



JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

The Newsletter of the National Christian Council in Japan

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Remembering those suffering from the effects of the Great East Japan Earthquake as well as other natural and human-made disasters, we pray for comfort and the hope offered in the birth of our Savior.

*May the light of Christ guide each of us
in hope and peace for the year 2012*

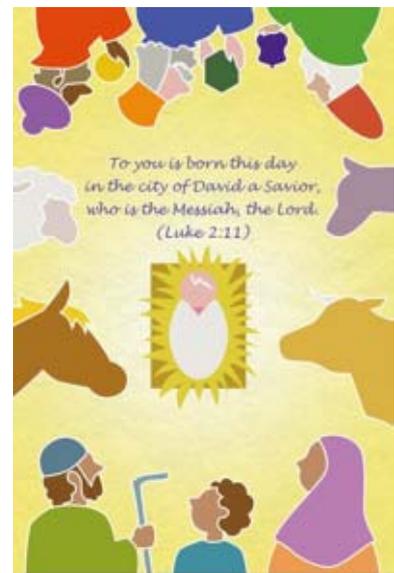
From everyone at NCCJ with thanks!

As we come to the close of this church year's sixth week after The Epiphany (Jan. 8) and ease into the season of Lent (Feb. 26), we have much to reflect upon. We can recall the words of Paul when he said, "In every way we're troubled, but we aren't crushed by our troubles. We're frustrated, but we don't give up." —2 Corinthians 4:8

The triple disaster on March 11, 2011 — earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown — has been devastating and its effects will continue for years to come. However, with the help of so many in the world bringing light and hope to Japan, we are encouraged. We can move forward with your support and prayers as a people of hope.

In this crisis, we have found opportunities to work with one another – not only with Christians of all types, but also with those of the Buddhist and Shinto faiths. Additionally, our ecumenical partners responded quickly and con-

tinued to aid and sustain us. We at NCCJ are deeply grateful for the support from both within Japan and overseas, and ask for your continued prayers for safety and healing.



Toshiyuki Mineda

Jesus is known as the Light of the World and the Prince of Peace. No one knows what this year will bring - except that it will be filled with the light of Christ, which the darkness can never extinguish, and the peace of Christ, which gives us hope for the future. This issue of JCAN will try to provide glimpses of hope and light by sharing articles and websites concerning response to the disaster as well as issues of peace such as the Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 held in Okinawa.

May we work together in solidarity to bring light and peace into our world.

Let this be our goal, and to go forth as God's Spirit gives us strength - to live in hope and peace as we follow the Light into the unknown future.

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NCCJ Members and Overseas Partners Work Together to Open Disaster Response Office

In the immediate weeks following the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant explosion/meltdown that devastated and continue to threaten northeastern Japan, the NCCJ office in Tokyo was faced with challenges it had neither the financial nor technical resources to immediately handle. Staff was stretched thin covering the new and varied needs of the disaster, in addition to their regular work and daily lives in which food shortages, unsafe water and radiation were constant concerns. The generous offers of prayers, donations and assistance that poured in from NCCJ members as well as overseas partners were a great comfort. At the beginning of May, international partners convened a solidarity meeting in Seoul, South Korea, at which time the idea of an ecumenical coordinating body was recommended in order to carry out timely relief and facilitate effective long-term recovery efforts.

As a result, on May 27, 2011, the Executive Council of the National Christian Council in Japan mandated the NCC Japan Ecumenical Disaster Response Office (NCC JEDRO) as a response of the NCCJ membership to the triple disaster. Office space was found on the 5th floor of the same building as NCCJ and the space and work of JEDRO blessed by Pastor Claudia Genung-Yamamoto in early June with approximately 15 in attendance. Since then, NCC JEDRO has been serving as a joint Christian effort “to support locally initiated humanitarian relief and rehabilitation projects with a network of international ecumenical cooperation.”

JEDRO’s Steering Committee members are as follows:

- Rev. Isamu Koshiishi, Chairperson (Moderator of NCCJ) / Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan
- Rev. George Gish, (Vice Moderator of NCCJ) / AVACO
- Rev. Kei Jokura, (Vice Moderator of NCCJ) / Japan Baptist Convention
- Rev. Baekki Heo, (Clerk of NCCJ) / Korean Christian Church in Japan
- Mr. Shinya Yawata / Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan
- Rev. Masato Tanno / Japan Baptist Union
- Mr. Hisao Mitsunaga / YMCAs of Japan
- Ms. Harumi Oinuma / Christian Federation of Childhood Education
- Rev. Sakae Omura / United Church of Christ, Japan (“Kyodan”)
- Rev. Tetsuya Noguchi / Japan Baptist Convention
- Rev. Isamu Aota / Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church



This logo was designed by Toshiyuki Mineda, part-time NCCJ staff and UCCJ member. It shows the light of hope shining from above. The Light is among us. The rays are like the Holy Spirit moving throughout the world as we work together in view of the disaster that hit Japan.

JEDRO’s staff is made up of the following members:

- Rev. Isamu Koshiishi, Executive Director / Anglican/ Episcopal Church in Japan
- Rev. Kei Jokura, Office Manager / Japan Baptist Convention
- Ms. Sue Shibata, Executive Assistant / Tokyo Union Church
- Ms. Kazuko Hashioka, Bookkeeper / Anglican/Episcopal Church in Japan
- Mr. David McIntosh, Public Relations / United Church of Canada
- Mr. Yutaka Akiyama, General Affair / Kyodan

Prof. Victor Hsu, (recommended at the Seoul meeting as Ecumenical Consultant), Yoko Ito (Program Coordinator-Emergencies, Church World Service) and Noriko Lao (Disaster Response Consultant, United Methodist Committee on Relief) have also contributed greatly to the work of JEDRO. In the early weeks, Rev. Claudia, Roxanne Bucaria and NCCJ staff helped to set up the office.

JEDRO has been focusing on two results of the triple disaster: radiation and trauma. Radiation contamination from the meltdown of the three reactors at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant will be a concern for years to come. JEDRO's mission is to support those victims who are in, or have been evacuated from, areas with heavy contamination. Overseas contributions have allowed JEDRO to provide stationary and hand-held radiation measurement devices for soil, food (including breast milk and water) and air to several locations. Stationary spectrometers operated by the Asian Rural Institute

(ARI—located in Nasu, Tochigi Prefecture, 110 km southwest of Daiichi) and Iwaki Citizens Radioactivity Measurement Center “Tarachine” (located in the city of Iwaki, 50 km south of Daiichi) enable farmers to make all-important decisions about crops and other products, and consumers to accurately measure contamination levels of items; hand-held Geiger counters distributed to middle and high schools throughout Fukushima have enabled those responsible for the care of children to monitor their local environments for radiation “hot spots.”

