



# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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## Meet NCCJ's new General Secretary, Rev. Makoto Iijima!

Rev. Makoto Iijima became the new NCCJ general secretary on April 1, 2009. Rev. Iijima was born on May 15, 1948 into a Baptist Christian family in Shinagawa, Tokyo. He was given the name, Makoto, which uses the kanji character for "belief." In 1962, he was baptized at Oi Baptist Church in Tokyo.

### EARLY LIFE AND WORK

Rev. Iijima did not go straight to the seminary to become a minister. After studying the "History of Political Thought in Modern Japan." as an undergraduate at International Christian University in Mitaka, Tokyo, he pursued graduate studies in the "History of Educational Thought in Modern Japan." After this, he became a junior high school teacher and continued teaching for many years. His gift and enthusiasm in working with young people is one of the many gifts he brings to NCCJ. He later became a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan. (Also known as the *Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan*.)

His encounter with ecumenicalism was the life changing event that brought him to NCCJ. This was originally sparked by his advisor, Dr. Kiyoko Cho Takeda who was a



*Rev. Makoto Iijima, NCCJ General Secretary*

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## Rev. Makoto Iijima... *(Continued from p. 1)*

professor at ICU. She had been one of the four chairpersons at World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1968-75, and encouraged him to apply as a WCC steward. This gave him the chance to attend the 5th WCC General Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in 1975. He was also asked to write about his experience of the Assembly for the Japanese Christian newsletter (*Kirisuto Shimbun*) as a "special journalist." Rev. Iijima said, "This was the first time for me to really think about ecumenism."

After this, he began work as a staff member of NCCJ for the Mission and Service Desk from 1975-1978. This took him into another area of work, that of human rights and democracy issues pertaining to Korea. He was also NCCJ staff for the Emergency Christian Conference on Korea Problems. Over the years, he has traveled to Korea over 15 times for meetings and conferences. His work with Korean issues has led him to continue to have a strong interest in Korea.

## ORDINATION AND CHURCH WORK

It was later, while working at a Taiwanese church in Ikebukuro, that he began to take evening classes at the Japan Biblical Theological Seminary in Mejiro, Tokyo. He graduated in April, 2006 with his M.Div. and in December, 2008, he was ordained by the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ).

His first job as pastor was in service to the same Taiwanese church in Ikebukuro where he had spent 6 years. At the church, he preached in Japanese for the second generation Taiwanese since this was their native tongue. The Taiwanese church has worship services in Taiwanese, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese. Rev. Iijima's ministry was primarily to the second generation Taiwanese, many of whom had assimilated into Japanese society. He enjoyed both being a pastor and doing the multicultural ministry this church offered.

## FUTURE FOR NCCJ

What are his hopes and dreams for NCCJ as its new general secretary? Among the many issues he is concerned with two came to mind. First, he would like to help NCCJ expand and reach today's young people. The Church often neglects its ministry to the young, and reaching out to them is a way to show that the church cares. He would also like to see churches and Christian organizations working ecumenically together to help young people to become more aware of the social issues of today's society. This is a ministry he would like to see NCCJ helping to facilitate.

Second, he would like NCCJ to think about its ministry toward elderly foreigners living in Japan (e.g. Brazilians, Koreans, Filipinos, Chinese, Taiwanese, and others). Foreigners suffer from discrimination, oppression, and lack of basic human rights in Japan. For the foreign immigrants who have been long term residents in Japan, there are very few services. He envisions a day where the churches reach out together to help eradicate the discrimination faced by foreigners and perhaps even make convalescent homes for them in Japan. Working ecumenically through NCCJ's member churches and Christian organizations, ministry to the foreign immigrants is a vision he holds for the future. He is inspired by the many scriptural references which support ministry to foreigners, strangers and outcasts in our midst.

In Psalm 146:9 we read,

"The LORD protects the strangers...."

In Exodus 22:21,

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Through NCCJ's ecumenical network, Rev. Iijima's goal is to bring justice, hope, and needed resources those so often neglected in society.

## HIS CURRENT WORK AND LIFE

Presently Rev. Iijima teaches an evening class in the "History of Christianity in Asia" at Japan Biblical Theological Seminary. He has written a number of books and articles in Japanese. The English translation of these book titles are: "The Christian History Between Japan and Korea", "Living in the Country as a Citizen of East Asia," "When Life is Shining."

He is married to Yasuko who is an English tutor and they have three grown boys; Koki, Yuki, and Nobuki. (*In their sons' names, "ki" is the kanji for Christ (Kirisuto) in Japanese.*) Son Koki works for the Asahi newspaper, Yuki is in Keio University graduate school as a law major, and Nobuki is a student at Waseda University.

When asked what his interests are, Rev. Iijima said he doesn't have much free time but does enjoy watching movies, walking in the park, and his absolutely favorite thing to do is to go alone to a quiet coffee shop with quiet music and have a quiet cup of coffee.

With his various ministries for helping the marginalized, his passion for ecumenism, and his goal to reach out to the wider community, we look forward to his leadership as General Secretary of NCCJ.

*(Rev. Iijima may be contacted by emailing him at [iijima@ncc-j.org](mailto:iijima@ncc-j.org))*

## NCCJ Holds 37th General Assembly

The 37th General Assembly of the National Christian Council in Japan was held on March 23-24, 2009, at the newly constructed dining hall of the Kanto Gakuin Jr-Sr High School in Yokohama which is currently celebrating the 90th anniversary of its founding by the American Baptist mission in 1919. The location of the Triennial General Assembly in Yokohama was also concurrent with the 150th year since the opening of Yokohama Port to western ships and the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in 1859 at various ports including Nagasaki and Yokohama.

The assembly theme, “Jesus Christ, Our Hope—God, Our Guide in History,” was based on Ephesians 4:3-4. In keeping with the historical context of the Sesquicentennial of Protestant Mission in Japan, an open forum was held on the first evening featuring three panelists who spoke on the topic of “Considering the Future of Mission in Japan.”

