's publications as their study guides due to their high standard of biblical scholarship. Their apprenticeship of training leaders is culturally appreciated and recognized.

Their past stance against war, nationalistic militancy, and their emphasis on social justice have established Christianity in the eyes of the public as a religion that speaks up for social justice. According to the 2018 Japan Mission Research findings, their numbers have declined sharply to 38 congregations, counting 1,407 members with regular attendees of only 600 in Japan. This may be due to aging leaders and to members who flow into other Protestant churches.

Loathe them or love them, the Mukyōkai is an antithesis to churches influenced by the West. Moving strongly to the right indigenously

has resulted in several weaknesses. In their pursuit of personal spiritual faith, independent Bible studies, and the emphasis on elite lecturers, they neglected the many biblical teachings of coming together in worship, encouragement of each other, and growing in sharing the gifts of Christian saints. They have also failed to be outward looking and evangelistic in nature. These may be the very reasons for their decline. Their original cry, however, continues to challenge missionaries to contextualize and indigenize Christianity in Japan. **JH**

1. “Uchimura's Self-introduction,” Uchimura's A Day A Life, <https://ainogakuen.ed.jp/academy/bible/nonch/daylife/00/self-history.html> (accessed April 30, 2023).

2. Kanzo Uchimura, *How I Became a Christian: Out of My Diary*, (Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1895), Chapter Fourth—A New Church and Lay-Preaching.

3. Chua, How Chuang, “‘I became Mukyōkai’: the Development of Uchimura Kanzo's thought on Non-church Christianity” (unpublished manuscript, Hokkaido Bible Institute, 2014), PDF.

Photo submitted by author

*Louis Lau, with his wife, Chris, has served with OMF since 1992. Hailing from Singapore, he is a church planting facilitator and dean of Asian Cross-Cultural Training Centre (ACTI). He's involved in homeless ministry and the LoveJapan project.*

# Disaster response— learning from the past

By Helen Kwak

*Tracing the history of evangelical response to disasters in Japan from 1986 to the present*

On October 25, 2022, Rev. Takao Nakadai spoke at an online meeting co-sponsored by the Committee for Aid and Cooperation of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) and the National Christian Disaster Network. This presentation was translated and adapted by Helen Kwak for this article.

## Beginnings

During his talk, Rev. Nakadai recalled one early experience with work he'd done with other teens from his church, singing songs and telling Bible stories at an institute for disabled children. While they were there, he glanced out the window and saw other high school kids out in the heat, pulling weeds and cleaning up the grounds. He remembered thinking about the difference: "Of course, as Christians, we were worried about saving their souls, and I didn't really think it was ok to stop doing that and do regular volunteer work. But I felt something lacking in the way we were serving. We were nice and cool inside with the children talking about the Bible while they were outside in the heat. For me this was the first time I really thought about service to society as a Christian." Just as his own understanding of relief work has developed over time, so has the evangelical response to disasters changed and deepened.

Within JEA from 1968–1986, there were some mutual support activities among the member churches during times of hardship. After its reorganization in 1986, JEA launched standing committees to deal with ongoing issues, including the Relief Committee (later called the Committee for Aid and Cooperation).

In response to the eruption of Mt. Mihara on Oshima near the end of 1986, JEA collected donations and supported the pastor and members of a church who had evacuated to Tokyo, even though the affected church was not a member of a JEA denomination. Offering support outside of its own membership was a new development for the association.

## Expanding to give monetary relief overseas

From that time, JEA worked with specialized organizations that had experience in disaster response including World Vision, Food for the Hungry (now Hunger Zero), and the Salvation Army. Through these connections at meetings and interactions with the World Evangelical Alliance and the Asian Evangelical Alliance, awareness of disaster relief work grew. During this period JEA gathered donations to contribute to organizations doing relief work overseas, responding to a typhoon and volcanic eruption in the Philippines, an earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia, an earthquake in Taiwan, and a project digging wells in Burkina Faso, Africa. Sometimes JEA sent people to visit local churches and see the disaster areas.

## A shift towards action

Several years later, in 1974, the Lausanne Movement confirmed that service in the world and evangelism are two wheels on the same vehicle and that social involvement is also part of Christian duty. From this point on, Rev. Nakadai began to think that some concrete action for the betterment of

society is also important and necessary alongside the preaching of the gospel.

In 1989, Rev. Nakadai attended the International Congress on World Evangelization (also known as Lausanne II) in the Philippines. During this conference, the attendees made a declaration called the "Manila Manifesto" which included the need to "demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter." The next year, Rev. Nakadai was asked to be part of the JEA Committee for Aid and Cooperation, and little by little, both he and JEA began to look at the situation inside Japan and began to include concrete action as part of its response to disasters.

In 1995, the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck Kobe and the surrounding area. JEA received lots of gifts and made sure they were distributed. At this point, World Vision, Food for the Hungry International, and the Salvation Army were members of the committee; they met regularly and worked alongside each other.

Rev. Nakadai did not go to the disaster zone right away. He told of a fellow pastor who rented a mobile phone from NTT and headed there immediately, traveled around the area by bicycle and reported back regularly. Rev. Nakadai stayed in Tokyo, gathering donations and making sure they got delivered. Some of the youth from his church went as volunteers, but he convinced himself that doing logistical support was enough. About a year later, he went and looked around, comparing what he saw to the photos from immediately afterward. He explained that



he regretted making excuses for not going and realized there is great value in showing up. He credited this regret with helping him respond quickly in 2011.

## Supporting government relief efforts

In 2004, the Chuetsu Earthquake occurred in Niigata Prefecture. JEA gathered donations and distributed support to affected churches and camp facilities. However, the donations they had received were more than could reasonably be used by the local church. So after some discussion, JEA introduced themselves to the people handling the relief efforts at the local government offices and donated money there too. This was the first real interaction with government in the area of disaster response and the first move to use donations for the public outside of the control of a Christian organization.

## All-out response

This brings us to the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami of 2011, which many of the people listening to Rev. Nakadai's talk had experienced themselves, either as responders, survivors, or both. This period saw lots of collaboration and cooperation but was on such a big scale that no matter how much any one organization worked, there was still more to do. There were a lot of developments during this time, but two main ones emerged.

First, individuals from the evangelical missionary community and from local churches joined forces under Jonathan Wilson's leadership, and CRASH (Christian Relief, Assistance, Support, and Hope). It was originally designed as a trauma support program for children experiencing disaster, but expanded overnight with an influx of donations and workers to roll out a disaster response that lasted for several years.

The other development that stands out is the creation of the Disaster Relief Christian Network (DRCnet). This was centered at Ochanomizu Christian Center in Tokyo and formed with the idea that there could be value in having a central hub for all Christians involved in disaster relief, including Catho-

lics, National Christian Council (NCC) churches, evangelical churches, and Christian businessmen.

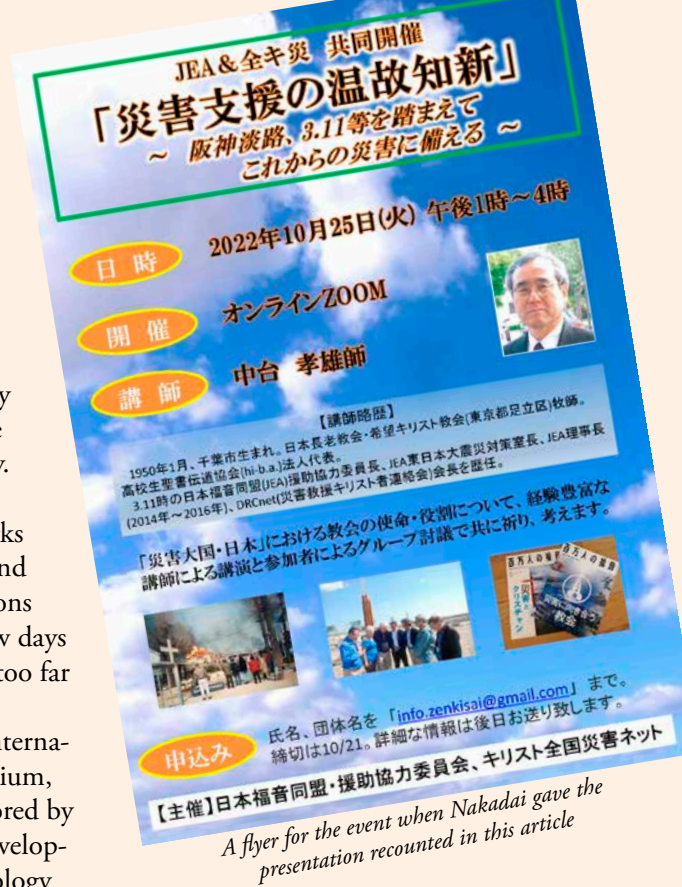
The DRCnet functioned for ten years, focused on three main directives:

- The development of a Disaster Response Chaplaincy Training program with the help of the Salvation Army.
- The development of local disaster prevention networks based on neighborhoods and locations, not denominations (which, during the first few days after a disaster strikes, are too far away to be helpful).
- The development of the International Theological Symposium, an ongoing activity sponsored by Fuller Seminary for the development of thoughts and theology relating to disaster response.

Since then, there have been disasters in Hiroshima, Kyushu, Kumamoto, and other locations around Japan. Good connections and cooperative relationships have grown up in these areas. In response to the earthquake in Kumamoto, the Kyushu Christ Disaster Relief Center was established, and in various places around Japan local networks are growing. When the Nationwide Christian Disaster Network (Zenkisai) was established in 2019, it became the forum for all these networks to connect. DRCnet's job was done.