Also as part of its role of supporting locally initiated projects, JEDRO has facilitated funding for Tohoku HELP, a Sendai-based inter-faith organization engaged in relief efforts since March 18th. One of this project's major concerns has been the spiritual and mental care of survivors. Tohoku HELP is addressing this concern with its “Care of the Heart” project. This includes telephone counseling, a regular 25-minute radio program that encourages survivors and addresses their various needs, and a traveling café. The traveling café visits evacuation centers, temporary housing complexes and community gathering areas and is made up of a Christian priest or pastor and/or a Buddhist monk who are on hand to listen to and support survivors; it is cleverly called “Café de Monk” (along with the religious reference, in Japanese “monku” means “to complain”).

Another aspect of Tohoku HELP's Care of the Heart activities, NCC JEDRO is also helping to fund the group's supply of counseling services to disaster evacuees relocated in temporary housing, with special attention to the elderly and persons with disabilities, and provision of warehouse space for displaced persons to store personal effects.



JEDRO staff and supporters sharing miso soup: (L to R) David McIntoshi, Yoko Ito, Sue Shibata, Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto, Roxanne Bucaria, Noriko Lau, Rev. Kei Jokura, Yutaka Akiyama

It is through the generosity of NCCJ member denominations, churches and organizations, many individual donors and volunteers in Japan and abroad, as well as its overseas partners that NCC JEDRO is able to reach out and touch survivors with God's love. In addition to the previously mentioned CWS and UMCOR, just a few other overseas donors include The United Church of Canada, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Korean Christian Service, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Japanese Evangelical Federation of Brazil, Ecumenical Relief Network of Korean Churches, Swiss East Asia Mission, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, Council of Churches in Malaysia, and Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany. We have been blessed with so many who support us all over the world: Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Switzerland, Germany, Australia, United States, Holland, Canada, United Kingdom, Nepal, Brazil, Taiwan, Czech Republic... we give thanks to our God for each and every one who has contributed through prayer, presents and participation.

In response to the vast scale and incalculable consequences of this disaster that continues to affect the livelihoods, health and spirits of many people, JEDRO will offer support for local initiatives for as long as there are the means and need.

For more information on JEDRO and how you can contribute, please contact JEDRO directly, or through your church or denomination.

Website: <http://jedro.jp/> (now being updated)

Phone: 03-6457-6213

Fax: 03-3232-0141

The following statement was released in September 2011 by NCCJ's Yasukuni Shrine Committee regarding the use of the March disaster as an excuse to amend the Constitution of Japan and reestablish the imperial system.

Statement on the Imperial System and the Great East Japan Earthquake Recovery & Nuclear Plant Issue

Japan's postwar constitution was enacted with profound remorse over the war the nation initiated while under imperial sovereignty and, accordingly, affirms that sovereignty rests with the people, advocates peace and commits to respect for fundamental human rights. However, although the existence and acts of the Emperor are strictly stipulated in relevant provisions in Chapter 1 of The Constitution of Japan, the word "symbol" in reference to the Emperor is only loosely interpreted. It is a fact that powers are now emerging that aim to return sovereignty to the emperor. With exception of the war years, so-called "royal visits" by the emperor and the imperial family have taken place since the early Meiji era (1868-) with only slight modifications and are a consistent centerpiece of the visual domination that is indispensable to the imperial system. However, these acts by the emperor are not the "acts in matters of state on behalf of the people" stipulated in Article 7, and are, therefore, in violation of the Constitution.

The excessive coverage of Japanese Self Defense Force activities in the areas affected by the disasters of March 11th, the promotion of nuclear energy by conservative influences and the imperial visits to the devastated region via Self Defense Force vehicles are the methods of the imperial system in visually dominating the recovery of the country through powers that continue to deny the Emperor's responsibility for the war. These visits to the disaster-stricken region by the Emperor and imperial family are the workings of the logic of what Mr. Tetsuya Takahashi has termed Yasukuni Shrine's "emotional alchemy." In other words, the war dead – victims of national policy – are enshrined as heroic spirits (gods) of Yasukuni Shrine and through the Emperor praying on the premises, emotions of bereaved families change "magically" from profound sorrow to joy. This is the deception behind honoring the spirits of the war dead. This type of act *by* the emperor and use *of* the emperor obscures the nature of the problem. That is to say that it obscures the mistakes and responsibility behind the policies of recovery and nuclear energy made by politicians, business leaders and the government.

And the present "honoring" of nuclear plant workers who are being exposed to radiation as "suicide squads" and "praiseworthy" is also in line with the logic of honoring those who happily went off to die for the Emperor with shouts of "Yasukuni!" In the meantime, those who should

truly be held responsible simply vanish from the scene. We believe that the emergence of the imperial state in the recovery effort is just around the corner. Therefore, we must be extremely vigilant that recovery is not connected to the next emperor's succession and enthronement (a ceremony in which the emperor becomes a god), a time in which democracy, peace and disarmament will be increasingly threatened. A recovery made from an underlying Yasukuni ideology that has been the trend of the imperial state since before the war is not a true recovery.

A democracy more genuine than ever before should emerge from this devastated land. Recovery should not be for the nation or for the Emperor, but should be founded on protecting the human rights and right to exist of each citizen as well as rigorously protecting Japan's Peace Constitution. However, the National Diet is now making significant moves toward constitutional revision by using the East Japan Earthquake as a pretext for adding an "emergency clause." This is the work of the "Parliamentarians' Alliance for Establishing a New Constitution" and a group of Diet members pursuing relaxation of the requirements for constitutional amendments set out in Article 96. On May 18th, the provisions by the "Research Commission on the Constitution of the House of Councillors" were forced through. With this, both Houses have enacted provisions and we have now entered into a critical political stage in which deliberation on amending the Constitution is legally possible. There is no need for an "emergency clause." The preamble of the Constitution stipulates, "We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want," and Articles 25, 26 and 27 guarantee the right to live. The Yasukuni Shrine Committee hereby warns that this trend, stemming from Japan's deeply rooted Emperor and imperial system, inhibits a recovery that values each individual's life based on Japan's Peace Constitution, and also further deepens confusion and puts Japan on a path toward the destruction of democracy.

September 27, 2011

Mr. Minoru Zushi
Chairperson
Yasukuni Shrine Committee
National Christian Council in Japan

From Kansai to Kanto to Tohoku with Global Board of General Ministries' (UMC) General Secretary and Information Officer

General secretary of the United Methodist Church's Global Board of General Ministries Dr. Thomas Kemper and Information Officer Ms. Melissa Hinnen were in Japan in November to meet missionaries and mission partners. They had a whirlwind trip through Kansai, Tokyo, Tochigi and the Tohoku area all carefully planned and led by UMC missionary, Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto. Here is a collage of their visit.



Dr. Ruth Grubel (Chancellor), Dr. Thomas Kemper (GBGM) and Rev. Musubi Tabuchi (Head Chaplin) at Kwansei Gakuin University

Dr. Kemper and Ms. Hinnen's first stop was in the Kansai region, where they participated in roundtable discussions at Kagawa Memorial Hall with mission partner representatives from the Buraku Liberation Center, Kagawa Center, Jesus Band Church, Korean Christian Center, and the Hyogo District of UCCJ (Kyodan).