Speaking from the perspective of the Anglican tradition, Rev. Kenta Nishihara began by referring to the arrival of Bernard Jean Bettelheim in Okinawa in 1846 as the forerunner of the Anglican mission in Japan, which later included the work of John Batchelor among the Ainu people in Hokkaido from 1879. He also lifted up the work of individual missionaries who served the needs of persons rejected by Japanese society at large, as well as by many in the established churches.

By sketching the past century of the ecumenical movement which traces its beginnings to the first World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, Nishihara emphasized the role of the NCCJ in solidarity with movements that struggle against discrimination and work for peace along with other church and citizens groups at the grassroots level. He cautioned against the divisive duality in the church that separates “church growth” from the church’s “social mission.” In recalling the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu at the 9th Assembly of the WCC in 2006 in Brazil, “The reason why the miserable system of apartheid continued for such a long time was due to the fact that the churches were divided.” Nishihara appealed to the churches and Christians of Japan to work together, avoiding the pitfalls of divisiveness, in carrying out their common mission of solidarity.

Rev. Kano Yoshitaka of the Japan Baptist Renmei (Convention) related to the Southern Baptists, spoke of the “Joy of the Ecumenical Movement.” He spoke passionately of his life-changing experiences during the 12 years from 1980 when he became deeply involved with the ecumenical ministries in the Kamagasaki area of Osaka where day laborers and other “homeless persons” struggle to make a living or

barely survive. Little time or effort was wasted on discussions of “creed” or “faith and order” in defining the theology of ecumenism. Rather, the emphasis was on working together to maintain the life of one fellow human for another day. He stated that the goal was “supporting one another as we worked together to support one other person.” This same spirit of working together for others has been the sustaining purpose of the NCCJ. And herein lies the hope for not only the future of the ecumenical movement in Japan, but also the renewal of society where so many have lost any hope for a meaningful life. The answer to those who have given up hope will not be found in arguments of whether we are “doing mission” or “doing evangelism,” but rather must be discovered in our own involvement with others and our determination to say, “You must not die. You must live, because we will live together with you!” In addressing such vital issues, the Japan Baptist Convention is emphasizing work among youth, and calling on the NCCJ to share in furthering the joy of ecumenical cooperation.

Representing the composite nature of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) was Rev. Jun’ichi Fujikake, pastor of the historical Shiloh Church congregation in Yokohama. Tracing its roots back to some of the first followers of the earliest missionaries in Yokohama, including Rev. and Mrs. James Curtis Hepburn who arrived in 1859, Shiloh Church was founded in 1874 as the first church in the Japan Presbyterian tradition. In summarizing the past 150 years of Japanese Protestant history, Rev. Fujikake identified three parallel influences within the Kyodan United Church tradition. The first is represented by the first congregation founded in Yokohama as the pre-denominational “Yokohama Kokai” in 1872, just prior to the abolishment of the ban on Christianity in 1873. This ideal of an “open church without denominational ties” is often lifted up as the roots of the Kyodan, which came into fruition under the Japanese military government in 1941. However, Rev. Fujikake pointed out the aspects of Japanese nationalism that contributed to this ambiguous “non-denominational” movement that sought to distance itself from the various “foreign missions” from overseas.

The second main stream in the present-day Kyodan was identified as “evangelicalism” with roots in the 9 Articles of Faith promulgated by the World Evangelical Alliance movement that began in England in 1846, and culminated in the Kyodan’s Confession of Faith in 1954. According to Rev. Fujikake, it is upon these two pillars that the Kyodan has been formed with its own unique style of clergy and church membership. In looking to the future, he projected a vision of a newly reformed “denominational church” that

*(Cont’d on p. 4, col.1)*

### 37th General Assembly... *(Continued from p. 3)*

would transcend the so-called “Kyodan struggle” of the past 40 years and overcome the various ambiguities that are the cause of such controversies as the current issue of disciplining those who serve Communion to non-baptized persons.

In the business sessions of the Assembly, the main concerns were the election of officers to serve in the next triennium and dealing with the restructuring of operations in keeping with a trimmer budget. Rev. Samuel Isamu Koshiishi was re-elected as Moderator, with Rev. Hiroko Ueda as the Secretary, and Rev. Kei Jokura as Co-Vice Moderator. The interim Acting General Secretary, Rev. Ken'ichi Otsu was replaced by Rev. Makoto Iijima.

Special international guests who attended the 37th General Assembly were The Rev. Fr. Rex R.B. Reyes, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and Rev. Kwon Oh-Sung, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea. They both shared greetings and their talks were translated into Japanese for the participants.

For those participating in the two-day session, there was a renewed sense of urgency for creating a stronger solidarity with each other and finding new ways of working together with “those of conscience” in Japanese society and the world community for building on the hope that unites us all in our common faith in “Jesus Christ, Our Hope.”

Submitted by: George W. Gish, Jr.

Member of NCCJ Executive Council representing AVACO and NCCJ Vice Moderator

April 14, 2009

*(Editor's note: NCCJ is truly ecumenical as can be seen by the officers elected. Rev. Samuel Isamu Koshiishi is with the Seikokai (Anglican/ Episcopal Church of Japan), Rev. Hiroko Ueda is with the Kyodan (UCCJ), Rev. Kei Jokura with the Baptisto Renmai (Baptist Convention). Rev. George Gish was requested after the General Assembly to be Co-Vice-Moderator. Rev. Gish is a retired UMC missionary still actively serving in Japan.)*

### Seminar on Dr. Bernard Jean Bettelheim and wife, Elizabeth Bettelheim

The NCCJ Center for Christian Education organized a seminar on June 13 at the Ginza Kyobunkan on Bernard Jean Bettelheim. It was well attended as many people were interested in learning more about the first Protestant missionary to Okinawa. He was an Anglican. Dr. Bernard Jean Bettelheim arrived in Okinawa from Hong Kong on April 30, 1846, accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth M., their infant daughter, Rose (born 1844), their infant son, Bernard James (born 1845), “Miss Jane,” a tutor and schoolmistress, and Liu Yukan, a Cantonese translator. They would remain in Okinawa for seven years. Throughout his time on Okinawa, he learned the Okinawan language and translated the Scriptures into Okinawan (in *kana* script). In May 1926, a memorial to honor Dr. Bettelheim was put in Naha, Okinawa.