## Today's work

Overall, Rev. Nakadai said, "Our work has gotten deeper little by little, our response has grown more collaborative, and our theology has become better at handling the gritty questions that arise." While disaster relief used to be limited to monetary donations within a single denomination, it now involves pastors being directly involved in outreach with local survivors. Cooperation is not only across denominations but even outside the church and a collaborative network is prepared to respond to the next disaster. The Great East Japan Earthquake International Theological Symposium still meets annually. It has risen to the challenge



A flyer for the event when Nakadai gave the presentation recounted in this article

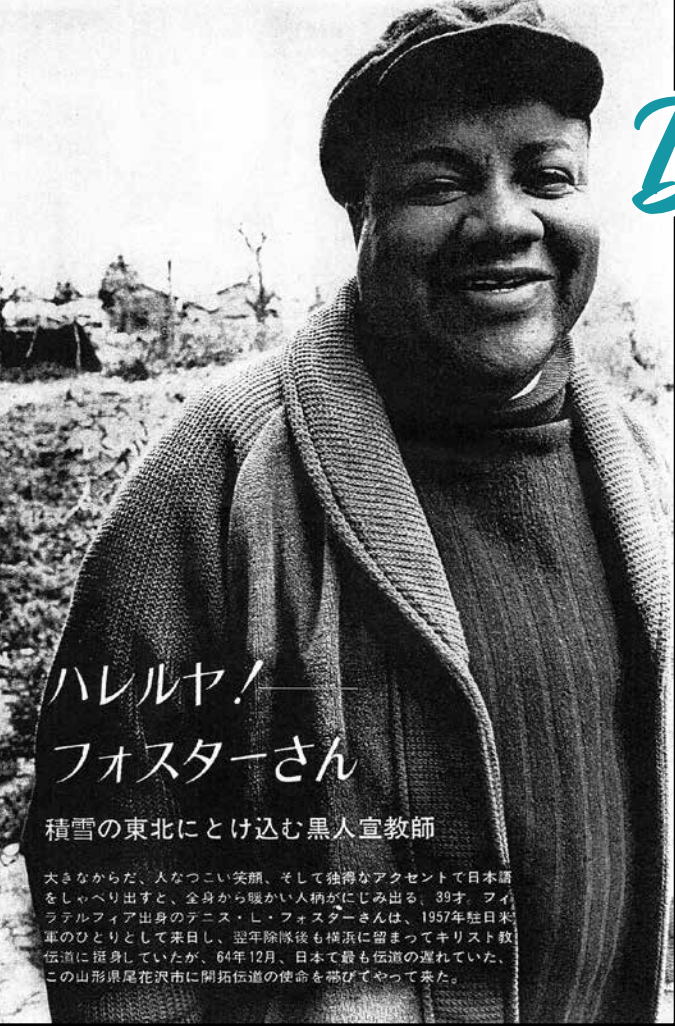
of addressing issues such as training leaders in difficult times, supporting healing from trauma, and representing Christ to survivors.

But the work is ongoing. Rev. Nakadai added a few comments about things we know from looking back on the past: "Immediately after a disaster, there is a hearty response, but it is difficult to maintain the enthusiasm for long. We need to keep a few live coals, like a pilot light on a gas stove, to enable us to fire up quickly when something happens." To this end, regular communication with like-minded groups, individuals, churches, and social services is valuable. We can all think about our homes, churches, schools, and communities and consider how well we are prepared for upcoming disasters, anticipating ways to demonstrate God's love visibly to our neighbors. **JH**

Flyer image submitted by author

*Helen Kwak is a counselor and head of care and training at CRASH Japan. She teaches keicho (attentive listening); develops workshops and seminars in listening and in chaplaincy; and leads book clubs and support groups.*

*Takao Nakadai describes himself only as a local church pastor (Kibō Christ Church) and director of hi-b.a. (an evangelical youth ministry). He has also served in various roles with JEA over the years.*



ハレルヤ!  
フォスターさん

積雪の東北にとけ込む黒人宣教師

大きなからだ、人なつこい笑顔、そして独特なアクセントで日本語をしゃべり出すと、全身から暖かい人柄がにじみ出る。39才、フィラデルフィア出身のデニス・L・フォスターさんは、1957年駐日米軍のひとりとして来日し、空軍除隊後も横浜に留まってキリスト教伝道に挺身していたが、64年12月、日本で最も伝道の遅れていた、この山形県尾花沢市に開拓伝道の使命を帯びてやって来た。

# Dennis Foster's lasting impact

By John Edwards

## The 25-year Christian witness of an African American missionary left a community in Yamagata changed

from those talking about the history of Christianity and the churches in that area.

When we actually decided to move to Obanazawa, we continued to hear the name Dennis Foster. People who have never been to church shared their memories of him.

“When I was a child, Dennis used to play with me in the street,” a flower shop owner told me.

“Dennis Foster always sat at that table,” the Ichiban Soba shop owner informed me.

When I was at the city cemetery helping clean graves, I learned from the former mayor of the city that Dennis Foster taught him English and music.

I asked an older missionary if he'd ever heard of Dennis. He did some asking around and it turns out that Dennis Foster was a single, independent missionary whose visa was sponsored by my own mission—SEND International (formerly Far Eastern Gospel Crusade).

### Called to a hard place

Dennis Leon Foster, an African American, was born August 22, 1931, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He graduated from music college in 1955 and came to Japan as a soldier in 1957. He became an assistant chaplain and music director. In 1958, he was discharged in Yokohama and stayed in Japan to do

missionary work. He studied Japanese and directed a choir at the YMCA. He prayed for the Lord to send him to a hard place, a place where there was no church.

During a chance meeting on a train, he met a believer, Mr. Hoshikawa, from Shinjo in Yamagata. “Are there churches in Shinjo?” asked Dennis. Mr. Hoshikawa replied, “Yes, there are four churches; but in nearby Obanazawa, there are no churches.”

Dennis decided to go to Obanazawa as a missionary. He moved there in 1964 at 33 years of age. He remained there until his death on April 6, 1989, at just 58 years old. (Interestingly, my wife and I moved to Obanazawa when I was a few months from my 58th birthday.) In those 25 years living in Obanazawa, Dennis never once returned to the US.

In his last written report to SEND (probably 1988), Dennis wrote:

The church situation is nothing like that of Yokohama. There was no Christian witness in this city when I came. Even now there are only a handful. Some of them attend churches in the Yamagata City area. Many of the people who attend churches in the Yokohama area are young and live away from their families and the strong influence of the traditional religions of Japan. The turnover is very high as young people go to large cities, such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and Sendai.

**M**y wife and I have been in Japan as missionaries for 30 years. Within a few years after our retirement, we will likely be largely forgotten in the missionary community. We will probably not leave behind a church plant nor will we be called back for various anniversaries. We didn't lead a mission organization. We certainly haven't had anything named after us. But we are not alone. That is the case for many of us who serve as missionaries in Japan.

Two years ago, my wife and I began to look for a new place to serve. We had been near large cities (Yokohama, Osaka, Tokyo, and Sendai) for our entire career, but we began to consider places that missionaries were not going to, where the JEMA Directory has few names listed, even for entire prefectures. Living in Sendai, we began to look nearby in Miyagi and Yamagata Prefectures. In a Facebook post, we saw a prayer request for three unchurched cities in Yamagata Prefecture. We drove to Zion Christ Church in Murayama. That church is trying to do evangelistic work in Obanazawa, one of the unchurched cities nearby. Over and over, we heard the name Dennis Foster



The population has decreased as more than half of the high school graduates leave the city. I have introduced several people to churches in the Kanto area.

According to former missionaries Arthur and Beverly Moe, in their book *Thou Shalt Remember*, life was initially difficult for Dennis in Obanzawa as he was both a foreigner and a black man. However, he quickly made friends as he was known to always be smiling. Initially walking and later getting around by bicycle, many residents of Obanzawa remember Dennis for his large size, strong voice, bright smile, and his singing. At his memorial service, one man shared that Dennis often broke out into song—often gospel songs.

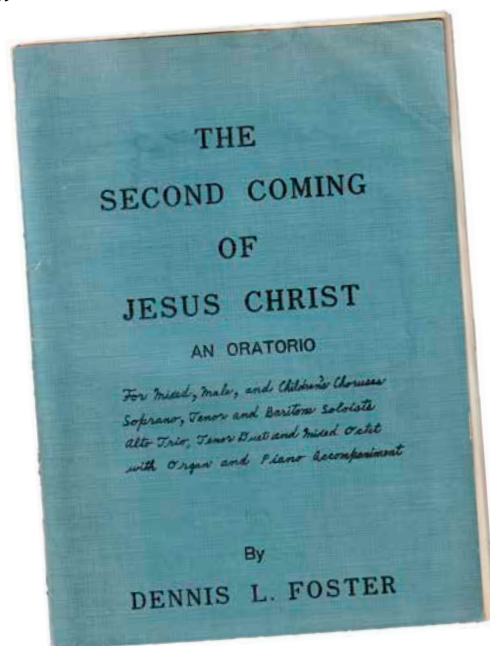
Dennis did make some connections through his one major music composition, *The Second Coming of Jesus Christ* oratorio (1969). Some believers in Yokohama helped him get it published, and portions of it were performed in some places in Kanto. In fact, the only pictures I've seen of him besides one printed on the bulletin for his memorial service at his home church, Nazarene Baptist Church of Philadelphia, are the three photos of him included in the publication of his oratorio.

Minoru Suzuki, as a grade school boy, used to go to Dennis's house with his older brother to play. As he got older, he learned music with Dennis. Minoru played the guitar and Dennis sometimes accompanied him on the piano. At 15, Minoru came to faith in Christ at a church in Yamagata. Dennis would ask Minoru questions such as “What is the gospel?” and then he would show Minoru the answers directly from the Bible.

Dennis served the community in several ways. He kept the street he lived on clean. He taught music and English but never charged for it. He sometimes helped people with bills, even with his own limited resources. According to Suzuki, Dennis created an A4-sized tract and distributed it in many places. He visited people, and he also led Bible studies.

For a time, he had a small church in his tiny rental townhouse. (One friend recalled his home was cold and dark.) At the end of his life, three men and a woman were attending the little church in his house. Arthur Moe described the room as having two banners hanging on each side of the front of the room, and on them were written the exact same passage from the Bible: 1 Corinthians 15:3–4: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (NIV).

There are two women in Obanzawa, Hiroko Okuyama and Keiko Mori, who recall that Dennis made a big impact on their spiritual development during their high school years. A third, Miss Enomoto, died in 2022, just a few months before Susan and I moved



to Obanzawa. At Dennis's memorial service in 1990, Miss Enomoto said that Dennis was strict but loving, that he used the Kōgoyaku Bible version, sang from the Seika (Japanese hymnbook), and that he always taught directly from the Bible. After Dennis's death, Minoru traveled to Dennis Foster's sending church to thank them in person for sending Dennis Foster to Japan.

Ms. Okuyama shared, “He showed me by his life how to live the Christian life. He was a man who lived by faith.

He would always pray for and with those who came to [seek] counsel with him.” She added, “he had a great sense of humor.”

## Ongoing legacy

Since 1989, there have been a couple of missionaries who lived in Obanzawa but none stayed more than four years. The last missionary family left in 2004. And yet, the feelings of local residents toward Christians and foreigners are overwhelmingly positive. Mrs. Wada, a believer and former elementary school principal in Obanzawa, says that because of Dennis Foster, the city is very welcoming of Christians. Nearly everyone over forty who was living in the city at the time have fond memories or positive impressions of Dennis and Christian missionaries in general.