Dr. Kemper spoke about the Methodist Church and Christianity in Japan at the 125th anniversary celebration of the arrival of missionary and Kwansei Gakuin University founder



Ecumenical Christian partners Round Table Discussion in Japan Christian Center (Tokyo)

Walter R. Lambuth. UMC missionary and Kwansei Chancellor Ruth Grubel together with Head Chaplain Musubi Tabuchi organized the visit and arranged for a talk on missions with the missionaries, chaplains, and professors at Kwansei Gakuin. A dinner was also held later with UMC missionaries located in Kansai.

In Tokyo, roundtable discussions were held with Japan Mission Partners – UCCJ, NCCJ, NCC JEDRO, KCCJ (Korean Christian Church in Japan) and Church World Service – as well as Second Harvest Japan (re-distributor of food to those living below poverty level) concerning relief projects in Tohoku, to which UMC has been a very generous contributor.



ARI's 39th Commencement Ceremony with participants from around the world, staff, Rev. Kenichi Otsu (ARI Director, 2nd from left), Rev. Dr. Toshiro Takami (ARI Founder, 4th from left) and Dr. Kemper

Dr. Kemper and Ms. Hinnen also visited Aoyama Gakuin University where they were escorted by missionary Rev. Dr. Paul Shew who shared with them the important role Christian education plays in the lives of students in Japan. See the GBGM article http://gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=6147.

After Tokyo, the team traveled north up to Tochigi Prefecture where Dr. Kemper gave the commencement speech to the 19 graduates of Asian Rural Institute's agricultural and leadership training program. Referring to a program marked by tumult due to the effects of the earthquake and radiation, Dr. Kemper told the participants, "I see your work in the days and years ahead as the harvest – the bountiful increase produced by what has taken root here even in this year of displacement and uncertainty."

(Cont'd on p. 6)

Book Review

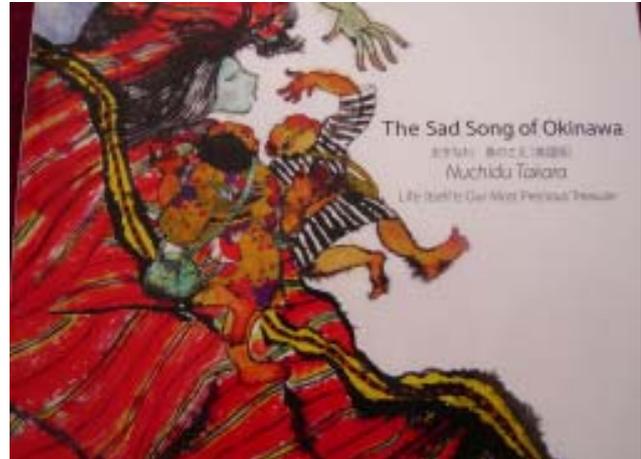
“The Sad Song of Okinawa”

Authors/Illustrators: Toshi and Iri Maruki
 Publisher: R.I.C. Publications

This children’s book tells the story of the Battle of Okinawa through the eyes of Tsuru, only seven years old when the war consumed Okinawa. It was written and vividly illustrated by the husband and wife team of Toshi and Iri Maruki who are known worldwide for their depictions of war and advocacy for peace.

“The Sad Song of Okinawa” starts out in an almost fairy tale-like manner with a young girl and her little brother surrounded by a loving family in rural Okinawa. Colors and scenes are bright and full of life and joy. Sadly, however, it isn’t long before colors darken and the reader can sharply sense the encroaching war. Tsuru’s grandfather sings a song of the sanctity of life as familiar and peaceful days on the family farm come to an end. With the arrival of war, Tsuru and her extended family are forced to flee not only the bombs of the Americans but also the brutality of the desperate Japanese forces. The story follows the family through the terror, destruction and senselessness of war, reminding us all that life is indeed a precious treasure.

Rev. Robert Witmer, a missionary with United Church of Canada at the UCCJ Dohoku Centre in Hokkaido, translated the postscript of this book. Rev. Witmer emphasizes the importance of “The Sad Song of Okinawa” as an instrument in not only promoting peace, but also helping children to



understand the horrors of war. It is intended for children at least 8 – 9 years old (depending on the maturity of the child) and should be read with an adult. This book would also be an excellent tool for peace educators and learners or teachers of the English language. It includes a CD with a reading of the story as well as two songs from Okinawa.

“The Sad Song of Okinawa” is available over the internet in the original Japanese or in the English translation for ¥2,500.

Dohoku Centre is a rural mission center with a focus on God, humanity and the soil through issues such as sustainable agriculture and human rights advocacy for the native Ainu people of Hokkaido. For more information, see Dohoku Center on Facebook.

From Kansai to Kanto... *(Continued from p. 3)*

The trio then headed up to Sendai to meet with Tohoku HELP staff and local pastors to discuss relief work proposals. UMCOR has funded various Tohoku HELP projects through NCC JEDRO (see article on proceeding pages), benefitting many in the region. Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek (UCC), director of the Emmaus Center’s Sendai Christian Student Center and at the frontline of relief work since the beginning, interpreted.

Ms. Hinnen and Dr. Kemper visited Rev. Isaku Arai of Natori Church (Kyodan), located just outside of Sendai. The city of Natori suffered immense damage from the earthquake and tsunami, and some members of the church were killed. Rev. Arai spoke to them about the tsunami, devastation and relocation of church members. Afterward, Dr. Kemper and Ms. Hinnen visited some of the temporary housing for the evacuees.



Rev. Isaku Arai explains areas hit by the tsunami to Ms. Hinnen and Dr. Thomas Kemper

Interview with NCCJ Acting General Office Secretary Rev. Hiroko Ueda

JCAN: Where were you born? Did you have any siblings?

Rev. Ueda: I am from Tokyo, and am the oldest of five children.

JCAN: How did you become a Christian?

Rev. Ueda: It was due to my mother's influence. She took us all to Sunday school each week. My mother was a Christian. My father was not. However, two years before his death, he became a Christian and was baptized. That was in 2003.

JCAN: Where did you go to school?

Rev. Ueda: I attended Ferris Women's College, a Christian mission school in Yokohama where I studied Japanese literature. After graduation, I worked for a company and married a Christian man, a graduate of International Christian University in Mitaka, Tokyo. Then I attended Tokyo Union Seminary for four years. Afterward I had the opportunity to study at Boston Women's Center and to pursue an

a minority as a pastor's husband. There is no support network for him. After graduating from ICU, he worked at the YMCA and now works at a Christian NGO. He is supportive of my ministry. Women pastors still have a long way to go but the situation is improving, I believe. We have a women pastors' support group in the Kyodan and once a year we have a gathering or a retreat. About 30 to 40 women pastors attend each year. We usually meet in Atami, but this year we will go to Sendai for our retreat to encourage the women pastors in the Tohoku region. They will not have to pay for the retreat.

JCAN: Do you have any children?

Rev. Ueda: We have one son, Takenosuke, age 16, who attends Meiji Gakuin High School.

JCAN: What have been some of your past vocations?