*Dr. Bernard Jean and Elizabeth Bettelheim*

### BOOK: One Thousand Paper Cranes by Takayuki Ishii.

See website:

[www.onethousandpapercranes.org](http://www.onethousandpapercranes.org)

*Ten years after the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Sadako Sasaki died as a result of the Atomic Bomb Disease. Sadako's determination to fold one thousand paper cranes, symbolizing her hope for peace, and her courageous struggle with her illness inspired her classmates.*



After her death, they started a national campaign to build the Children's Peace Statue in memory of Sadako and the many other children who were victims of the bombing of Hiroshima. On top of the statue is a girl holding a large crane in her outstretched arms. She is Sadako Sasaki.

To this day, in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, the statue of Sadako is beautifully decorated with thousands of paper cranes brought and sent by people around the world. For more information contact the author, United Methodist pastor, Rev. Takayuki Ishii.

CONTACT: [author@onethousandpapercranes.org](mailto:author@onethousandpapercranes.org)

## NCCJ's Rev. Takasuke Iijima

Welcome to Rev. Takasuke Iijima who from April 2009 became Executive Secretary for Programs. In this work, he will be in charge of a number of special areas. As director of the Human Rights Desk, he will be involved in various issues including rights for Koreans, other Asian residents in Japan and foreign migrant workers. With the Opposition to the Death Penalty Committee, he will be working closely with the Catholic Bishops' Conference Justice and Peace Committee. As if that is not enough, he will also be involved with the Faith and Order Commission and the Yasukuni Shrine Committee.

Rev. Iijima was born in 1942 in Tenjin City, China but raised in Mito City, Japan in a Christian family. Their church was part of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan).

He studied Christianity at Rikkyo (St. Paul's Anglican) University where he first became involved with peace groups, an involvement which would last for thirty years. At that time he was involved with "Christians for Peace" and "Support Group for the A-Bomb Victims."

After graduation, he worked at the Tokyo YMCA as an executive secretary. In all, he worked 32 years for the YMCA



not only in Tokyo, but also in Okinawa, Sendai, and Saitama. His strong interest in peace and international issues led him to help organize YMCA work camps in the Philippines and Thailand, as well as in Japan. (*Editor's note: The YMCA is still a Christian organization in Japan where one has to be a baptized Christian to be staff.*)

After the YMCA, he worked in the office of a Christian-related phone counseling organization known as "Inochi no Denwa." ("phone of life") which was started in 1971 as a suicide prevention hotline and counseling service.

He then moved to social welfare, working for a Christian convalescent home called "Fukugawa Ai no Sono." At this time, he began studying for the ordination exams, becoming ordained in 2008. The work at the convalescent home was good preparation for his present ministry as an associate pastor with the elderly at Waseda United Church of Christ. (Waseda Church is next to the Japan Christian Center where NCCJ is located.) Waseda Church has a membership of about 200 (which is a large congregation for a Japanese Protestant Church in Japan) and offers four worship services each Sunday, as well as a midweek noon worship service.

When he has free time, Rev. Iijima enjoys bird watching and photography. His wife, Aiko, is an artist who does large enamel (*shipo yaki*) pieces and teaches enamel art work (*shipo yaki*) as a volunteer at the YMCA. The Iijimas have two grown children.

Their son, Kazuhiko, spent two years of his high school in America. He and his wife, Naomi Nakaoka, both studied theology at Payap Univeristy in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and are now both finishing their Masters of Divinity course at San Francisco Theological Seminary in California. They will spend the summer of 2009 doing an internship with the pastor of the Japanese Church in Bangkok.

Daughter, Chitose Muta has two boys, ages 4 and 2, and Mrs. Iijima enjoys caring for her grandchildren once a week. From his university days until the present, Rev. Iijima has long been concerned about peace and human rights issues. With his long commitment and experience, I am sure that NCCJ has put the care of these issues in capable hands.

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(*Editor's note: Rev. Iijima was the boss of the former NCCJ general secretary, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, when he worked at the Yamate YMCA in Tokyo back in 1983. Interesting how in Japan Christians overlap!*)

## NCCJ's Ms. Terumi Sasamoto

Terumi Sasamoto is not a newcomer to NCCJ. For the past ten years she has worked on the World Day of Prayer committee which is part of the NCCJ Women's Committee.

She is one of the part-time staff members at NCCJ working with the Women's Committee, Disabled Persons and the Church Committee, Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee, and the Theology and Missions Committee. She was introduced to NCCJ by Ms. Hatazawa, NCCJ's office manager, as they are both graduates of International Christian University 30 years ago where they met at the same dormitory. It was through Hatazawa-san's influence that she began to attend church and become involved with NCCJ activities.

Ms. Sasamoto was born in Ishikawa prefecture where they have their own dialect of Japanese. Her family were devout Buddhists but when she was in fourth grade, a church was built near her home and her parents allowed her to attend Sunday School. She ended up attending regularly all through junior high school. After high school, she was accepted at International Christian University in Mitaka City, Tokyo, where she majored in German Literature. After graduation she spent some time working in an art gallery as a secretary to the owner. Through this she learned about modern art, an experience she greatly enjoyed. Before coming to NCCJ, she worked in various computer related jobs.

Sasamoto-san is married to an architect and has two grown children; daughter Ayuka who is a nurse and son Atsushi, who is a 4th year student in Toyo University. She

NCCJ is also happy to announce that the new International Relations Executive Secretary will be Mr. Toshiyuki Mineda. Mr. Mineda will be appointed to this position on July 3, 2009 after the next NCC Central Committee Meeting.



attends a United Church of Christ (kyodan) church (Josai Kyokai) in Hatayama, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo. Luckily one of her hobbies is reading as she has a one hour and ten-minutes commute to NCCJ from where she lives in Saitama-ken. She is able to get through a lot of her favourite books; mysteries and historical novels.

She enjoys her work very much as is clear from her cheery welcoming face. It is wonderful to have her at NCCJ.