Mr. Hoshikawa, the man Dennis met on that train all those years earlier, stated at the one-year memorial service for Dennis in 1990, “Obanzawa is a hard place to evangelize but there is now a root planted and growing.”

Last week I met a medical doctor who loves music. In fact, he has a pipe organ and a piano in his clinic waiting room! He never met Dennis but he is full of gratitude for the gospel work he did in Obanzawa. He has several copies of Dennis's oratorio, and he hopes to organize a memorial concert performance within a couple of years.

An article in *Japan Harvest* (Winter 1997) briefly mentions the ministry of Dennis Foster (p. 17). Outside of that, there are few, if any, current missionaries in Japan who remember him. Yet his legacy of Christian witness is strong, and the lives he impacted in the Japanese community continue to inspire believers and open hearts to hear more about our savior Jesus Christ. I want that to be my legacy—individuals and even communities impacted by the gospel. **JH**

Images submitted by author

*John Edwards and his wife Susan have been missionaries in Japan since 1993 (with SEND International since 2002). They currently do evangelistic work in Obanzawa, Yamagata, and lead the D House internship program.*



# Celebrating God's faithfulness in Tokyo for 150 years

By Jonathan Oh

**The fruits of mission work may not be immediately visible, but God is faithful**

1875: Union Church building in Tsukiji

In 2022, Tokyo Union Church celebrated its 150th anniversary.<sup>1</sup> This celebration was all about the Lord's faithfulness, and it is to God's glory alone that this anniversary was possible—especially in the midst of a pandemic. The story of this church should be an encouragement to those who are living and serving in Japan today, for God uses and redeems the work of his people to bring honor and glory to him alone. In the Land of the Rising Sun, missionaries have served an important purpose in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

## Started in prayer and in mission

More than two centuries after Japan declared Christianity illegal, missionaries quietly reentered the nation as early as 1837. Their primary focus at the time was to provide aid and support to the people of Japan, but about ten years later, missionaries began to focus on the mission of proclaiming Christ—even though it was illegal to do so.

In 1857, Townsend Harris came as a diplomat from the US, and he worked with the Japanese government to establish an official relationship between the two countries. Missionaries began to freely enter Japan once again, and other foreigners also began to arrive. During the 1860s, in Tokyo, foreigners were expected to live in the Tsukiji area (now part of central Tokyo). As

they started to settle, the foreign settlers also brought their Christian faith with them. By 1872, Union Church was founded in Tsukiji with much prayer, and a building was dedicated by that summer. Missionaries led Sunday morning services and helped develop a community that foreigners would call home.

English is an important bridge in connecting with Japanese today; the same was also true during the late 19th century. Arthur Collins Maclay wrote in his book, *A Budget of Letters from Japan*, "Many young Japanese go to the missionaries to learn English, and, of course, receive much Scriptural instruction with it . . . The zealous missionaries take turns in preaching to the English-speaking residents every Sunday morning, and it is to be hoped that this will form a permanent feature of their work here."<sup>2</sup> The work of the missionaries included both the preaching of God's Word and English language instruction to those who lived in Japan.

## A unique witness and a building problem

A unique aspect of the Union Church was the unity of missionaries from various traditions and backgrounds. Isabella Bird, who traveled Japan in 1878, wrote in her book *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, "There is a complete nest of Missionary Church

edifices, a wonderful testimony to the shattered unity of the Christian Church, and the number of houses occupied by missionaries is very large."<sup>3</sup> In this context, the desire of Union Church to be rooted in Christ and to be united as much as possible in witness was no small feat. The Lord was using this church to shine the light of Christ to a nation that had only recently opened up to Christianity.

As much as things seemed to be going well, a problem arose. The Union Church was quickly running out of space, and settlers also started to move out of Tsukiji to progress westward. By 1902, the church had moved out of Tsukiji and became a church without a building. For almost three decades, Tokyo Union Church (TUC) had to move around different parts of Ginza in order to gather in worship. One of the main locations was Ginza Methodist Church. Because TUC was sharing the building, their services were held during Sunday afternoon. In one missionary report dating back to the late 19th century, the Union Church was criticized for holding services on Sunday afternoons when most people would have wanted to enjoy their day away from work. It was deemed a "missionary church" for catering to the missionaries rather than to others who were in the community. There were tensions that brought challenges to this young and growing congregation. The





1930: New TUC building in Omotesando

Great Kanto earthquake in 1923 and subsequent fire in Tokyo destroyed a plan to build on a property in Toranomon, delaying the transition to a permanent meeting location.

Tokyo Union Church eventually found a place in what is now known as Omotesando. A building was dedicated in 1930, and the community continued to develop and grow, though it faced hardships during the late 1930s and 1940s as the Japanese government forcefully intervened in the affairs of the church. Many foreigners left during the war, and the building was destroyed during the firebombing of Tokyo in 1945. Yet in the midst of the rubble, an offering plate was found intact, and it is now used each year during Dedication Sunday as a reminder of God's faithfulness and the dedication of the people's whole lives to the Lord.

### Becoming integrated into the community

TUC again was without a building for several years, but it had become a deeper part of the Omotesando community. In the process of rebuilding, the church called its first full-time pastor, and it served as one of a number of English-speaking churches in both Tokyo and Yokohama. Yet even though it was no longer a "missionary church," it had not lost its focus and dedication to the "unfinished task of Christ" in Japan as then-pastor Howard Haines wrote back in the 1950s. TUC



1980: Current TUC building, rebuilt in Omotesando

continued to shine the light of Christ in the heart of Tokyo and worked to serve the community in the subsequent decades. Around the time of the centennial anniversary, TUC was in the midst of growth to the point that there was a need for a new campus as many residents moved into western Tokyo. TUC then planted West Tokyo Union Church for this growing part of the community.

By the 1970s, due to age and the lack of space, a new building for TUC was needed. There was much uproar over the building of the new facility. There were petitions circulated by those living in the neighborhood—specifically in Japanese—to preserve the old building (that had been rebuilt post-WWII). However, a new building was dedicated in 1980, and because of its central location, it serves as a witness to those who are passing by today, and it stands in contrast to the rich material goods that are sold next door.

### Staying connected in a time of hardship

A few decades later, a global pandemic, the likes of which had not been seen in recent generations, forced churches to change the way they gathered. After the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020, the leadership of TUC decided to close the building to weekly public worship out of care and caution for our community and our neighbors. TUC entered a new digital era by broadcasting the services live online and developing an online community in new and innovative ways. Some people from around the world and in many prefectures across Japan joined the services regularly without ever having stepped foot in the building. It was in the midst of this pandemic that the 150th anniversary of TUC took place. While we continued to learn how to navigate through this challenge, God remained ever

faithful, calling us into community in new ways. The celebration of this anniversary in October 2022 began with a 24-hour online global broadcast and culminated in a two-weekend event with past pastors joining the congregation in Tokyo. During this celebration we were able to welcome people back fully to our Omotesando campus, and our weekly gatherings are once again filled with people excited to worship God. The Lord helped guide TUC into a new place that's stronger and better than before the pandemic. More importantly, it reminded us that God is at work even when we cannot see or understand what is happening. The missionaries who started Union Church more than 150 years ago could not have imagined where we would be today.

The work of God continues today both through existing churches like TUC and also through new church plants all throughout the country. As we look forward to the next 150 years, our prayer is that God's kingdom will come and that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Through struggles and hardships, the Lord continues to protect the church, and for those who are serving across the Land of the Rising Sun, may this story of God's faithfulness be an encouragement to those seeking to serve God and the people in Japan. **JH**

A special note of thanks to Rev. Dr. Steven Toshio Yamaguchi, Mrs. Alison Yamaguchi, and Rev. Hector Herrera III of Tokyo Union Church for their important contributions for this article. A special mention to Robert F. Hemphill, who wrote about the first century of TUC in the book *A Church for All Seasons*, which provided significant background for this article.

1. Tokyo Union Church is the current official name, but it was initially Union Church and we are unsure what year it changed.
2. Arthur Collins Maclay, *A Budget of Letters from Japan* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1886, second edition 1889), 199.
3. Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880, reprinted 2010), 33.

Photos submitted by author, from *A Church for All Seasons: Tokyo Union Church 1872–1980* (updated edition of original 1972 book by Robert F. Hemphill).

*Jonathan Ob is a tentmaking missionary in Tokyo. He is an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church in America and works to support churches in broadcasting and technology.*



# A deep foundation

*We see only the present, but God has been working in Japan for centuries*

*By Jack Garrett*

Christian roots in Japan are much deeper than most of us realize, but God knows them all. He knows his children! As I have lived in Nagasaki Prefecture since 1981, the history of Catholic missions in Japan has been rather inescapable for me.

## The Christian century

Jesuit priest Francis Xavier found his interest in Japan aroused when he met a Japanese in Malacca, Malaysia who quickly became a Christian. In 1549, Xavier entered Japan at Kagoshima. The feudal lord of that area gave Xavier permission to preach. The priest was impressed by the Japanese, saying they were “a people of very good will, very sociable, and very desirous of knowledge; they are very fond of knowing the things of God, chiefly when they understand them.” He did not think he would find “another race equal to the Japanese. They are a people of very good manners, good in general, and not malicious; they are men of honor to a marvel”.<sup>1</sup>

Xavier’s arrival marked the beginning of what has been called the Christian Century in Japan. Xavier soon went on to Nagasaki, and Lord Omura Sumitada was very receptive. He was the first daimyo to openly become a Christian, but he was soon followed by Otomo Sorin (in Oita, as well as Arima Harunobu in Shimabara City, east of Nagasaki City).

In 1580, 17 years after he became a Christian, Sumitada gave the Port of Nagasaki to the Jesuits, and trade blossomed. In 1582, Sumitada sent four boys to Europe on a Portuguese ship, and they were welcomed, marveled at, and treated as princes. They were faithful to what they saw as their

commission and returned to Sumitada. However, by the time they returned, Sumitada had died, and the Edo government was cracking down on all things Christian. Of the four, one became apostate, one died in exile in Macao, and the other two were martyred in Nagasaki.

## Martyred

Of course, when you speak of Nagasaki and martyrs, the 26 martyrs come to mind. Most of them had been marched down from Kyoto, though one 13-year-old was from Nagasaki. They were a mix of European missionaries, Japanese priests, and Japanese laymen. They became famous and were canonized in 1862, however, they were far from the last to be killed for their faith.