Rev. Ueda: I taught math-related courses at Keisen University for three years. Then I was the general secretary at Council on Cooperative Missions (COC) for six years, and the executive secretary of Ecumenical Ministries of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) for eight years. The first four years I held the posts at COC and Kyodan concurrently.

JCAN: Where do you attend church?

Rev. Ueda: I attend Ginza Church, which is known as the "mother church of Kyodan" because of its long history. I was a temporary pastor for eight months at Nishi Kokubunji Church as well.

JCAN: When did you become NCCJ's Acting General Office Secretary?

Rev. Ueda: I assumed the post in 2010, thinking it was only for two months. At the end of that period, the appointment was extended one year. However, at the time of the March 11 triple disaster, NCCJ was in the midst of restructuring. In fact, the board was meeting on the restructuring issue just when the earthquake struck!

JCAN: What are your hopes for NCCJ?

Rev. Ueda: I hope that our ecumenical relationships continue to grow stronger. We are very thankful for all the international support during this time of crisis in Japan and greatly appreciate the prayers. We ask that everyone continue to pray for Japan during this long period of recovery.



Rev. Hiroko Ueda on the left with other NCCJ friends and staff

STM degree (*Master of Sacred Theology*) and a Th.D (*Doctor of Theology*) at Boston University. My field was comparative religions. However, I did not finish my Th.D because my father became sick and I returned to Japan. After seminary I worked at Kakinokizaka Church in Meguro.

JCAN: Was it or is it hard to be a woman pastor in Japan?

Rev. Ueda: Of course! Only 20% of the pastors in the Kyodan are women, which is actually much higher than any of the other denominations in Japan. Sometimes it is difficult for women pastors to find a church where they can serve. A number of women pastors are married to other pastors. Other women pastors are single. Very few are married to non-ordained spouses. My husband is a layperson so is

Christian News Highlights

NCCJ Staff Adapt to Meet New Needs

As you can well imagine, this year has brought with it various changes in the staff and structure of NCCJ due to the financial restraints mentioned in JCAN's Spring 2011 issue as well as March's triple disaster.

Some NCCJ staff members were reassigned with the inception of the NCC Japan Ecumenical Disaster Response Office (JEDRO) in June this year. You can find more information on JEDRO in this issue, but Rev. Kei Jokura (Japan Baptist Convention), Rev. Heo Baekki (Korean Christian Church in Japan), "retired" UMC missionary George Gish (AVACO) and Rev. Isamu Koshiishi (Anglican/Episcopal Church in Japan) are all now assisting with NCCJ's disaster response. Rev. Hiroko Ueda (Kyodan) continues her role as Acting General Office Secretary until April 2012. Ms. Kazuko Hashioka (Anglican/Episcopal Church in Japan) is now serving as the NCCJ accountant. In mid-April, Ms. Akemi Sagara (Kyodan) joined as the new administrative assistant and only full-time office staff. Ms. Terumi Sasamoto (Kyodan) is our "multi-purpose" staff, working on the World Day of Prayer committee, handling arrangements for the Article 9 Conference, and assisting Rev. Ueda in a variety of other ways.

Publication responsibilities continue in the artistic hands of Mr. Toshiyuki Mineda (Kyodan). And in May, Ms. Roxanne Bucaria (Tokyo Union Church / UMC lay member from Sacramento, Ca.) was employed to assist with translation and overseas correspondence until the end of January 2012.

Preparation Now Underway for the 38th General Assembly of the National Christian Council in Japan

On March 26th – 27th, 2012 we will be holding our 38th General Assembly at St. Andrew's Church in Tokyo. This triennial Assembly will include member denominations and organizations as well as guests from international NCCJ organizations. From 4:00 pm on the 26th we will be having a panel discussion concerning the triple disaster. Later, at 6:00 pm that evening, a reception will be held with NCCJ committee members as well as members of various civic groups and faiths in attendance. Although the Assembly will primarily be in Japanese, if you are interested in attending and require interpretation, we may be able to arrange this service if we are advised in advance.

For more information, please contact NCCJ Office Manager, Ms. Sagara, at 03-3203-0372 (Japanese only) or general@ncc-j.org (English or Japanese).

Please, Use Our Resources!

There is a wealth of published resources available for reference purposes at the NCCJ office in Waseda, mainly in Japanese but with some English and Korean. Christian magazines and newsletters from various viewpoints and regions are available, including World Council of Churches, Ecumenical News International, Christian Conference of Asia, *Observer* (the United Church), *World Mission* (Catholic) and *Praxis* (World Student Christian Federation). There are also various theological books on topics of faith and social justice. Files, pamphlets, books and videos (yes, very analog!) line the shelves and cover human rights and political issues: gender equality, foreigners/refugees/Koreans in Japan, Buraku caste, death penalty, militarism, comfort women, Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan, nuclear power, peace and more. While understanding that the NCCJ staff has limited English language skills, you are always welcome to stop by and borrow these resources.

Great Hanshin Earthquake Remembered

A prayer service was held at Kobe Church (UCCJ) at 6:00 p.m. on January 17 in memory of the Great Hanshin Earthquake that occurred at 5:46 AM on the same date in 1995. An estimated 6,434 people were killed, while 300,000 were left homeless due to the earthquake which was 7.2 on the Richter magnitude scale. Rev. Mitsugu Shinmen, originally from the Kobe area but now a professor at Miyagi Gakuin Women's University in the Tohoku region, spoke about his experience living through both disasters. During the service of hymns and prayer, he preached about the dire situation in Tohoku. Rev. Shinmen emphasized the importance of Christians in particular to share the pain of those suffering in Tohoku. Around 230 people gathered for this ecumenical service of remembrance. Other services of remembrance were held at Kwansei Gakuin University in Nishinomiya earlier in the week and throughout Kobe.

News from International Churches

Please keep all international churches and pastors in prayer as they face changing demographics and economics here in Japan.

West Tokyo Union Church Pastor Claudia Heads Southwest

After almost 17 years serving as the pastor to West Tokyo Union Church, and 19 years at NCCJ, Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto has moved to Kobe to serve as outreach missionary to the Kobe Jesus Band Church (UCCJ) at the Kagawa Memorial Hall. Rev. Susan Townsley (UCC) and

Rev. Teresa Sherrill (Mennonite) are now sharing pastoral duties at WTUC.

Tokyo Union Church

Rev. Barry Dawson Moves out West

In June, Pastor Barry (PCUSA) ended his combined total of eight years at TUC to serve as a missionary with the Reformed Church of America at the Protestant Church of Oman. While Rev. Matthew Hardin (PCUSA) continues to minister at TUC, Rev. Randy Mundt (ELCA) is assisting the church through this time of transition as the interim pastor.

St Paul International Lutheran Church

Rev. Kevin Powell Arrives from the North

Rev. Powell, a native of Canada, was installed as the newly called pastor of St. Paul's on November 20th.

Other News...