*Editor's note: (NCCJ only has three full time staff: the general secretary Rev. Iijima, our accountant Men-san, and Ms. Akie Hatazawa, the office manager. People who visit are often surprised and amazed at how small the office is and how few staff there are but the amount of work that NCCJ manages to accomplish! As an international guest once said; "The NCCJ staff are dedicated Christians who work hard for social justice and peace issues.")*



### Christian Conference of Asia

Since 1974, Asia Sunday has been celebrated in Asia and other places around the world on the Sunday before Pentecost. The day commemorates the founding of CCA which was formally the East Asian Christian Conference. Each year a different country takes the theme. Two years ago the focus was on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution.

This year, the focus was on Sri Lanka. Asia Sunday can be celebrated on other Sundays other than before Pentecost and we hope your congregation will find the resources useful. See the liturgy, Bible study reflections, hymns for Asia Sunday 2009. <http://www.cca.org.hk/home1.htm>

## Children and Youth Gather for Peace in Northeast Asia

### *Doing justice and seeking God's shalom (Isaiah 10:1-2)*

A third Regional Children's Peace Conference will be hosted by Japanese churches in the week of August 15, 2008. About 40 children from ages 10 to 15 will be invited to a camp outside Tokyo to study the Bible, play peace games and share meals for five days under the tutelage of Japanese pastors working with children and youth. The first two peace conferences were held in 2005 and 2007, respectively. This year, the invitation is extended to Korean, Taiwanese and Hong Kong children. Children and young people learn and live the way of peace more easily. They do not have a problem with language, as they can speak the language of peace.

Along with an annual School of Peace, the Children's Peace Camp is one of the more regular programs undertaken by church leaders from Northeast Asia. NCCJ and KNCC co-hosts the Women's Gathering and the new program to include Taiwan and Hong Kong is being explored.

Known as the Churches' Forum on Peace and People's Security in North-East Asia, the Forum is an ecumenical platform initiated by National Councils of Churches in the northeast Asian region supported by the Christian Conference of Asia, to promote and build peace and security from

the people's perspective. Its main activities include the provision of peace education, organizing peace activities like the children's peace camp, information sharing, and networking among Councils and beyond.

The Forum meets once a year and the present Moderator is the Rev. Po KC, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Rapporteur is Charlie Ocampo, Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service with the Christian Conference of Asia.

The meeting in Tokyo, held at the Korean YMCA Hotel from 23rd to 24th of May, also approved the Forum's Terms of Reference, including a clause for membership, coordination, program planning, decision-making processes and financial support.

The next meeting of the Forum will be on 26th to 28th February 2010, to be hosted by the National Council of Churches in Taiwan (NCCT), which will include visits to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and NCCT Offices.

Charlie Ocampo

Charlie Ocampo, Christian Conference of Asia, Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development & Service.

## A Call to Renounce War

From bows to ploughshares, from spears to pruning hooks...

Thirty Buddhist, Christian and Muslim religious leaders gathered at the Korean YMCA in Tokyo to continue saying "no" to war and any effort to re-interpret Article 9 to justify the participation of Japanese Self Defense Forces in the U.S.-led war anywhere in the world.

The Rev. Gyouyo Kodama, a respected leader and member of the Buddhist clergy in Japan led the Article 9 International Working Group in drafting a Statement of its Vision and Mission, which was adopted by the members in attendance.

The Mission Statement states, "In the light of... dangerous developments in Japan, we cannot be passive spectators. Based on our religious teachings, we believe that war is always a crime; and war brings death both to the body of the victims and the soul of the perpetrator.

We commit ourselves to sincerely practice and actively promote the spirit and the letter of Article 9 at all times and in all places; and to protect the dignity of victims of all forms of violence."

Dave Robinson of Pax Christi USA reported on positive developments in the United States following the election of President Barack Obama. While the direction of the Obama Administration on specific matters in the Asia/Pacific region are yet unclear, Mr. Robinson believes that the Obama years will certainly bring needed and real change to a whole range of issues domestically. Furthermore, he believes that the fundamentals of US foreign policy will prove more enduring and less susceptible to the kind of systemic change that the Article 9 movement seeks.

He claimed that the efforts of the Article 9 Global Working Group have already made crucial contributions to understanding the dynamics of the Bush/Rumsfeld plans

*(Cont'd on p. 8, col. 1)*

**A Call...** (Continued from p. 7)

for a remilitarized Japan in service to US efforts to dominate the region.

The Working Group also received a communiqué from the Ecumenical Bishops Forum in the Philippines entitled, "From bows to plowshares, from spears to pruning hooks." Signed by 14 Catholic and Protestant bishops, 4 members of the Philippine Congress, and 25 members of clergy and lay leaders, the Communiqué drew attention to the United States' desperate bid to remain as the dominant world power on the one hand, and attempts by the governments in Japan and the Philippines to amend their respective constitutions in support of the US agenda. In particular, the signatories pointed to the presence of US military bases in Okinawa and elsewhere in Japan and the Visiting Forces Agreement

(Balikatan exercises) in the Philippines to carry out the US military agenda.

A 2009 Article 9 Inter-Religious Conference, hosted by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, will be held in Seoul in December. The agenda of the Conference will include looking at the policy of the newly-elected Japanese government, President Obama's one year in office, progress of the 6-party talks and reports on other conflicts in Asia.

Charlie Ocampo, CCA-JID

*Charlie Ocampo is the Christian Conference of Asia's Joint Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development & Service.*

## Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 Follow-Up Meeting

The second follow-up meeting for the Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution was held on May 20-22 at the Korean YMCA in Tokyo. Thirty one participants from Korea, Thailand, USA and Japan gathered to prepare for the upcoming Second Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 in December in Korea. The attendees of various faiths (Buddhist, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim) were from various organizations and churches concerned with peace such as, Pax Christi USA, the Christian Conference of the Asia, the Asia Muslim Action Network, NCK, NCCJ, UCCJ, Korea Presbyterian Church, Niwano Peace Foundation, Peace Boat, Citizens Against Revising the Constitution, and the Buddhism International Corporation Network. Former general secretaries of NCCJ, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto and Rev. Tsutomu Shoji were also part of this follow-up meeting.

Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution provides that in "aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use

of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish (this) aim, ... land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential will never be maintained." Since



2006, the Japanese government has tried to amend this provision, and pave the way for a future Japanese army. However, thanks to faith communities and other concerned citizens in Japan, there has been a strong campaign to oppose any alteration of this provision. With the support of people worldwide, Article 9 is held up as a model for other countries as well. Let us all continue to work together to promote a world of peace.



## Asian Rural Institute Opening Ceremony

ARI is a training center for rural community leaders set on a 6 hectare farm in Northern Japan. The mission of

the Asian Rural Institute is to build an environmentally healthy, just, and peaceful world, in which each person can live to his or her fullest potential. This mission is rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.

To carry out this mission, ARI trains and nurtures rural leaders for a life of sharing. Leaders, both women and men, who live and work in grassroots rural communities primarily in Asia, Africa and the Pacific form a community of learning each year together with staff and other residents. Through community-based learning ARI participants study the best ways for rural people to share and enhance local resources and abilities for the common good.

At the heart of ARI's program is the concept of 'foodlife' - holding significant value in human life and the food that sustains life.

This year ARI has 30 participants from all over the world and for the first time, from Togo and China. The new director of ARI as of April 1, 2009, is Kenichi Otsu, former NCCJ general secretary.

Volunteers and guests are welcome to visit ARI. Donations are also greatly appreciated as is costly to bring participants from mostly Asian and some African countries to participate for the nine months training. For more information, see ARI's website: [www.ari-edu.org](http://www.ari-edu.org)

JCAN's editor, Rev Claudia Genung-Yamamoto went to ARI on April 18, 2009, to give the opening ceremony greetings. Excerpts from her speech follow.

"Trusting God for the Harvest"

by Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto

ARI connections are like seeds. Let me tell you more about those "seed connections." As a United Methodist missionary, I have been pastor at WTUC for over 14 years, three years ago. I came to Japan for a weekend work camp as an ICYE exchange student. At that time, ARI was quite new.

ARI seeds grew in me when I worked and lived as a missionary at a Japanese orphanage, Bott Memorial Children's Home in Machida, for two years (1980-82) where many staff had known about ARI and had visited ARI. The home was located not far from the Tsurukawa Rural Seminary where the original ARI began before its present location.

*(Cont'd on p. 10, col.1)*



"Asian Rural Institute's Opening Ceremony" Founder, Rev. Takami is in front row in wheelchair.

ARI... (Continued from p. 9)

In 1983, I married Toshimasa Yamamoto (presently an ARI board member) and came back to Japan to do my pastors field education at International Christian University (ICU) Church. Rev. Gretchen DeVries, associate director here at ARI for many years, often came with other ARI participants to speak with our congregation and helped me feel even closer to ARI.

The church where I am the pastor is West Tokyo Union Church. WTUC is one of the many churches that support ARI through our church budget and special offerings. ARI helps us to learn more about the importance of organic and sustained farming. Our church, WTUC, brought some of our high school youth for a weekend work camp experience a few years back. Lately, at church, we have been selling delicious ARI organic cookies, eggs, rhubarb jam, kiwi jam, Fair Trade coffee, and organic carrot juice after the worship which our congregation enjoys very much.

Besides being a pastor, I also am a missionary assigned to work at NCCJ where your present director, Rev. Otsu, was the general secretary. Your former director, Bishop Jinataro Ueda was at NCCJ, as well. Here in Japan, we Christians all seem to be interrelated and easily move around! Since Christians are only 1% in Japan, often they work with each other and are "recycled" among various Christian agencies. That's a good thing — much like the philosophy of ARI which encourages recycling.

ARI certainly has a wide field in which it has spread its seeds.

Planting seeds and God's work makes me think of Takami-sensei, who was an unusual sower for his time. He founded ARI without much money, but he had a unique, God-given vision. He wanted a place for rural leaders to come together to build an environmentally healthy and peaceful world. He wanted a place rooted in the love of Jesus Christ but open to all people. He wanted rural leaders from various parts of the world to come and form a community of learning. In this community they would be "servant leaders" and learn by sharing, doing, experiencing, and exploring organic agriculture techniques, sustained farming, and community development. He wanted people to take part in "food life work" which is a special term he made up, to show the inseparable connection between food and life. He wanted people to come, get their hands dirty in the soil, and then return home to plant seeds of justice and peace.

Takami-sensei threw seeds and they grew. Roots were formed. Connections made. He didn't do it alone. Takami-sensei planted seeds in many hearts, and other sowers came

along who caught his spirit to keep ARI going. Now ARI has seeds all over the world with people working in many different places. These are seeds that include the seeds of love, seeds of peace, seeds of justice, seeds of hope, and seeds of tolerance. And you all today, you new participants this year 2009, are the new seeds.

An old ARI newsletter talked about a participant who said that when he grew plants, he named them after members in his church congregation, so that when he watered them, he prayed for them. Now I don't suggest you all start talking to plants, but his method shows a closeness to the land and the importance of growth and how he kept the seeds of the community he would return to in his heart — just as I am sure you are holding all those from your own homes close to your heart, hoping that what you learn here will bring growth to your community.

The next nine months, know this will happen to you: You will grow, change, adapt, struggle, enjoy, and connect. This is the right place for you now, and you are the right people for that task. You are on fertile soil! You will discover new things about yourself and others and you'll see how we are all interrelated. Nurture one another as seeds of hope! Go forth with a vision of the harvest to come! Dear participants, may the blessings of God be upon you today and always.