The Portuguese were expelled from Nagasaki by Tokugawa Ieyasu. But the Dutch were allowed in because they were not subject to the Pope and had agreed not to proselytize. In the meantime, Christians were hunted down all over, as portrayed in the novel *Silence* by Endo Shusaku. As the book related, the Unzen hot springs were a favored execution site, where people were literally boiled to death. Various other “creative” methods of execution were also employed.

Naturally, as many people as possible escaped to nearby areas. Sumitada’s son Yoshiaki formally apostasized, but it is my strong impression he did it only to protect his people from the Edo government. His own sister had become a nun, after all! As Yoshiaki conducted various delaying tactics, dedicated believers escaped as best they could, creating the bulk of what were later called hidden Christians.

But not everyone escaped. In 1657, a group of Christians were discovered in the upstream area of the Kori River, currently part of Omura City, north-east of Nagasaki City. A young man of the group had received the gift of healing and prayed for many people. Rumors of that reached the government office in Nagasaki (which had been taken over from the Jesuits by the Edo





government), and they investigated. As a result, 406 were decapitated—all on the same day. The government wanted the word to go out as broadly as possible that this religion was deadly!

The bodies of those executed in Omura were buried in one pit; the heads were salted and displayed on spikes for a month and then buried in another pit several hundred meters away from the bodies. The government had heard of the Christian teaching of resurrection, and given the obviously supernatural nature of the healings that had exposed the believers, they wanted to take no chances with these people coming back to life and giving them trouble.

### Hidden and waiting

The hidden Christians remained as faithful as they could, but they didn't share their faith with anyone but their

own children. Over the years, syncretism with Buddhism occurred to the point that when Christianity was again permitted, not all of the hidden Christians rejoined the Catholic Church from which they had sprung. A major problem was that the only Scriptures they had, if they had any, were in Latin, and the ability to read and understand Latin was lost as the years went on. However, they instituted a system of rotating elders and hung on as best they knew how.<sup>2</sup>

And that brings us to today. For many years now, the church where I serve, Shinsei no Sato Christian Church in Omura, has had this vision: "To know Christ and make Him known, changing Japan one person at a time, that the City of Omura would again be the foremost Christian city in Japan, actively advancing the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth." How

that will be fulfilled is God's business because we certainly can't accomplish it on our own! However, as Gabriel told Mary, with God all things are possible.

The question remains of the fruit of those faithful, persecuted believers. Several years ago, I met the head of the Tasaki Pearl Company at a formal dinner. He was originally from Omura and had been a classmate of the honoree at the dinner. He learned that I was a pastor and came over to speak to me.

What he said left an indelible impression: "My ancestors were from Hirado and were Christians. When the persecution came, they switched to Nichiren Buddhism on the surface but remained Christians in their hearts. I too am a Christian in my heart." To say that I was blown out of the water would be putting it mildly! How many more like him are there?

I have a friend who attended my English Bible class faithfully for several years; her father and two of her brothers were Buddhist priests. She said that when they were cleaning the koi pond at the temple, they discovered one of the *Kwannon with Child* statues that were widely used by hidden Christians as a "Madonna with Child" image, and she said it was a family treasure. However, she stopped coming to my Bible class because she said that if she continued, she would have to formally become a Christian, and with her family connections, she couldn't do that.

So where does this leave us? The stories of both my student and the head of Tasaki gave me a new glimpse of God's old, ongoing work. As we pray for revival in Japan, we need to trust that God has already laid the foundation and that he will bring it to pass in his right time for his glory alone. **JH**

1. Herbert E. Plutschow, *Historical Nagasaki* (Tokyo, The Japan Times, 1983), 5. The quotes were translated by C. R. Boxer.
2. The information on the Hidden Christians in this paragraph is largely based on the author's recollection of the museum devoted to them on the island of Ikitsuki.

Photo submitted by author

**Jack Garrott** was born in Fukuoka in 1948, to Max and Dorothy Garrott. They arrived in 1934 and 1935 respectively, were married in Japan, and are buried in Kitakyushu. Jack has been in Nagasaki as a missionary since 1981.



*Members of three Omura churches after an Easter Sunrise Service at the Hokobaru Martyrdom Site, where 131 believers were decapitated in 1657*

# The one who perceives

By Roger W. Lowther

## *Finding a striking analogy in Japanese history*

On longer runs up the Sumida River from my apartment building, I come to Asakusa and Sensō-ji, the oldest temple in Tokyo. According to legend, a gold statue of Kannon, a Buddhist deity, was caught by two brothers who were fishing there in AD 628. They tried multiple times to return the statue to the river, but magically it kept returning to them. Because of this seemingly divine occurrence, the chief of Asakusa Village remodeled his home into a shrine so that the locals could worship the statue there.

### **The Merciful One**

Today around Sensō-ji, many signs point to the location of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion and mercy. Kannon (観音), which literally means “see sound,” hears the sounds of suffering. At the Tokyo National Museum, I saw various statues of the bodhisattva with eleven heads to perceive all suffering, a “thousand” eyes to see all suffering, and a “thousand” arms to reach out and relieve all suffering. Kannon is called “The Merciful One” who is able to achieve Nirvana but delays doing so due to compassion for suffering beings.

During the roughly two hundred and fifty years of persecution in Japan, “Hidden Christians” used images and statues of Kannon to secretly worship the God of the Bible. They sometimes made the statues look like the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, what are now known as the “Maria Kannon.” These statues sometimes contain a cross hidden in the back or within the base.

**Blessed is the people that  
know the joyful sound: they  
shall walk, O Lord, in the  
light of thy countenance.  
Psalm 89:15 KJV**

### **Fascinating analogy**

I find the analogy of Mary and Kannon fascinating. What if we instead consider Jesus the greatest of all perceivers? Isn't he the one who sees and hears all our cries of pain and suffering? “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry . . . The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles” (Ps. 34:15, 17 NIV).

Isn't Jesus the greatest of all merciful ones, who reaches out with his mighty arm to save? “The arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear” (Isa. 59:1). More than the legend of the reappearing statue, isn't Jesus the greatest of all pursuers, “the Hound of

Heaven,”<sup>1</sup> who never stops pursuing people from every language, tribe, and nation? “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). Jesus is our merciful Savior, who perceives all our cries of pain and suffering and answers with the “blessed sound” of the gospel (福音). Through the ages we cry “Kyrie Eleison” (Lord have mercy), and Jesus answers those cries for mercy by pursuing us, even to the point of death on a cross.

And not only that! Jesus came into the world to save us and also to have a relationship with us with the intimacy of family, that we may forever “walk in the light of his countenance.”

Jesus is one truly worthy of all our honor and worship. Praise be to God! **✠**

1. A poem by Francis Thompson, published in 1890, that portrays God as relentlessly pursuing his people. <http://www.houndofheaven.com/poem>



Photo: Maria Kannon statue at Tokyo National Museum



# No more waiting

## Who are the new His-story makers?

This magazine's theme leads me to remember that each one of us is His-story in the making! We are living out the story of Jesus in our lives. What will be said of the year 2023? How does Jesus want to live out His-story in our lives? What will unfold and come forth this year? We know what has been happening for the past three years, and now at last a golden time is upon us.

Can it be said that history repeats itself? Sometimes we need to look back to see where we are heading. Stroll with me back to the last time Japan was really shut down and in a tough time. The dates were 1939–1945, when World War II took place. Little by little, darkness began to hover, and missionaries needed to leave Japan. People could not live freely, and a war mentality set in. Yet when the war was over, a time of great rejoicing and openness took place. During the next seven years (1945–1952), the Occupational Period, Japanese soldiers and civilians from abroad were repatriated and restored to Japan. Arms industries were dismantled, and political prisoners were released. The emperor was reduced to ceremonial status.

### Emerging from darkness

We are beginning to come out of another tunnel of darkness. Light is visible once again! At the writing of this article in February, I am looking forward to masks coming off and Covid being reclassified as something similar to influenza. By the time you get this magazine, some changes will have already taken place.

How will we believers contribute to making history in Japan this summer? It's up to each of us. Have you felt shut up, shut in, and shut down these past three years? Who is ready to live again? Now is the time to forget the former things and not dwell on the past. God is going to do a new thing. It is spring-

ing up. Living intentionally, reconnecting, and getting back into community again in personal ways are all part of this new life coming forth.

We have all been hidden in the master's quiver and have spent a great deal of time alone with God. Has all this been in vain? I think not. As Mrs. Charles E. Cowman wrote in her devotional: "The greatest miracles of Elijah and Elisha took place when they were alone with God. Joshua was alone when the Lord came to him. Gideon and Jephthah were by themselves when they were commissioned to save Israel. Moses was by himself at the wilderness bush. Cornelius was praying by himself when an angel came to him. No one was with Peter on the house top when he was instructed to go to the Gentiles. John the Baptist was alone in the wilderness and John the Beloved alone in Patmos, when nearest to God."<sup>1</sup>

### For such a time as this

I invite everyone to stop and spend a few minutes in personal reflection about the past three years of your life.

- How has God been encountering you?
- What has God been speaking to your heart?
- What is it that you have been longing to do?
- What are the desires of your heart?
- What new talents, skills, and understanding have you acquired for such a time as this?
- What new assignment have you received?

I propose that it is time to cast off fear and restraints and come out of being still. We have a dying world right in front of us. Arise, *ekklesia* (which means "called out from the world and to God" in Greek), and spring into life once again! Though there has been much darkness, our Lord has set us free. It's time to arise and shine, for



By Kari Miyano

the glory of the Lord is upon us. It's time to fan into flame God's gifts. We have all been waiting for such a time as this. People are hungry for friendship and connecting with others. Use your gifts and talents such as pastoring, leading, designing, singing, dancing, writing, creating, shepherding, teaching, hosting, and listening. Entrust the hope of the gospel to faithful ones who will also be qualified to share it with others. Pour into those who have good soil—those with noble and good hearts who hear the word, cling to it, and, by persevering, will produce a crop of righteousness.

The people of Japan are waiting to hear of this hope. Who can you share it with through your everyday life? **JH**

1. Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications 1979), 65.

*Kari Miyano is a follower of Jesus, disguised as an American English teacher and okusan (homemaker). She likes traveling in Japan with her Japanese husband and meeting people face to face.*



# No place is too remote for God

By James Ballinger



*One woman's generosity and zealous evangelism in 1612 made an extraordinary impact on Izu Oshima*

*I can't imagine there are any Christians on this island.* That sad thought flashed into my mind as I walked across the gangplank. The Jetfoil was bound for the beautiful volcanic island of Izu Oshima, about 100 km south of Tokyo, just off the Izu Peninsula.