Bazaar Held on Behalf of Tohoku Residents with Disabilities



Selling items from Tohoku at Kagawa Memorial Hall's Annual Bazaar

Residents of Tohoku with physical and mental disabilities have lacked a place to sell their handmade goods since the March 11th disaster, significantly affecting their livelihoods. Kagawa Memorial Hall in Kobe has offered to help sell these goods on their behalf, then returning proceeds to them. A bazaar was held at Kagawa on Nov. 5.

Prayer Service Held at Kagawa Memorial Hall in Kobe

Japanese Christians held a prayer service for peace Dec. 7 in Kagawa Memorial Hall in observance of the 70th anniversary of the Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. The service also was in memory of Kagawa Memorial Hall's namesake, Toyohiko Kagawa, a Christian social activist, and E. Stanley Jones, the well-known Methodist missionary who founded Christian ashrams worldwide, in-

cluding in Japan. Not only did Kagawa advocate peace, he also collaborated with Jones, a Princeton classmate, to attempt to broker a political peace agreement by arranging for a meeting between the Japanese government and US president Franklin Roosevelt. The event never fully materialized before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. On his first visit after World War II, Japan hailed Jones with banners saying, "Welcome to the Apostle of Peace." The two men, both nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, continued to support peace events after the war.

For more info on Kagawa, go to this power point translated by UMC missionary Rev. Dr. Tim Boyle:
http://core100.net/lab/pdf_siry_o/aitokyodo_eng.pdf

Peace Service Held in Hiroshima

A peace service was also held on Dec. 8 in Hiroshima with former general secretary of NCCJ Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto speaking. The title of the talk was "Creating a Peace Community in Northeast Asia." Rev. Yamamoto is presently working as a chaplain and professor of Christianity at Kansei Gakuin in Nishinomiya (Kobe area).

Christian Peace Network (Heiwa Net) Working Diligently for Peace

Heiwa Net is a member of the planning committee for "Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" (Sayonara Gempa-tsu), an anti-nuclear group pro-natural energy spawned from the Fukushima Daiichi disaster. On December 10, an anti-nuclear rally was held in Hibiya Park featuring Nobel laureate in literature, Kenzaburo Oe. Tani Daiji, Catholic bishop of Saitama, also was given the opportunity to speak, a surprising choice for a non-Christian organization in Japan. He explained that "out of respect for God, humans have to safeguard creation" and insisted that we "should get away not only from our dependence on atomic energy, but also from our addiction to electricity." An estimated 5,500 concerned citizens attended the rally with many joining the march afterward. Participants ranging from mothers pushing babies in strollers to grandparents, Buddhists and Catholics to environmentalists and labor safety staff marched past TEPCO (Toden), through Ginza and past Tokyo Station. Currently, Sayonara Gempatsu is collecting signatures for an anti-nuclear / pro-clean energy petition with a goal of 10 million! Upcoming events include a rally on February 11 at Yoyogi Park and a protest in Fukushima on the one-year anniversary. (<http://sayonara-nukes.org/english/>)

Members of Heiwa Net and other Christian organizations joined in a December 14 protest on Japan's use of sexual slavery during World War II. This day marked the 1,000th Wednesday a weekly demonstration has been held in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul requesting Japan to

(Cont'd on p. 12)

Buddhists, Muslims and Christians Gather in Okinawa for the 3rd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution



“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on 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.

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 belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

—The Constitution of Japan: Article 9

With the preservation and global-awareness of Article 9 at its core, in 2007 a fellowship of Buddhist and Christian leaders held the Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution in Tokyo at a time when there were serious political efforts to altogether eliminate the article in order to further militarize Japan. Organizers never envisioned a second conference (2009 in Seoul, Korea), let alone a third one. However, in light of continued attempts to alter or remove Article 9, to increase the strength and range of the Japanese Self Defense Forces and, finally, to expand the US military presence in Asia, the need for this conference remains. The 3rd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution was held in Okinawa from October 4 – 7, 2011, followed by a press conference in Tokyo on October 8.

Even as it was written and approved in 1947, Article 9 has never been fully realized in Japan, in letter or in spirit, due to the constant presence of US military forces since 1945 and the inception of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954. And within Japan, the traditionally non-militaristic Prefecture of Okinawa is sadly recognized as the farthest removed from the ideals of Article 9: the islands of Okinawa host over 70% of the U.S. Forces in Japan in a prefecture that makes up 0.6% of Japan’s total land mass, is home to a mere 1% of the nation’s population and is constantly ranked



Participants attach messages to fence at proposed site for Henoko base.



David McIntosh and Ven. Thanomsing Kosolanavin at the fence between Camp Schwab and Henoko.

as the poorest in the country. The recent increase in SDF bases and soldiers further militarizes the land of a people that have been trying to escape from the shadow of war and live in peace since the end of World War II.

A total of 220 participants from 44 different Christian, Buddhist and Islamic denominations and organizations came to Okinawa from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, South Africa, Switzerland, Italy, Canada and the US. Overseas participants arrived early and with some Japanese participants spent the first day and a half learning about the history and present reality of Okinawa. They

learned of the experience of Okinawans during the Battle of Okinawa through visits to the Himeyuri Peace Museum (a memorial to high school girls who were forced into the war effort to perform as nurses for the Imperial Forces, serving in cave hospitals in wretched conditions, and then sent out of the caves and onto the battlefield to die in the final days of the war), the Peace Memorial Park (featuring a memorial with the names of over 240,000 victims of the Battle of Okinawa, including Okinawans, Taiwanese, Koreans, as well as soldiers of Japan and the Allied Forces) and lastly, Abuchiragama Cave (a 270-meter long cave that initially housed military staff and civilians, but later included a field hospital with nearly 1,000 dying and wounded soldiers).

In order to understand the present reality of Okinawa citizens and their feelings of yet again being treated as persona non-grata in their own country, participants were told about and shown the ubiquitous presence and effects of both US and Japanese military forces. Stopping at a hill overlooking Futenma Marine Corps Air Station in the city of Ginowan, it became abundantly clear why this facility is referred to as “the most dangerous base in the world.” When the airfield was developed after the war, Okinawans were forcibly moved off their land without being told that it would not be returned. Therefore, land owners relocated as closely to their land as possible, resulting in residential homes being built immediately opposite a military runway. Henoko, the proposed location for a new air station, is a beautiful, environmentally-sensitive bay that the US has suggested could be filled in as a replacement for Futenma. Participants



Mr. Asao Takaesu talks about reclaiming his land



Mr. Takaesu's land on SDF base



Mr. Shigeaki Kinjo shares his experience as a boy during the Battle of Okinawa

visited the protest encampment next to the proposed base site, where citizens have been staging sit-ins and other forms of peaceful protest for almost 15 years. They now await the results of an environmental assessment conducted by the central government that could determine base relocation. (This is the same assessment/report to which Satoshi Tanaka, former head of the Defense Ministry Okinawa Defense Bureau, was referring when he said to a reporter who asked on November 28 about the expected timing of the report's release, "Would you give prior warning when you are about to rape someone?" and that was submitted by the Bureau to the governor's office on a pre-dawn morning at the very end of December to avoid protesters.)