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## Book highly recommended by the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ)

Ju Gi Cheul

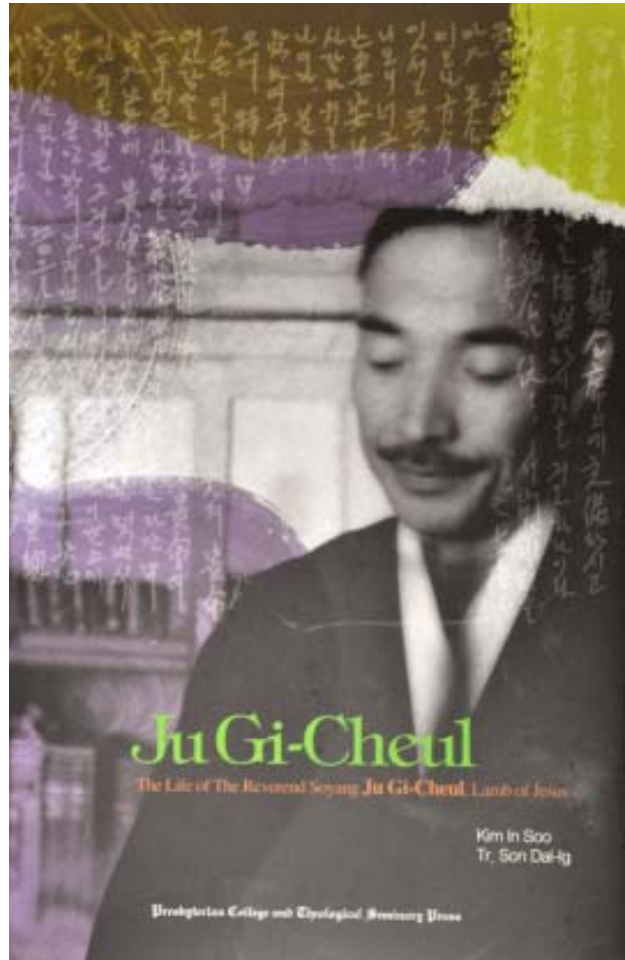
The Life of the Reverend Soang Ju Gi Cheul, Lamb of Jesus

By Kim In Soo, Translated by Son Dal-Ig

Published in 2008 by the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Press. This book is being sold by the Korean Christian Church in Japan. Email:

Reverend Soang Ju Gi Cheul was persecuted for resisting Shinto worship during Korea's colonization by Japan. At that time, all churches and schools were forced to participate in Shinto worship as part of their patriotic duty to Japan. A man of outstanding conviction and faith, he refused to participate and so was in prison off and on for seven years and finally died in prison on April 21, 1944, about a year before Korea's liberation from Japan. He is considered a martyr by many in the Korean Protestant Church.

If you wish to purchase the book or have more information, please email [KCCJ@kb3.so-net.ne.jp](mailto:KCCJ@kb3.so-net.ne.jp)



**AWRC**

you think might be interested.

Thank you for your support.

With warm wishes,  
Clare

Clare Law  
Publications & Administrative Assistant  
Please reply to: [enquiries@awrc4ct.org](mailto:enquiries@awrc4ct.org)  
Website: [www.awrc4ct.org](http://www.awrc4ct.org)

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology (AWRC)! We are closing the AWRC office in Kuala Lumpur and setting up a new office in Yogyakarta, Indonesia with Anna Marsiana as the new Coordinator.

We would like to reduce our publication stocks prior to the move so we are offering very special prices for our journals and books. Please see our website. This is an excellent opportunity to purchase a set for your personal use or collection.

We also seek your help to publicise this promotion. Kindly tell to anyone whom

The Federation of Inochi no Denwa, at (03) 3264-4343. (Japanese only), open 24 hours a day <http://www.inochinodenwa.or.jp/>

There is also the Tokyo English Life Line, which was started a few years after Inochi No Denwa by the international churches in Tokyo for the international community. TELL offers free, anonymous phone counseling at (03) 5774-0992 daily from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m., [www.telljp.com](http://www.telljp.com)

TELL Community Counseling Service (TCCS) offers face-to-face counseling. Call (03) 3498-0231 (English) or (03) 3498-0232 (Japanese) for an appointment.

## Joint Statement of the Christian Churches against the Amendment of the Immigration Control Law

*(We Christian churches in Japan have drawn up an urgent joint church statement against the amendment bill of the Immigration Control Law. We would like to make our voice heard by the Diet and Japanese Society. Prior to a rally in the Members Hall of the House of Representatives on May 13, Christian church representatives "to oppose the amendment bill of the Immigration Control Law" held a press conference to release the joint church statement.)*

13 May, 2009

### Multinational and multiethnic Society

Today, there are more than 2.15 million foreign residents from 190 countries in Japan. The Christian churches in Japan also welcome many foreign believers. But their duly recognized basic rights as residents, workers, women, and children to live in Japan, are often limited or denied. Since we consider the lives of everyone as God's gifts that are more precious than anything else, as the words in the Bible say, we have continued to appeal that the human rights of everyone, whether he or she is a Japanese or a foreigner, must be guaranteed and that, for that purpose, a Basic Law for Foreign Residents, based on international human rights treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Japanese Constitution, is necessary.

### The amended bills neglect U.N. recommendations

This March, the government submitted bills amending the Immigration Control Law, the Special Law on Immigration Control, and the Law of Basic Resident Registers to the Diet, and the Legal Committee of the House of Representatives began its deliberation on the Immigration Control Law and the Special Law on Immigration Control on April 24. We hold a strong apprehension about the contents of these three bills that have been introduced to the current Diet session. These bills do not reflect the repeated recommendations for correction made by international human rights organizations, such as the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

### Reporting obligation for religious corporations

Section 17, chapter 19 of the bill to amend the Immigration Control Law prescribes that organizations that are receiving those who reside in the country with their status

of residence for religious activities (such as missionaries) are obliged to report not only on the beginning and the end of the period of reception but also "matters related to other circumstances of reception."

This is a very important problem that we cannot ignore as Christian churches. In recent years, due to the rapid increase of foreign believers who come to and live in Japan from Brazil and Peru, as well as other parts of Asia such as the Philippines and Korea, our churches and church-related organizations receive many missionaries and sisters from those countries. If we follow this provision of the bill to amend the Immigration Control Law, our churches and organizations would then have to report even on the content of the activities of those missionaries and sisters. Moreover, the bill says that matters to be reported "shall be specified by ordinances of the Ministry of Justice" and are not specified in the text of the bill.

This means that they can be specified by ordinances of the Ministry of Justice without being discussed at the Diet and, furthermore, expanded by the ministry in the future. This would create circumstances in which the state directly intervenes in activities of religious corporations, which constitutes a violation of the Constitutional separation of religion and the state. We Christian churches have bitter experiences under the Religious Corporations Law before World War II. The question of how a mere reporting obligation was changed by ordinances of the government ministries is not a matter of the distant past.