To be honest, the fact that my wife and I were boarding this boat at all was a bit harebrained. My mother, visiting for Christmas, had offered to look after our children so we could celebrate our 15th anniversary. My wife Charley had, no doubt, pictured a spa treatment and dinner, which I attempted to organize but was frankly overwhelmed by the choices—googling “spa hotel Tokyo” brought 44 million hits. I’ve always had a fascination with islands, and living in central Tokyo, the thought of escaping the concrete jungle was enticing. And

so, on a slightly grey January morning I shoved a small suitcase into the basket of a Docomo share bike, and we started the 10-minute cycle to Hinode Pier where our journey began.

Oshima is an island of 7,000 people and technically a part of the Tokyo Metropolis. I’m not sure why the thought about Christians popped into my head, but assuming a Christian population of 1% for the whole of Japan suggests there may be about 70 Christians on Oshima, though obviously the number of believers varies vastly by area. In rural areas the average is as low as 0.1%, if there are any Christians at all.<sup>1</sup> As we glided under the Rainbow Bridge, and the machinery of oil refiners gave way to breathtaking views of Mt Fuji, that sobering thought lodged in my mind.

We landed at around 10.30 a.m. After picking up a *kei* car, we planned to do a loop of the island before checking into our hotel. First stop was a small dairy farm to sample camellia ice cream—one of the island’s famous products. Next, wondering who actually lives in a place like this, we called into the Oshima Folk Museum and were treated to a personal tour by a retired Tokyoite who’d been posted to the island as a civil servant and decided to stay. Among displays of the 1986 volcanic eruption, traditional workers’ clothes, and a strange notice about the island declaring independence after the war to escape Allied rule, there was a small exhibit about exiles from the mainland. For many centuries the Izu Islands were a penal colony. We noticed that some of the names were written in



katakana—often a sign of those who'd taken a "Christian name" in baptism. Were some of those exiles followers of Jesus?

Later, we pulled into Fudeshima Observatory, where you can see a rock jutting out of the water that looks a little like a *fude* (brush for writing or painting). But as I got out of the car, it wasn't the rock that caught my eye, but an enormous white cross towering over the landscape. What on earth is this?! It stood several meters tall, glistening in the sun against the ocean's deep blue. Nearby was a small Shinto shrine and plaque commemorating someone called ジュリアおたあ (Julia Ota); the name looked vaguely familiar from the museum display about exiles.

Our interest piqued, we carried on towards Habu, a picturesque harbour in a hidden little bay offering much needed shelter from stormy winds. On the way into town, we passed a graveyard, and I did a double take. "Was that another cross?" I exclaimed, pulling the car over. Sure enough, at the back of an ordinary Buddhist cemetery was a charnel house adorned with a cross. Nearby was a stone with names of the brothers and sisters of Habu Church whose remains rest here waiting for their resurrection on the day of the Lord's return!



Heading north again we made for the main town of Motomachi. At our hotel, a little googling told me there are actually three churches on the island, two Protestant and one Catholic.

What's more, the Shinto shrine we saw earlier is one of just three "Christian shrines" in Japan.<sup>2</sup> That is, a Shinto shrine that commemorates a Christian as a kami (god).

### Who was Julia Ota?

After we returned to Tokyo, I discovered the shrine venerates Julia Ota,<sup>3</sup> a Korean lady brought to Japan as a prisoner aged three or five after the Japanese invasion under Konishi Yukinaga in 1592. Konishi was a Christian and young Julia was raised in his household, herself coming to faith. After Konishi was killed in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Julia was taken into the household of his vanquisher Tokugawa Ieyasu. However, in 1612, with Tokugawa increasingly wary of Christianity he ordered Ota and others in his household to renounce their faith in Christ. Julia refused, preferring to choose banishment than renounce her true Lord. Julia was exiled to the Izu Islands, but wherever she went she was admired for her generosity and zealous evangelism. Although she only spent a few weeks on Oshima, when residents later learned of her death they erected a shrine to console her spirit. It is said that at her shrine bubonic plague could be healed. The fact that Julia was a fervent believer in Christ seems to have been forgotten, but clearly, she made a remarkable impact on the islands' residents.

### Christianity on Izu Oshima

The impact of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan churches seems to have been no less extraordinary. I called up Pastor Kanno Katsuyuki, who has written about the history of the church in Oshima<sup>4</sup> and been ministering there for seven years. To my astonishment a tentative phone

call turned into a 20-minute natter and prayer!

He told me that although the two Protestant churches now have a combined Sunday attendance of only a

little over 20 people, the church has a wonderful history. Habu Church was planted by the Scandinavian Alliance Mission (now known as TEAM) in the Meiji period in around 1890. He was sure there wasn't a single person on the island who didn't know of the church, in large part due to one of his predecessors, Pastor Aizawa. Aizawa-sensei was a passionate evangelist, publishing his own evangelistic newspaper which he then delivered on foot to every household on the island. He also made sure Habu Church was at the forefront of serving the community, founding the island's first daycare center.

Oshima may have seemed remote to me but not to our Father, for as Jesus reminds us: "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17 NIV). I was reminded of this as we soaked in an onsen on the edge of Minamoto's port, with views of Mount Fuji. At sunset, the clouds were draped in the most remarkable pinks, a beautiful display of our heavenly Father's glory. It was the glory of creation that I'd expected to be the highlight of this trip—and on that front we weren't disappointed—but we also discovered the glory of the gospel at work in this most unlikely of places. Praise be to God. ✨

1. For statistics and explanation, see "Why Rural Japan," Rural Japan Church Planting Network. <https://en.ruraljapanchurch.com/why-rural-japan> (accessed March 16, 2023).

2. Miyeon Kim 金美連, "日本のキリシタン神社で行われる儀式—枯松神社祭、桑姫社大祭、ジュリア祭の比較考察 [Rituals Held at Christian Shrines in Japan—Comparative study of Karematsu Shrine Festival, Kuwahime Shrine Festival and Julia Festival]", 国際関係研究 (日本大学) Vol. 41 (Shizuoka: 2021), 93-104. [https://www.ir.nihon-u.ac.jp/pdf/research/publication/02\\_41\\_09.pdf](https://www.ir.nihon-u.ac.jp/pdf/research/publication/02_41_09.pdf)

The other two churches are in Nagasaki. Some suggest there may be as many as eight: <https://office.nanzan-u.ac.jp/library/publi/item/katholikos29.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2023).

3. Summary of Julia Ota based on various sources including Miyeon Kim (cited above) and Wikipedia "Julia Ota" (ジュリアおたあ). Accessed March 16, 2023.

4. Katsuyuki Kanno 菅野勝之, "大島元村に続く宣教師たちの伝道スピリット [The ongoing spirit of missionary evangelism in Oshima Motomura]," 信徒の友 [Friends of Faith], June 2022.

Photos submitted by author

*James Ballinger leads the Samurai Projects, which raises up Bible teachers by promoting church-based internships. James, his wife Charley, and their four children are from the UK and part of Japan Christian Link.*

# Benefits of a having a historical perspective

By Simon Pleasants

## *An appreciation of Japanese history can be valuable for missionaries today*

A mere three-minute stroll from our previous home in western Tokyo lie the ruins of a temple built around 750 AD—part of a nationwide system of temples established in response to a pandemic. A couple of minutes farther on, a path besides a small stream was a favourite location of a relative of an Edo-period shogun for falconry. Take a ten-minute walk in the other direction and you can find the remains of a Jōmon-era house built around the time of Abraham. And nearby there's a thirteenth-century road that connected the region to Kamakura, Kanagawa Prefecture when it was the country's capital.

While the area where we lived (Kokubunji) is particularly abundant in historical remains, you don't have to travel very far in most places in Japan to find evidence of its long and rich history. The country is a haven for history buffs, but missionaries can also enjoy and benefit from Japan's history.

Appreciating the history of a country offers many benefits when seeking to reach people for Jesus. For a start, it can provide valuable insights into contemporary Japanese culture. For example, the relatively high suicide rate in contemporary Japan may have some roots in the honour accorded to taking one's life in certain situations in the past.

Having an appreciation of Japanese history can also be important for establishing connections with Japanese people. It can help build relationships through demonstrating an interest in and a respect for the local culture. And it can be useful for contextualizing the message of the gospel. Sermon illustrations drawn from Japanese history and literature can impact the hearts of people more directly than illustrations from Western sources.

Importantly, a historical perspective can provide a broader outlook from which to view the present. "One of the great benefits of studying history is that it gives us a standard of comparison against which we can judge our own time, values, and assumptions," says Matthew Sterenberg (private communication with author), assistant professor of history at Waseda University.



In particular, knowing about the history of past mission efforts is valuable for assessing present strategies. “We absorb ideas, values, and assumptions from the culture of which we are a part, but when we look at the history of missions, we may find that some of our assumptions are mistaken, because we’re confronted by people who did missions effectively in very different ways,” explains Sterenberg. He adds, “Studying history is a kind of cross-cultural study and can provide a clearer perspective on our own culture that can help us make better, more informed judgments.”

Finally, in Japan many historical figures were Christians (see the timeline poster we’ve included with this issue), and the influence of Christians in Japan vastly exceeded their numbers. This is a powerful testimony that it is possible to be simultaneously Japanese and Christian and to greatly contribute to the welfare of the nation.

For all these reasons, it’s important to have an appreciation of Japanese history and how it shapes the national narrative. “Anyone thinking about doing missions work in Japan should

have a sense of how the country has changed over time, of the key turning points in its history, and of the forces and personalities that have made the country what it is,” says Sterenberg. He continues, “It’s also important to understand how the Japanese people understand their own history and how they weave that understanding into their national identity.”

### Tips for learning Japanese history

Given the importance of knowing Japanese history for missions, here are some tips for learning more about it.

- Establish a rough framework for the different periods in Japanese history. This will allow you to place scenes from books and novels in their historical context, and historical facts you glean can be placed within this framework.
- Read books on Japanese history. There’s a wealth of good books on Japanese history in English. Start with ones that give a brief overview of the whole span of Japanese history and dig as deep as your inter-

est takes you. Sterenberg suggests beginning with a good introductory level volume on Japanese modern history that introduces the main contours of Japanese history. He also notes that Andrew Gordon’s *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* is a popular choice.

- Listen to podcasts and watch documentaries and videos on Japanese history.
- Visit historical sites and museums in your vicinity and when traveling in Japan.