Participants also were taken to a Japanese Ground Self Defense Force base on which lies a 333-sq. meter piece of land owned by Mr. Asao Takaesu. As is the situation for so many throughout Okinawa when a military facility (US or SDF) is built on their land, property is confiscated and rent paid to the land owner by the Japanese Government. Though relatively unknown, civil law in Japan provides for the return of land to its owner if rental payments are refused for over ten years and the 20-year rental agreement is rejected at the

time of renewal. This is much more generous than the option available to those whose land was confiscated by the US military: if these owners reject the agreement their land is forcibly expropriated under the “Special Measures Law for US Military Bases.” With perseverance and determination, Mr. Takaesu was finally able to reclaim the land that had been handed down to him through the generations. An SDF escort accompanied participants from the base entrance to his strip of land, where all were treated to Okinawan hospitality with singing and dancing. Through the start of what was to be a two-day downpour, Mr. Takaesu relayed his story and struggles as well as his dream to make his “Churasa (“Beautiful” in the Okinawa dialect) Garden,” into a peace park. As visitors left his patch of peace with warmed hearts and soaked feet, they added a shovelful of dirt to the newly planted Article 9 Peace Tree.

With a deepened understanding of Okinawa’s history and present-day reality, participants then assembled at Okinawa Christian University for the Conference and heard reports and personal accounts of participants from Okinawa, Korea and the Philippines, all of whom are struggling against US military presence and/or growing national militarization. Making an unforgettable impact was the story told by Rev. Shigeaki Kinjo, a young boy when the Battle of Okinawa took place. To a silent room he spoke about the “forced mass killings” and how he was duped into participating. He feels he was spared in order to share his story, the message



Participants work on conference statement

Christian News... *(Continued from p. 9)*

recognize and compensate the former “comfort women.” In solidarity, protesters in Tokyo formed a human chain around the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Marking the Christmas season with prayers for peace, Heiwa Net held its annual “Caroling for Peace” service at Tokyo Union Church on December 16. After the service, participants joined in a peace walk to Shibuya – singing Christmas carols and handing out prayer cards that included Japan’s renunciation of war in Article 9 of the Constitution.



Junaid Ahmed and other participants helped to plant the Article 9 peace tree

of God’s forgiveness and to work diligently to realize peace. After completion of the presentations, participants of the inter-religious conference gathered into Korean, Japanese and English language groups to work on the previously drafted final statement; they later came back together and, within a few hours, miraculously combined the different inputs into a single statement that was adopted unanimously to enthusiastic applause.

In addition to this powerful final statement, a separate statement proposed by Korean participants was adopted by the Conference to protest the building of a new naval base on Jeju Island (earlier named the “Island of Peace” by the Ko-

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rean government) and persons of faith were called upon to attend a “solidarity visit” to the island. The solidarity visit took place in early December with 10 participants from the Okinawa Article 9 Conference joining other foreign and Korean participants.

The Article 9 Conference statement was delivered to the office of the Governor of Okinawa followed by a peace procession of 100 participants marching to the steady beat of drums carried by Buddhist monks. A member of the Buddhist community passed out fliers and spoke to onlookers explaining about the “colorful” assembly of marchers.

Writing for the Common Global Ministries Board, Rev. Xiaoling Zhu commented: “...this peace article is not just a provision for the Japanese people only; it also serves as an international peace instrument towards reductions in military spending, promotion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, ending violence against women, supporting conflict prevention, and mitigating the negative environmental impact of the military... it’s a gift to the world for peace!”

Returning participants remarked that the Article 9 Conference has grown in relevance over the last four years, as is shown in the strength of the conference statement. Through the hard work and extraordinary preparation of the Okinawa planning committee and its supporters, which included pastors, monks, laypeople, civic activists, as well as staff and student volunteers from Okinawa Christian University (host of the conference), the history of Okinawa was brought to life, and the current situation made palpable. Deeply touched

by the Okinawan people’s absolute desire for peace and made painfully aware of the injustices of the present reality, each participant took home with them a renewed desire to not just preserve the letter of Article 9, but to realize its spirit in Okinawa and around the world. Thanks also go to the Korean-Japanese, Korean-English and Japanese-English interpreters, including ecumenical co-workers in Japan David McIntosh (United Church of Canada), Martha Mensendiek and Jeffrey Mensendiek (Kyodan, CBGM).

The Article 9 Conference was financially supported by various local and international religious organizations that share in the passion to protect Article 9 and its message of settling disputes through peaceful means. These groups include Niwano Peace Foundation, Zai-Nippon Interboard Senkyoshi Shadan, United Church of Canada, Common Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), Evangelical Church in Germany, the Evangelisches Missionwerk in Sudwestdeutschland, and NCC Korea.

The conference closed with a strong sense of community and high hopes for a 4th Article 9 Conference in 2013 (tentatively scheduled to be held in the Philippines), in addition to a deep desire to realize the goals of the conference statement.

(Information on the first Article 9 conference in 2007 and the ensuing statement can be found in the Summer 2008 issue of JCAN on the NCCJ website. The Jeju Statement referred to above will also soon be on the website.)

Japan Women’s Conference

60 women from all over Japan gathered for the 2012 Japan Women’s Conference on January 20-22 at Amagi Sanso in Izu. The chairperson for this year was Debbie Umipig-Julian, a UMC missionary. The keynote speaker was Koko Kondo, an A-bomb victim from Hiroshima known as “Hibakusha.” (Her father, Rev. Tanimoto, was written about in



John Hershey’s book, “Hiroshima” where Koko is also mentioned as an 8 month old baby.) The Japan Women’s Conference has been held every year for the last 55 years. The dates for next year are January 25, 26, 27. To see photos or to register go to: <http://wocon.net/>



The logo for the conference was designed by Debbie’s husband, Ronald Julian. The symbols included a “W” and a “C” and the women’s symbol combined with with the sign of the cross.

Websites for Updates on Life and Work in Tohoku

Are you wondering what type of work is now being done and how life is for those in Tohoku almost one year after the disaster? Do you find yourself with extra time or finances to contribute to rehabilitation work? Here are just a few English websites that you can refer to for in-depth information on day-to-day life and ways you can serve.