### Missionary activities would be limited

Not only that, under Chapter 23 of the amendment bill of the Immigration Control Law, foreign residents such as missionaries and sisters would be required to carry their residence cards at all times and show them; otherwise, they would be punished with a penalty for violating this. The missionary activities of the missionaries and sisters within Japan support communities of faith of foreign believers across the country, and their supports to the lives and education of foreign communities are not limited to one place. And yet, in addition to the troublesome reporting on the

*(Cont'd on next page)*

changes to their addresses within 14 days, if they fail to report on their newly-changed addresses within 90 days, their status of residence itself would be revoked, and we are concerned that the missionaries and sisters would be deprived of their freedom of missionary activities.

**Legislate a Basic Law for Foreign Residents**

Therefore, we have no choice but to oppose the amendment bill to the Immigration Control Law.

We appeal to the Diet and the Japanese society. Please listen to the voices of concerned foreign residents as you deliberate the amendment bills of the Immigration Control Law, Special Laws on Immigration Control, and the Law of Basic Resident Registers, and enact legislation from the standpoint of foreign residents who live in and are active in various fields. The world is watching Japan closely to see how it responds to foreign residents. In this global age when large-scale human migrations occur on a daily basis, we sincerely wish that Japan show its good sense of human rights to the rest of the world.

- Archbishop Mitsuaki Takami, President, the Bishops' Commission for Social Concerns, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan
- Rev. Isamu Koshiishi, Moderator, National Christian Council in Japan
- Rev. Nobuhisa Yamakita, Moderator, United Church of Christ in Japan

- Rev. Yeoun-Won Jung, Moderator, Korean Christian Church in Japan
- Rev. Makoto Uematsu, Archbishop, Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan
- Rev. Makito Hatta, Moderator, Church of Christ in Japan
- Rev. Akinori Taguchi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Japan Baptist Convention
- Rev. Shigemi Ono, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Japan Baptist Union
- Junko Satake, President, Kyofukai-Japan Christian Women's Organization
- Mayako Ishii, President, the Young Women's Christian Association of Japan YWCA
- Rev. Suguru Matsuki, Chairman, the Committee of Social Affairs, Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church. Co-Representatives, National Christian Conference on Issues of the Alien Registration Law:
- Rev. Makoto Iijima General Secretary, National Christian Council in Japan
- Bishop Daiji Tani, Chairman, Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants and Refugees and People on the Move, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan
- Rev. Tomeyuki Naito, General Secretary, United Church of Christ in Japan
- Rev. Soo-Kil Park, General Secretary, Korean Christian Church in Japan
- Rev. Junko Satake, President, Kyofukai-Japan Christian Women's Organization
- Rev. Cheong-Il Lee, Kansai Christian Conference on Issues of the Alien Registration Law

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A proposal for a Basic Law for Foreign Residents (in two parts)

<http://www.ksyc.jp/gaikikyoku/Basic%20Law%20for%20Foreign%20Residents%201.pdf>

<http://www.ksyc.jp/gaikikyoku/Basic%20Law%20for%20Foreign%20Residents%202.pdf>

Also see a back issue in Japan Christian Activity News Christians Defend Rights of Foreigners in Japan

<http://ncc-j.org/english/jcan/2005%20Spring.pdf>

**General Secretary of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY)**

As June 1, 2009, Mr. Kohei Yamada, the General Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of Japan will be the new General Secretary of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs.

NCCJ offers our congratulations! (*YMCA is a member organization of NCCJ.*)

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 General Secretary

An Open Letter to President Obama

March 24, 2009

Dear President Barack Obama:

We are writing to express our heartfelt congratulations on the historic decision of the people of the United States in electing you as their 44th President. We welcome your public promise to change the nation's directions by healing the wounds and scars left by President Bush.

In your inaugural address, you made such a fervent statement, "And so, to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation, and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity. And we are ready to lead once more."

During the campaign, you were quoted as saying, "instead of relying on military force to build peace, we will give priority to the use of dialog." Therefore, we join with all those in the world who desire a peace based on non-violence in celebrating your taking the Presidential oath because we sincerely hope that you will work to achieve peace by denying all forms of violence, and will exercise strong leadership in these efforts.

We, of the National Christian Council in Japan, are penitent for our mistakes in cooperating with the Japanese military in the past war. In keeping with the words of Jesus who warned that "All who take the sword will perish by the sword," we are striving to answer the challenge he issued by saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers." We sincerely hope that peace will be achieved without resorting to violence.

As you know, Japan committed a great misdeed by perpetrating aggression during World War II. Out of our reflection on that grave transgression, our peace constitution was promulgated, being based on "trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. (Preamble)" This spirit is expressed in the so-called "Peace Clause" of Article 9 as follows:

ARTICLE 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of the belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Unfortunately, however, we continue to see violence-filled retaliations and conflicts all over the world, justifying war in the name of justice against terrorism. Of course, we strongly oppose any kind of despicable acts of violence, but at the same time, we know for sure as historical facts that there exists no such thing as "war in the name of justice," and that any resolution of conflict calling on violence will only end up in a series of additional hatred and violence, and that no peace and reconciliation can be achieved by these means in the true sense of the word.

At the Hague Appeal for Peace Civil Society Conference in 1999, the first of the 10 fundamental principles for justice and peace in the world declared that "Every Parliament should adopt a resolution prohibiting their government from going to war, like the Japanese Article 9." We were very much encouraged by this statement. We thus believe that Japan should maintain Article 9 as its basic foundation for a country of non-violence, and believe that this is the very model the world needs now for the construction of peace. However, despite the fact that Japan possesses this particular article on the abolishment of wars, we continue to equip ourselves with the "armed forces" in the name of "self-defense," which have been dispatched around the world under the guise of "international contributions." We have been vehemently protesting with our strong opposition to these actions.