Making the most of being in a country with such a rich history as Japan would enhance our witness. Explore ways to grow in your understanding of its historical roots, culture, literature, and Christian history. A better understanding can make our ministry to the Japanese more effective. **JH**

*Simon Pleasants works as an editor in the Tokyo office of a scientific publishing company and is the executive editor of Japan Harvest. Originally from Wales, he moved to Australia in 1988.*

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# Overcoming an addiction to romance

*Rediscovering God's love for me*

Anonymous

I want to share part of my story in the hope of encouraging you.

Last summer, I finally had to admit that I was addicted to reading romantic novels and fantasizing/dreaming up romance stories.

This started way back when I was a teen. At that point, I didn't really think of it as a problem. But over the years, this became my way of escape. When I was overwhelmed by life, I would read or dream up stories. I was not always discriminating about what I read, so some of it was . . . well, I guess you understand. I had long stretches when all was going well, but then also times when this issue was more prominent.

For a long time, I was not willing to admit that this was really a problem, let alone a sin. For me, it was not about sex but recreating the feeling of falling in love. What could be wrong with that? And what could be wrong with reading? In my last term, and then particularly during time in my home country, it became worse. Before I left Japan, I'd known I had a problem and needed to get help. I tried, but my shame was so great that I couldn't really bring myself to follow through.

Because excessive reading and daydreaming went along with an unwillingness to relate to God, read the Bible, and pray, I knew all was not well. But at the same time, I was angry with God because I felt he wanted to take something away from me. I was convinced that I needed the reading and daydreaming to help me deal with the stress and burden of life. It seemed he wanted to take away the chief pleasure in my life. As God didn't seem willing to fill the void, that made me escape into my fantasies or reading, so I felt somewhat justified in my behaviour. I tried again and again to break free, but I always fell back eventually. From a logical standpoint, I knew that God was able to set me free. But as he didn't do it, the only conclusion I could draw was that he didn't want to. Maybe this was my "thorn in the flesh," as Paul phrased it in 2 Corinthians.

Coming back to Japan, the stress of transition triggered my addiction to a whole new level. I became less and less available for my family, and I had no interest in interactions with anyone because they just interrupted the daydreams that helped me to cope.

When I listened to a podcast about addiction, I finally had to admit that I was addicted. Before, I had seen it as a problem but not really an addiction. I decided then that I

didn't want to find out how much worse it could get and that I would get help.

## Getting help

It took two attempts to actually ask for help from someone I trusted. The shame that a missionary could fail in such a way was overwhelming and almost stopped me. I thought that if our supporters knew, they would never pray for me or give financial support. A few years back, I had been thinking about shame and even gave a short message about it. I understood then that shame keeps us in isolation and is not a good advisor. But actually pushing through the shame was





very hard nonetheless. But I am so glad and thankful I did it. It was the first step to healing.

I looked into recovery from addiction (any form of addiction) and found helpful patterns to follow. Many follow the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous in some way or other. An important step is to make a life inventory. I did this when I worked through a book that was recommended to me, *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil T. Anderson. It helped me tremendously, and I would like to recommend it to you. A key for me was to realise how many of Satan's lies I had been believing, for example, that I would lose all the pleasure and relief in my life if I gave up my addiction or that God didn't want to set me free.

I discovered lots more about myself, and though not necessarily connected to my addiction, these areas needed correction too. Once I started to see the truth and choose truth, so much started to make sense in Scripture and in my life. I fell in love with Jesus once again.

## There is hope

By God's grace, since the day I talked to someone about my struggle, I have avoided romance novels and learned that I need to stop thoughts that wander into unhelpful directions.

## Resources :

Janet Dallman (Member Care Advisor/JEMA Member Care Committee Chair):  
jp.mca@omfmail.com

*A Way of Escape*, Neil Anderson

*The Bondage Breaker*, Neil Anderson

*Every Man's Battle*, Stephen Arterburn

*Every Woman's Battle*, Shannon Ethridge

SheRecovery.com: Pornography & sexual addiction support for women

Pure Heart Japan: <https://onfire.jp/en/purity/>

There is definitely still temptation, and I am very conscious of how easily I can slip, but I know God gives me everything I need to overcome temptation. Before, there seemed no way I could resist. But that was another lie.

Back then, when people said things like "You have to choose the truth and resist the devil's lies," or "You have everything you need to walk daily in the victory of Jesus," it always sounded holier-than-thou and not something I could relate to. But there is actually a lot of truth in these statements, and I know now that they were not meant to make me feel bad but to point me to the truth. I almost gave up hope at times. I asked God a few times to let me die because the pain of my constant failure was unbearable.

But there is hope. There is joy and peace in this life! What God did for me he can do for you. There is nothing, absolutely nothing I did to deserve to be set free. As far as I can see, the only thing I did was admit I needed help and tell someone who could help me. And since then, I've seen God guiding me to the Scriptures, books, and sermons to grow me and help me keep walking in the light.

One thing that helped me tremendously was that I had always been convinced that God is good and loved me. I hope and pray that you know that deep down in your heart. And if not, then let me tell you that it is true. God's love for us—for you—is unfathomable. He knows the whole extent and the exact nature of your struggle, and we usually say, "But he loves you anyway." Brennan Manning, an author I really like, once explained there is no "but." God loves you. Fiercely.<sup>1</sup>

My prayers are with you. **JH**

1. Author's paraphrase of concepts in *Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging*, Brennan Manning.

*This article is written in the original author's own words and lightly edited by Janet Dallman.*

*Written by a missionary who has worked in Japan for several years.*

# Lessons from the running club

*How to encourage and celebrate each other, rather than compete*

By Judith Ricken

Every year in August or September, I see announcements and flyers for the Nagoya Women's Marathon (NWM) that will happen the following March. Each time, my heart starts beating faster; I'd love to take part but . . . will I be able to actually do it?

In the late summer of 2022, I was already able to run 10 km comfortably, so it looked possible to to run a race four times that distance by March. I applied for the NWM! As I read training plans and listened to podcasts, many people mentioned it is helpful to have a group to run with.

## Finding a club

I usually run along the Tenpaku River in Nagoya, where I live. I had once seen a group that looked like they ran marathons regularly, but when I tried to look them up online I couldn't find them, and the Tenpaku Sports Center didn't know of any running club. However, in a shoe shop I saw a leaflet about a running gathering in a local park in Nagoya. The shop clerk also told me about another group: the "Tenpakugawa Sōyūkai" (天白川走友会). I didn't understand the word, so he explained it: *sō* (走 from 走る *hashiru*) and *yū* (友 from 友達 *tomodachi*), so "Tenpaku River Running Friends Club."

I went home and found their homepage. I couldn't read much, but I did make out their meeting place and time. Every Sunday morning at 6:30 a.m. in summer and 7:00 a.m. in winter—that was perfect for me. The place was under a certain bridge with a name I couldn't read either, but it did mention that the bridge was red, and along the river there was only one red bridge. I decided to try the next Sunday. The only question was which side of the bridge? I guessed the left side and was right! Around 20 people in running gear were warming up and chatting. I approached one who looked like he might be the leader and asked whether this is the Tenpaku Sōyūkai and if I could join.

He said, "Well, yes, you can, but today we're doing the long run that's about 18 kilometres. If you like, you can come along on your bike."

Eighteen kilometres! I had just gotten up to 12km in my training schedule. Thankfully I had come by bike and decided to follow along. Meanwhile, the others looked at me with a mixture of bewilderment and interest, and I could hear them whispering about me. One brave soul came over and told me he was an English teacher. Another wanted to know whether I spoke

Japanese. Soon enough, we arrived at the Higashiyama Zoo, where they ran the 10,000-step course. The course has a lot of ups and downs, and I was soon the last person (despite biking there rather than running). But I made one round and decided to go back by bike earlier to be in time for the Bible study before Sunday service. As I left, I called out, "See you next week." One lady was kind enough to explain that from next week they would be meeting at the winter schedule time.

As I would learn is the usual format, the next week's meeting started with reports from races people took part in. Some seemed to be running marathons biweekly. When they learned I wanted to run the NWM, they got excited and wanted to know what my usual marathon time was. As I explained that it would be my first marathon, they got even more excited and encouraged me. After the third week of coming to the group, I decided that I would join them regularly.

The weeks went by. I was still the slowest runner apart from an 83-year-old, and most of the members were older than me! Because I was so slow, I usually ran by myself. The others chatted while running, but that was



*Judith with two of her running friends*



impossible for me at their speed. After a few weeks, I realized that I wasn't the slowest runner anymore, and the others encouraged me as well: "You got faster! Well done!" As our verbal exchange was limited to simple phrases, there was no chance to share about my faith yet, although some of them were interested in me and wanted to know what kind of work I do and why I was in Japan.

In December, they held an end of year party (忘年会 *bōnenkai*). The leader invited everyone to share their reflection of 2022 and goals for 2033. People gave me advice to prepare for running the NWM, and after the meal, the coach approached me and said he had a lot of experience, so if I ever had any questions, I shouldn't hesitate to ask him. I felt supported and got the impression they really wanted me to do well.

## Encouragement

Joining this club has improved my life immensely. It helps me stick to the training, and it's fun to run together with others. It's a really nice fellowship, and as far as I can see, they don't compete against each other. Instead, each one is working on his or her own goals while helping others along. When one is injured or doesn't make the race in the time she thought she would, the others encourage her. Older ones who have already had all kinds of injuries show stretching exercises to those who encounter this particular injury for the first time. "You got faster!" is a comment I hear more and more. They're able to share their joy in successes, whether that is to run the marathon in 2.5 hours, or 10K in under one hour for the first time.

## What can Christians learn from this?

Sometimes I wish church was more like this. I often feel people in the church are "competing," and there can be envy as we compare ourselves to others. There can also be a sense of defeat and inferiority as we feel the need to do more or be more, thinking things like "I should pray more" or "I should be more outgoing like him." In the running club, everyone is encouraged to push on wherever they are on the journey, and we can honestly and joyfully admire a fast runner without envy. We help each other along, and we are simply encour-



*Newspaper photo of the race—author is in black, behind the lady in sunglasses waving*

aged to take the next step without pressure to reach a certain goal. It's okay that we're all at different stages. We should see church the same way: everyone is on the same journey, but at different stages. Instead of wishing we were ten stages ahead and being intimidated, we could learn from runners who just work towards the next achievable goal.

Every Sunday I encounter two different worlds. Before going to church, I dive into the world of a non-Christian Japanese, their worries and their struggles. A couple of members have admitted that, to their dismay, their adult children hardly keep in touch.

One evening after the Wednesday training, another lady asked me more about what I do. Trying to explain my role at KGK, I said, "Basically I'm like a pastor for students."

Suddenly she opened up and I was able to have a deeper conversation with her about something that deeply troubled her.