- **Asian Rural Institute** – ARI is a Christian-based training center that educates rural leaders from Asia and Africa in organic farming and leadership techniques through a nine-month program. Staff are facing the extensive quake damage to their buildings and radiation contamination to their soil with faith, courage and innovation.
<http://www.ari-edu.org/english/index.html>
- **Rev. Jeffrey Mensendiek** – Living in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, Rev. Mensendiek is a UCC missionary working at the Emmaus Center as director of youth activities. This is a blog relating the stories of people and churches in Tohoku.
<http://www.globalministries.org/news/eap/japan-missionaries.html>
- **Church World Service** – CWS is in partnership with NCCJ and has been actively supporting organizations involved with recovery efforts in quake and radiation-contaminated areas.
<http://www.cwsasiapacific.org/updates> <http://www.actalliance.org/stories/cws-at-work-in-japan>
- **Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan)** – Kyodan continues its dedicated work in restoring local communities and churches and has an office on the ground floor of the Japan Christian Center.
<http://uccj-e.org/>, http://www.uccj-jishin.jpn.org/?page_id=583
- **Disaster Relief Christian Network** – The work of DRC Network is to “collect, manage and disseminate information in a suitably organized form” and its network consists of a number of international Christian organizations.
<http://drcnet.jp/en/>
- **Second Harvest Japan** – Is the first food bank to be established in Japan and has been at the forefront of providing aid throughout the devastated region. If your church or group needs food for distribution to those in need, please contact Charles McJilton (charles@2hj.org). They supply food at no cost and can arrange logistics to get the food to where it needs to be. If you are interested in a group/individual project to send food packages to families in the Tohoku region, please contact Ruby Sakuma (ruby@2hj.org).
<http://www.2hj.org>

Food for the Soul: Words from Dr. Thomas Kemper

Food for thought: Quotes from Dr. Thomas Kemper’s Christmas Message to United Methodist Missionaries based on Isaiah 9:5-6 (this message is appropriate for all of us in ministry; especially during this crisis in Japan)

“Through your work, you are building a path that Isaiah prophesized—a radical path to liberation, peace, and justice. A path that is possible because of the birth of a small and helpless child. The light of the world lies in the hands of someone as powerless as a newborn baby. All authority rests upon these innocent, small shoulders, promising light—not darkness; life—not death; peace—not war; and freedom instead of oppression.

In a world filled with violence and destruction, I am always grateful for those moments when I catch a glimpse of the peace of the Christ child. Where in your work have you seen glimpses of this vision? I saw a glimpse in my recent

visit to Japan, where the church is responding to the tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear disaster that shook the country in March. I saw a glimpse at the Asian Rural Institute, where in spite of challenges they are continuing to plant for abundant harvests in health, justice and peace... What a mighty vision of the end of violence and oppression through the birth of this tiny human being. The life of the world is in the hands of a newborn baby. It seems unbelievable - too radical. We struggle with this message.

And yet the prophet says: The world cannot be changed by power and might but through a helpless baby who is full of innocence and vulnerability.”

Final Statement of the 3rd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9

From Seoul to Okinawa
October 7, 2011 - Okinawa Christian University

Article 9 of Japan's Peace Constitution

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 the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

1) The 3rd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution gathered 220 participants from Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, South Africa, Switzerland, Italy, Canada and the USA to see and hear the experiences of the Okinawan people. The conference was held at the Okinawa Christian University from October 5 through 7th, 2011. With our thoughts turned toward the victims of disasters arising from the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami, and Fukushima Number 1 Nuclear Power Plant incident, we prayerfully reaffirm the sanctity of life, and hereby issue this Statement.

2) Article 9 of the Constitution has never been realized in Japan and least of all in Okinawa, which holds roughly 74% of American military facilities as well as other Japan Self Defense Forces bases in just 0.6% of Japanese land. Furthermore, former Prime Minister Hatoyama's declaration that he would have the military bases in Okinawa moved out of the prefecture or to another country has not been realized. Okinawa's bases have not only been retained, but new bases are being constructed. On Jeju Island—designated an “Island of Peace” by the government of Korea—a new naval base is being built by the government and armed forces. We, the Asia Inter-Religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution, categorically reject foreign military basing arrangements, be it the physical bases in Okinawa and the naval base in Jeju, Korea, or unhampered access to land, air, and naval facilities as contained in the Visiting Forces Agreement between the Philippines and the United States.

3) For the foregoing reasons, be it resolved that -

- The US and Japanese governments must honor Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and we strongly oppose any attempt by the Japanese Government to revise the same.
- We demand the Japanese government that the “sympathy budget” allocations toward the U.S. be

abolished and reassigned to relief efforts in disaster-stricken areas.

- We call upon communities of faith in the United States to consider their complicity as US citizens in US policies toward Okinawa, examine their consciences, and join in advocacy for the closure of Futenma and other bases in Okinawa as well as the abandonment of plans to build a new base in Henoko.
- We demand that the proposed plan of the construction of the bases of Self Defense Forces in Miyako and Yaeyama be abandoned.
- We demand the total abolition of nuclear weapons and challenge the continuous use of nuclear energy in all its applications.
- Recognizing the horrific human toll of U.S. wars, expansionism, and hegemony, we call upon all persons of faith to join the global peace movement and oppose the imperial militarization of Asia, the Middle East and beyond.

4) In the statement issued in Seoul, Korea, on the occasion of the 2nd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution, we affirmed that, Article 9 is more than ever relevant for regional and international relations, and is forward-looking. It can be seen as the core value of a just, peaceful, and sustainable Asian community.

5) Despite Japan regaining independence in 1952, Okinawa has remained under U.S. military rule for another 20 years. All the U.S. military bases there remain intact. During this period, a large movement arose in Okinawa demanding the return of Okinawa to Japan, whose Constitution contained the war-renouncing Article 9. This wish was finally realized in 1972, in the so-called “Return of Okinawa.” However, this was essentially only a transfer of administrative rights, which resulted in the betrayal of Okinawa's hopes and desires. As Okinawa was being returned to a Japan that had the Three Non-Nuclear Principles,

these principles should have applied to Okinawa as well, but the governments of the United States and Japan struck a secret agreement that left the portage of nuclear arms into Okinawa up to the discretion of the U.S. What Okinawa desired was to be a land without military bases, or at least “comparable to the mainland” in level. But even after the transfer of administrative rights, the situation of military base presence in Okinawa did not change. Furthermore, Okinawa has been made more “comparable to the mainland” by the construction of new military bases for the Japan Self Defense Forces. In recent years this military presence is even threatening to expand to the regions of Miyako and Yaeyama.

6) The post-war government of Japan has continually accepted the presence of U.S. and JSDF military bases, thus contravening Article 9. Removal of “the world’s most dangerous base” at Futenma and its return to Okinawans still has no schedule. Despite the opposition of 80% of Okinawa’s citizens, the government of Japan is attempting to build a new military base to replace Futenma, which will destroy and pave over the sea at Henoko. The government is also destroying its own rain forest by building a helipad in Takae. Both places support biodiversity that is 50 to 60 times as rich as the coastal waters and forests in the mainland. Furthermore, U.S. forces are planning to deploy new Osprey planes to the yet-to-be-removed base at Futenma, as well as to various facilities being constructed further north. The government of Japan speaks of reducing the burden of military bases upon Okinawa, but the reality is that the functions of bases and military armaments are being strengthened.

7) With the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement, the military continues to cause daily suffering for the people of Okinawa. From these bases in Okinawa U.S. forces were sent into the Korean War, the Viet Nam War, the Gulf War, the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War. And ever since the Gulf War the Japan Self Defense Forces have joined and collaborated as one with U.S. forces in what can only be described as acts of war.

8) The governments of both Japan and the U.S. say that the bases on Okinawa are a deterrent force. But the the military forces on Okinawa are a threat to neighboring nations. We cannot watch silently while bombers and warships are sent out from this precious land, passed down from our peace-loving ancestors, to terrorize, destroy and kill the inhabitants in every region on this earth.