For the past eight years, President Bush made a strong case for restructuring the presence of the US armed forces in the Asia-Pacific region, firming up the U.S.-Japan Security Pact and encouraging the amendment of Article 9, thereby making possible Japan's participation in wars again. We are seriously concerned, however, because the amendment of Article 9 would endanger world peace and security significantly.

We welcome your policy to change from the unilateral military actions carried out by President Bush to an approach of dialog and cooperation among many nations. We strongly urge you to follow this policy, by abolishing any military

agreements between the U.S. and Japan, preventing any demand or pressure placed on Japan to amend Article 9, withdrawing the U.S. presence from all military installations, and terminating the dispatch of the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

Military action will never bring true peace. Article 9 is a treasure, not only for Japan, but also for the whole world. We believe that keeping and realizing the ideals stated in Article 9 is indispensable to world peace. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave us a vision when he declared, "I have a dream," in which he envisioned a world no longer dominated by aggressive acts, but a world dedicated to protecting peace and human rights.

We were tremendously impressed when you said, "This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed, why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall; and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served in a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath." It is because we are reminded of the fact that you had just accomplished Dr. King's dream. Therefore, we believe that achieving peace non-violently is not simply a dream, but it is the "power of reality."

We are looking to you, the 44th President, to take seriously the desires in the hearts of all those who long for peace based on non-violence, as you carry out your presidential responsibilities.

May the blessings of our Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, be with you!

National Christian Council in Japan  
At the 37th General Assembly Meeting held in Yokohama, Japan, March 23-24, 2009.

## Palestinian Theologian Rev. Naim Atek

Rev. Naim Atek was in Japan speaking in April to the Niwano Peace Foundation at the Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist headquarters, Japanese Anglican (Seikokai) churches, the Anglican seminary, and universities in Japan. One of the universities was the Methodist-related Kwansai Gakuen in Kansai where former NCCJ general secretary, Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto is one of the chaplains. Rev. Yamamoto helped to organize Rev. Atek's speaking tour at the university. Rev. Atek is the former Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem and present director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. He was accompanied by Dr. Jeff Halper, a professor and Israeli activist, as well as chairman of ICAHD – The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, an organization that works to block the IDF's activities in the Palestinian territories and the demolition of Palestinian homes. Dr. Halper was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his longtime commitment to anti-occupation and pro-peace activities.

At the Anglican Seminary in Yooga, Setagaya-ku, Tokyo, Rev. Ateek spoke to a group of more than 50 mostly Anglican ministers and some laity about interpreting the old testament through the eyes of Palestinian Liberation



*Rev. Naim Ateek and Anglican Bishop of the Tokyo Diocese, Bishop Jintaro Ueda*

Theology. Bishop Jintaro Ueda translated the stimulating talk and discussion which followed. Rev. Naim Atek encourages Christians from around the world to work for justice and to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Rev. Atek believes in working together for justice and liberation for the Palestinian people so that they might live and prosper alongside their Israeli neighbors.

For more information on the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Center, see <http://www.sabeel.org>

## NCCJ Calendar Highlights 2009

### March

- 6 World Day of Prayer Meeting in Tokyo (St. Paul's Anglican Church)
- 16 Study Meeting on Ecumenism for recent seminary graduates organized by Division of Christian Education of NCCJ (organized yearly)
- 23-24 NCCJ 37th General Assembly (Kanto Gakuin Miharadai Campus)

### April

- 14 Submit collected petitions to Japanese government demanding withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Somalia
- 15 Interview with Rev. Iijima by the Kirisuto Shimbum (The Christian Newspaper)
- 16 Secretariat Meeting of Christian Peace Network in Japan

### May

- 3 Japanese Constitution Day Peace Parade

- 21-22 International Working Group Meeting on Inter-Religious Article 9 Conference
- 23 CCA Working Group Meeting on Peace and Reconciliation in North East-Asia in Tokyo
- 24 CCA Asia Sunday Celebration in Tokyo (Charlie Ocampo, CCA Exec Secretary preached)

### June

- 15 Petitions collected and submitted to the Japanese government demanding a withdrawal of the Japanese Self Defense Force from Somalia
- 18 Petitions collected and submitted to the Japanese government demanding the withdrawal of Japanese Self Defense Force from Iraq
- 26 Latin Harp Charity Concert at Tokyo Union Church by Christian Coalition on Refugees and Migrant Workers

## TOYOHICO KAGAWA DVD: Japanese Evangelist of Kobe Slums

A movie on DVD on the life story of the Rev. Toyohiko Kagawa (<http://zaidan.unchusha.com/cart/index.html>), a Japanese evangelist and social reformer who is being remembered this year on the centennial anniversary of the beginning of his ministry to the poor in then Japan's largest slum area in Kobe in 1909, is available with English and Japanese subtitles.

The movie is based on his million-seller autobiographical Japanese novel entitled, *Shisen wo Koete* (Across the Death Line), which was published with an English translation as "Before the Dawn" in 1924 and 1925.

The DVD is for all DVD regions and costs at 4,500 yen per copy. To order the DVD and for more information, email Kagawa Archives & Resource Center (the English Web site: <http://zaidan.unchusha.com/e/index.html>) in Tokyo in English or in Japanese at [zaidan@unchusha.com](mailto:zaidan@unchusha.com).

See also these English Web sites :

1. The "2009 Centennial of KAGAWA TOYOHICO's Sacrificial Lifestyle": <http://www.core100.net/e-index.html>

2. Kagawa's Jesus Band: <http://www.jesusband.jp/eng/charter.html>

3. The Japan Consumers' Cooperative Union on Kagawa: <http://jccu.coop/eng/aboutus/history.php>

4. A news article by Hisashi Yukimoto of the Ecumenical News International (ENI), "Japanese Evangelist of Kobe Slums Remembered after 100 years", as reproduced by the Presbyterian News Service: <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09207.htm> and the Disciples World: <http://www.disciplesworld.com/newsArticle.html?wsnID=14945%22>

Used copies of the English translation of the novel are available at some internet bookstores: <http://www.bookfinder.com>

Many more books by and on Kagawa are available in English. Rev. Kagawa (born in 1888 and died in 1960) was an active pacifist and world-wide famous evangelist. In 1955, Kagawa was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.