I wished to comfort her but didn't really know how. Even if I said something like "God is with you," what she understands as "God" is totally different from what I mean. She prays every day, she told me. I hope that I will encounter more of such conversations and gradually be able to talk about the good news of Jesus, bringing these two worlds closer together.

By the way, I did finish the Nagoya Women's Marathon in March. **JH**

Photos submitted by author

*Judith Ricken is a German Alliance Mission (GAM) missionary who first came to Japan in 2013. She does student ministry with KGK, enjoys hiking Japan's beautiful mountains, hanging out with friends and reading lots of books.*

## New pastors appointed for two Japanese churches in Bangkok

Christian Shimbun, January 29, 2023 Translated by Hiromi Terukina

Bangkok, Thailand places second in the world, after Los Angeles, US, for its number of Japanese expatriates. There are two Japanese churches in the city, and both needed pastors for a long time. Their prayers were finally answered amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, breathing new life into the Japanese ministry in Thailand.

### Bangkok Japanese Christ Church

One stop north of the busy Siam Station, Bangkok Japanese Christ Church (BJCC)'s chapel is on floor 12A of a building marked with a cross. BJCC, was established in 1964 and belongs to the Church of Christ in Thailand. They recently welcomed Masaru Nielsen-Bushimata as their new pastor. Prior to Thailand, Nielsen-Bushimata served at Nagaoka Covenant Christ Church in Japan. He had a desire to serve overseas, and his wife, Amy, had a vision to help financially



BJCC's service

challenged women in other countries. In 2018, the couple went on a vision trip to Thailand and found out that BJCC's pastor had just announced his



Masaru Nielsen-Bushimata and his wife



Maji Niino and his wife

resignation. The other Japanese church in Bangkok, Thai Bible Evangelical Church (TBEC), was also pastor-less. "I was planning to become a missionary and serve at an NGO, but to hear that two churches were in need of a pastor made me think about what I could do here," says Nielsen-Bushimata.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the two Japanese churches had to wait to recruit new pastors and continued to hold their services online. Nielsen-Bushimata joined other pastors in preaching online to aid BJCC. In May 2020, Nielsen-Bushimata's assignment as pastor became offi-

cial, but the city was still in lockdown. So because he wasn't allowed to enter Thailand until July 2021, his installation ceremony was held online. Finally in November 2021, regular Sunday in-person gatherings were permitted again and church members began to return.

### Thai Bible Evangelical Church

In central eastern Bangkok, near Phrom Phong station, TBEC shares a floor of a multi-story complex with a Korean Church. TBEC holds Sunday services in the afternoon. This church began in 2002 with believers gathering at one of their homes. And since most of the members are expatriates, many leave the country within a few years, and new members join. Some have opted to stay following marriage, whereas others have left the country due to the pandemic but continue to join the services via Zoom.

The pastor of TBEC, Pastor Maji Niino, served for a long time at Shanghai Japanese Christian Fellowship and returned to Japan in 2017. He worked as joint pastor at Yokohama Tsuzuki



BJCC lies high up in a local building



TBEC is shared with a Korean church



# uest News

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!*"

New Town Chapel while caring for his father. With a desire to serve overseas in Asia again, Niino visited Bangkok in February 2020 and found out that the two Japanese churches were in need of pastors, and how TBEC had had no pastor since 2018. Like Nielsen-Bushi-



*TBEC's service*

mata, Niino first aided the church by preaching online. In April 2022, Niino made arrangements for his father to be taken care of at a residential home, obtained his visa, and got ready to leave for Thailand. Unexpectedly, his mother-in-law passed away in July that same year, followed by his father three days later, and Niino had to rearrange his plans, finally arriving in Thailand in September.

"This church was without a pastor for a long time, and many members have since left Thailand," says Niino. "We are preparing to reach out to Japanese expatriates living in Bangkok and resume the fellowship that was lost in the pandemic."

Niino's inauguration ceremony took place in November 2022, led by Nielsen-Bushimata from BJCC. The two pastors regularly stay in touch with each other and hope to work together for the salvation of Japanese in Thailand. The two strongly encourage Japanese pastors to consider serving at Japanese churches overseas. "Most pastors serving overseas return to Japan in seven to ten years, and it is a challenge for the churches to recruit new pastors," says Niino. ■

## Problems with online meetings for the visually challenged

*Christian Shimbun, January 22, 2023  
Translated by Atsuko Tateishi*

The Japan Evangelistic Association for the Visually Challenged (hereafter JEAVC) hosted a seminar about online meetings for both the visually challenged and the sighted. Online meetings became increasingly commonplace during the COVID-19 pandemic and the seminar, held in Yokohama on November 26, 2022, helped those attending explore together what problems visually challenged Christians faced with such meetings.



*The seminar was held in hybrid format, both online and in-person.*

Tadakatsu Mihei, Chair of JEAVC's Executive Committee, looked back on the initial stages of the pandemic. In order to hold the Executive Committee meeting in April 2020, he downloaded the Zoom app and created an account. While sorting out the advanced settings, however, he faced one difficulty after another. His screen reading software, a tool for the visually challenged which verbally describes a computer screen, had difficulty comprehending the complicated picture of his screen and would skip some of what was displayed. In the end, having almost given up during the process, he completed the setup by using a few different kinds of reading software. He was then able to ensure each committee member had

a microphone, and successfully held the committee meeting online for the first time. He thanked God for the way he enables us to use technology in his work.

Keiko Kageyama, an Executive Committee member of JEAVC, recalled the problems she had during the online worship services at her church. The screen reading software would verbally announce each time someone joined or exited the online meeting room, which greatly distracted her from her worship experience. During another online meeting, when she was

asked to speak, she was not able to unmute herself right away. "People were telling me to locate a button on the lower right of the screen, but that did not help me at all. We, the visually challenged, operate the PC by typing on

the keyboard," she said.

In yet another meeting, the hymn numbers and the Scripture verses would be displayed on screen without any verbal announcement, which left her lost. Despite the number of problems she has faced, Keiko appreciates the convenience of meeting people online at home. She shared how important it is to ask questions without reservation when you face problems, and to receive training where needed, in order to make the most of technology.

The meeting concluded with Pastor Fumito Tanaka of Ariake Christ Church preaching from Hebrews 10:25, encouraging the audience to continue meeting together in mutual love and support. ■

# The Holy Spirit and prayer

*Let's be changed to be men and women empowered to pray*

This is a translated summary, by Ken Reddington, of the chapter “The Holy Spirit and Prayer,” from *Be Filled with the Spirit* by Kōji Honda.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot stress enough how important and necessary prayer is. Prayer is fellowship with God, but also the greatest weapon to move the hand of God.

The prophet Samuel said, “Far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12:23 NASB 1995). He says that not praying was sin. God waits for us to pray, and through our prayers, He works. In reality, we often neglect prayer altogether. However, we cannot separate prayer and the Holy Spirit. Through prayer, the Holy Spirit comes into the believer’s heart, indwells, and fills him.

The Lord Jesus taught His disciples to seek the Holy Spirit: “How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13). So the Lord’s disciples continued to pray after His ascension. At last, on the Day of Pentecost, they were filled with the Spirit. The Apostle Paul encourages Christians to pray: “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Eph. 6:18). Power to pray comes from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit knows our needs even now. The Spirit is given as a gift from the Lord to those who earnestly seek Him. In addition, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer, so when the Holy Spirit fills a person, they become a person of prayer. Prayer is one of the greatest ways for us to serve Him. Prayer is very important for all churches; it’s the driving force behind them.

## He leads us to pray

“Now in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit teaches us to pray. Sometimes we fall into sin and give in to temptation. Other times, we are overwhelmed by opposition and persecution. We can forget to pray because of our weakness and misery and sink into the mire of hopelessness and dejection. But the Holy Spirit “helps our weakness” by comforting, encouraging, and leading us to prayer.

## He intercedes for us

The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of intercession. Sometimes, danger or bodily harm closes in, and we aren’t even aware of the gravity of our situation; we really need to pray, but we can’t. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us “with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). When the words of our prayer are not enough, even though halting words, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us before the Heavenly Father with deep groanings. Isn’t that wonderful?

## He is the power of prayer

Prayer is fellowship with God, but it is also spiritual warfare. The Holy Spirit is the motivating force within us to pray. He enables us to pray and helps us continue praying. When we are tired from praying, when we groan while interceding, the Holy Spirit

gives us a greater thirst, giving us a desire to seek the Lord’s answers. Praying in the Spirit is actually the secret to prayer. It is praying in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of the Lord works powerfully in the church when Christians who can pray in the Holy Spirit are raised up. Prayer is the driving force behind churches. The Scottish pastor John Knox is said to have prayed, “Give me Scotland or I die.” His prayers were feared by Mary, the Roman Catholic queen of England at the time. When I think of Japan’s current situation, when I think of the church, I want to be changed to become a man of prayer who moves

the hand of God. For that cause, I earnestly seek the Spirit of prayer. Through this Holy Spirit, may we be changed into people of prayer to God. **JH**

1. Kōji Honda 本田弘慈, 聖霊の満たし [Be Filled with the Spirit] (Saitama, Japan: New Life Ministries, 1995), 35–39.



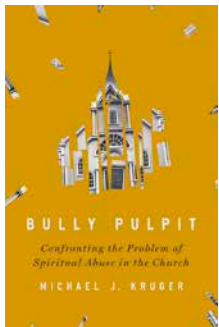
*Kōji Honda was born in Fukui Prefecture in 1912. He was often called the “Billy Graham of Japan.” He helped start Kobe Central Church and the denomination Jesus Christ Church, and in the 50s and 60s he did itinerate evangelism. He was committee chairman for the Billy Graham Tokyo Evangelistic Crusade (1980). Honda died in 2002.*



## Bully Pulpit: Confronting the Problem of Spiritual Abuse in the Church

Michael J. Kruger (Zondervan, 2022) 164 pp.