9) Arms cannot bring peace but respecting the rights of people can. In spite of the lies and fraudulent assertions of

both the Japanese and U.S. governments, we, as written in the Preamble of the Constitution of Japan, “have determined to preserve our security, and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.” We believe that there is a “nature that is true and real” in the peoples of all nations, and for this reason we resolve to continue walking forward towards a world without military bases.

10) Okinawa once had its own philosophical tradition of “non-military culture.” Through friendly relations and trade, not by arms, Ryukyu (Okinawa) established relations with various Asian countries. But in 1609 it came under the de facto rule of Japan’s Satsuma Clan, as a result of an invasion by Satsuma. This year marks the 402nd year from that date. In 1879 the Ryukyu Kingdom was again invaded, this time by the Meiji government, and was annexed by force to become part of Japan. This is what is known as the “Ryukyu Disposition,” and this year marks the 132nd year from that date. In the 15-year War, which began with the self-staged Manchurian “terrorist” Incident of 1931 and lasted until Japan’s surrender in 1945, Okinawa was sacrificed to ensure the continuity of the Japanese state system. The people of Okinawa were forced by the Imperial Japanese Army, deployed to defend Okinawa, to “Live Together and Die Together” with the military. During the Battle of Okinawa, in which land battles engulfed the island’s civilian inhabitants, massacres of local residents by Japanese forces, ejection of refugees from shelter caves, and “forced mass deaths” under military orders, occurred in many locations. The Japan Ministry of Education has shown a strong tendency to dilute such facts in Japanese school texts, giving rise even to court cases over the issue. Yet the Supreme Court found, in a 2011 judgment, that there were indeed Army orders to force “mass deaths” on the Islands of Zamami, Geruma, and Tokashiki

11) Holding the Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9 of the Japanese Peace Constitution here in Okinawa awakened us, people of many faiths, to the realities of the struggles of the Okinawan people. We truly pursue the realization of Article 9 in our own places, and walk together toward this realization. We commit ourselves to actively work to oppose the spread of American military bases across Asia and around the world and demand the closure of all military bases. We trust that the route to these aspirations can be found in each person’s faith. We pray for the realization of peace and take action to build peace through non-violence. The answer to violence is to embody and animate the spirit of Article 9.

— *Participants of the 3rd Asia Inter-religious Conference on Article 9*

NCCJ Ecumenical Prayer Calendar

National Christian Council in Japan asks for your prayers for the people involved with these churches, denominations, organizations, committees, events, ministries and concerns.

January

- 8 Japan Catholic Medical Association
Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service
- 15 NCCJ Commission on Faith & Order
- 18–25 Christian Unity Week
- 22 NCCJ Peace & Reconciliation Committee on East Asia
Remembering those who are victims of military bases
Peace and unification for the Korean Peninsula
- 29 Japan Baptist Union

February

- 5 Seeking freedom of religious belief
- 12 Anglican Episcopal Church in Japan
- 19 Japan Evangelical Association
Nippon Revival Association
- 26 World Day of Prayer (March 3) – Malaysia
NCCJ Women's Committee

March

- 4 International Women's Day (March 8)
- 11 Peace for survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery for the region
NCCJ Center for the Study of Japanese Religions (Kyoto)
- 18 East Asia Mission
Japan Christian Culture Society
Tokyo Bible Meeting (*Mukyukai* "Non-church" Group)
- 25 Remembering the victims of the WWII Battle of Okinawa (started March 26, 1945)

April

- 1 Palm Sunday
Japan Baptist Convention
- 8 **Easter**
God's reign on earth – a world without classism
- 15 Christian Political League Association of Christian Kindergartens
- 22 Victims of Chernobyl Nuclear Plant accident (April 26)
- 29 Removal of all bases on Okinawa

Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation (Int'l interfaith peace organization)

May

- 6 Asian Rural Institute
NCCJ Philippine Committee
NCCJ China Committee
- 20 NCCJ Buraku Discrimination Committee
NCCJ Christian Literature Publishing Society
Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)
Asia Sunday (CCA event)
- 27 **Pentecost**
Amending the "Basic Law on Foreign Citizens"
Foreign Residents Committee
Ecumenical Sunday

June

- 17 The Orthodox Church in Japan
AVACO (Christian communication center)
- 24 United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan)

July

- 1 Japan YMCA
- 8 Japan Free Methodist Church
International Christian University Church
- 15 German Speaking Protestant Church in Tokyo
German Midnight Mission
NCCJ German Church Relations Committee
- 22 NCCJ Youth Committee (Ecumenical Youth Movement)
- 29 Yokohama Union Church
Tokyo Union Church
West Tokyo Union Church
Kobe Union Church

August

- 5 Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki
NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee
- 12 End of WWII Memorial Day

- NCCJ Yasukuni Shrine Committee
- 19 Christian Network for Peace
- Inter-religious Peace Building Network
- 26 Victims of Sept. 1 Massacre of Koreans (*after 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake*)
- NCCJ Human Rights of Foreign Residents Committee

September

- 2 Asian Health Institute
- NCCJ's work on promotion of Japan's Peace Constitution
- 9 Collaboration between faiths in realizing peace in Palestine
- 16 World Council of Churches – International Day of Prayer for Peace (Sept. 21)
- 23 The Korean Christian Church in Japan
- 30 Remembering World Communion Sunday

October

- 7 ACT Alliance (world network of churches for humanitarian assistance)
- 21 Christian Education Week (Oct. 21 – 28)
- NCCJ Division of Christian Education
- International Christian Church (ICU)
- 28 Sayama Incident (*This case highlighted discrimination against Japan's Burakumin social minority.*)

November

- 4 Japan Christian Academy
- Japan Christian Council for Evangelism with the Blind
- 11 Persons with Disabilities Week (Nov. 11 – 17)
- NCCJ Committee on Persons with Disabilities and the Church
- Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church

- 18 NCCJ Urban/Rural Mission Committee
- Japan Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
- 25 Japan YWCA

December

- 2 AIDS Sunday
- 9 International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10)
- Remembering sexual minorities
- Abolition of the death penalty
- Japan Christian Women's Society (formerly the Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union)
- 16 International Migrants Day
- Christian Coalition for Refugees and Foreign Migrant Workers
- 23 NCCJ Commission on Theology and Mission



What is the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ)?

NCCJ is made up of 31 member and associate member churches, denominations and organizations. Christians make up a little less than 1% of the population of Japan, but have influenced this country in many ways through education, welfare, human rights, women's concerns, and peace advocacy. NCCJ networks with other Christian councils, particularly in other Asian countries, and is a member of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) as well as a related organization of the World Council of Churches. Working ecumenically and with people of other faiths in Japan and abroad, NCCJ is striving to bring justice and peace to our world today.



Website: <http://ncc-j.org/> (The NCCJ website is currently being updated. The English portion may not be accessible at this time.)

E-mail: general@ncc-j.org