Kruger, president and professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, has written an incisive diagnosis of spiritual abuse. He is troubled about the rising number of abusive leadership cases he has seen even in theologically solid churches. He notes that the vast majority of Christian leaders and pastors are wonderful people who are kind and gentle shepherds. But some pastors are abusive. The problem is not just abuse but the context that allows it to continue unchallenged. His goal is to help churches and Christian ministries identify and stop abusive leaders. His chapter “Flipping the Script” on the retaliatory tactics of abusive leaders details the cruel and devious ways they



operate. The chapter on the devastating effects of abuse on those who suffer was sobering to read. He ends with a strong biblical prescription on how to create a culture that resists spiritual abuse: prevention, accountability, and protection. His final word to Christian leaders challenges us to search our own hearts so that we do not become bully leaders ourselves. The answer to abusive leadership is the cross of Christ. We follow a shepherd who gave his life for others. This is a book to ponder and to share with others, especially those who have worked alongside or under abusive leaders. **JH**

operate. The chapter on the devastating effects of abuse on those who suffer was sobering to read. He ends with a strong biblical prescription on how to create a culture that resists spiritual abuse: prevention, accountability, and protection. His final word to Christian leaders challenges us to search our own hearts so that we do not become bully leaders ourselves. The answer to abusive leadership is the cross of Christ. We follow a shepherd who gave his life for others. This is a book to ponder and to share with others, especially those who have worked alongside or under abusive leaders. **JH**

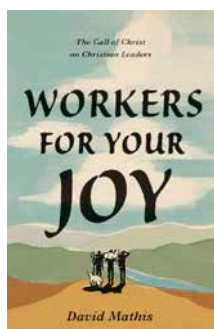
Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

## Workers for Your Joy: The Call of Christ on Christian Leaders

David Mathis (Crossway, 2022) 341 pp.

Mathis, a pastor in Minnesota and teacher and editor at desiringGod.org, writes a wonderful book about how the local church is to be led. After reading Kruger’s book on bad leaders, it was a delight to study what Christ calls leaders in the church to be and do.

In 15 chapters, Mathis looks at the qualities of leaders Paul gives in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. He divides the study into three parts: the man before God (devotional life), the man before those who know him best (private life), and the man before the watching church and world (public life). The church needs leaders



who are humbled, whole, and honorable. Full of practical wisdom and insightful application, the book has study questions for each chapter and is a great book to use for training leaders. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★

## American Missionaries, Christian Oyatoi, and Japan, 1859–73

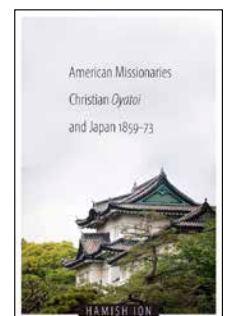
Hamish Ion (UBC Press, 2009) 410 pp.

Ion, Emeritus professor of history at the Royal Military College of Canada, has published four volumes on Protestant missionaries in Japan (two on the Canadian Missionary Movement and another on the British). Like the other volumes, this superb work on American missionaries and *oyatoi* (foreign employees) “stresses the role played by American Protestants as both Christian missionaries and informal agents of their own culture and civilization” (p. ix). As Ion notes, the importance of these early years cannot be overestimated.

At that time (1860s and early 70s) the government was still publicly displaying edicts reminding the population about the ban on Christianity. Ion shows that the Meiji government was pressured by foreign governments to remove these edicts, and they finally did in March 1873. He states, “The ban on Christianity had been in place for so long that there was little need for publicly displayed edicts to remind the general population of this well-known fact. The only concession that the Meiji government had given the Western powers was the cosmetic one of taking down the notice boards . . . . It was not until the Meiji Constitution of 1889 that religious tolerance was granted and the prohibition of Christianity lifted” (p. 124). The chapter on the Yokohama Band details the beginnings of the first Protestant church in Japan. Of the eleven members of the new church formed in March 1872, two were spies who reported to the government.

Valuable appendices have lists of the early missionary societies, the early missionaries, early Japanese converts, and the number of churches and Japanese Christians. For those who want a deeper understanding of Japanese church history, this carefully researched book is indispensable. **JH**

Reviewer rating is 5 of 5 stars ★★★★★



*Don Schaeffer and his wife Hazel serve with the Christian & Missionary Alliance and came to Japan in 1984. They have planted churches in Saitama Ken and served in mission leadership.*

# Mining the *Japan Harvest* archive

*The struggles we face today haven't changed much over the years.  
We can learn much drawing on the wisdom of the past.*

The closest I've come to mining was visiting a disused tin and copper mine that dates back hundreds of years. Deposits were rich and tunnels stretched under the sea. Imagine 300 miners digging ore with candles stuck to their helmets.

We're going to mine the *Japan Harvest* archives,<sup>1</sup> with 70 years of deposits, digging for nuggets or seams of wisdom and insight into missionary member care. So, grab your helmets, shovels, and pickaxes!

Deep down in 1954, we discover a nugget to encourage missionaries' spiritual life. "The Place of Power" shared secrets for effective prayer. For example, the article includes a quote from Robert McCheyne: "I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often when I sleep long or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. . . . Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place . . . it is far better to begin with God—to see His face first!"<sup>2</sup>

In 1957 lies a seam of wisdom with advice on spiritual, mental, and physical health. Have we learnt these lessons, or do we need reminding?

- "Give yourself adequate emotional outlets, such as prayer, praise, music, art, hobbies, friendly games, fishing, hunting, sports, gardening, and wholesome fun of any kind. Avoid emotional suppression . . . Laughter, talking and sometimes weeping are good outlets.
- Practice sociability . . . Self-confinement is bad. Fellowship is good and important. . . . Make some time to play each day or week.
- Plan your work and life. Don't take on more work than you know you can do in a day, thus getting a back-log. With God's help do your best, and leave the rest to Him.
- Don't be over-ambitious . . . Take a sane, sensible, and realistic view of your own abilities and accept them as such . . . Don't drive yourself to impossible goals, for this will be like 'running with an overheated engine' all the time. The result will be nervous tension."<sup>3</sup>

In 1960 we find a gem: "We can be certain that the devil will use every device to bring us low. He will magnify our brother's faults. He will stimulate imagined grievances. He will distort supposed wrongs . . . 'We need to be watchful, for there is a watchful devil who never sleeps.'"<sup>4</sup>

Miners who reach the depths of Spring 1975, are challenged to examine their attitudes

(as I was) by a nugget entitled, "Seven deadly attitudes": anger without trust, work without enjoyment, opinions without humility, leadership without flexibility, love without expression, closeness without empathy, and charisma without depth.<sup>5</sup>

## Family issues

This rich seam occurs throughout the mine. Dig this seam and you'll find "Preparing the family for Japan," which says, "two principles then, Christian parenting and family calling, should direct the new missionary family's preparations, move and settling."<sup>6</sup> Also, "Your children are leaving You!"<sup>7</sup> is about children going to their passport country for education. Another gem about education says, "Each missionary family faces unique challenges, but four issues impact every family: (1) the potential to be bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate, (2) field relocation, (3) home assignments and (4) re-entry into 'home' culture."<sup>8</sup> Hilary Lynch says, "Our journey of homeschooling has been both a joy and a trial. But in all honesty, I think the hard times are making me a better person and I pray that for my children, too."<sup>9</sup>

A personal and moving article, "When parents need us," addresses missionaries with older parents—"The decision if and when to become personally involved in caring for parents is rarely a simple one."<sup>10</sup> The family issues seam includes the TCK-themed issue (Summer 2013); it covers friendship, schooling, identity, and resources. The Missionary Family Life issue (Winter 2018) also contains advice on family rituals, vacations, combining family and church planting, and testimonies of God's care. Try mining these issues for yourself!

## Resiliency

The other rich seam found in the *Japan Harvest* mine is resiliency or thriving in Japan.

Nuggets of wisdom along this seam include "Team Resiliency", which says, "There are three ways to un-





dermine a team—or a family . . . don't talk, don't feel and don't trust."<sup>11</sup>

Sue Plumb Takamoto reported in 2004 on difficulties in adjusting to Japan. She included: cultural differences, inability to communicate, extended isolation and loneliness, identity issues, feeling insignificant, and social base or family issues. Sue's suggested helps for adjustment were: empowering mentors, unique community, the Word, calling, and worship.<sup>12</sup>

Faith de la Cour offered keys to resilience: self-care, friendships, thankfulness, practicing and giving forgiveness, humour, and laughter.<sup>13</sup>



A particularly rich deposit is the Member Care issue (Autumn 2013). It covered physical, emotional, spiritual, and marital health; survival tips for new workers, singleness, and equipping rural workers. The issue "Thriving in Japan" (Autumn 2019) contains wisdom on finding rhythms, elements that are foundational and help missionaries thrive.



There are gems, nuggets, and seams of useful "member care wisdom" to be found in the *Japan Harvest* archive mine. The struggles we face today haven't changed much over the years. Someone once said, "It is

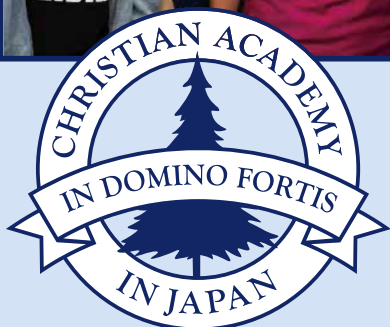
helpful, when planning for the future, to draw on the wisdom of the past."<sup>14</sup> Let's dig in and find the treasure! **JH**

1. All the *Japan Harvest* articles mentioned can be located online here: <https://japanharvest.org/japan-harvest-archives>
2. "Selections from E.M. Bounds, Power Through Prayer," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 3-3 (May 1954), 1.
3. Rudolph C. Logefeil, "Spiritual, mental and physical health," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 5-3 (Summer 1957), 42.
4. Joseph Carrol, "Spiritual Warfare," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 9-3 (September 1960), 7.
5. William Cessna "Seven Deadly Attitudes," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 25-2 (Spring 1975), 33-35.
6. Paul Theule, "Preparing the family for Japan," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 41-3 (1992), 7.
7. Ann Springer, "Your children are leaving you!," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 29-3 (1979), 22-23.
8. Hydi Peterson, "MK Education in Japan," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 49-3 (Winter 1998), 3.
9. Hilary Lynch, "Homeschooling – Our Journey," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 56-2 (Fall 2004), 26.
10. Beth Fuhrman, "When parents need us," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 45-3 (Winter 1995-96), 16-18.
11. Kelly O'Donnell, "Team Resiliency," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 49-3 (Winter 1998), 20.
12. Sue Plumb Takamoto, "Missionary adjustment to Japan: A reality check for Leaders and Mentors," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 56-2 (Fall 2004), 8-10.
13. Faith de la Cour, "Resilience," *Japan Harvest*, Vol. 59-1 (Summer 2007), 26.
14. Raphael Daoud Jackson, "Planning for Your Successor: Lessons from Our Predecessors," *Library Worklife*, <https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2009/06/13/planning-for-your-successor-lessons-from-our-predecessors/> (accessed March 8, 2023).

*Peter Dallman, with his wife Janet, has served in Japan with OMF International since 1998. He has worked in church planting and welcoming new missionaries, and is now involved in training missionaries.*

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