



Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

Rev. Hitoshi and Satoko Adachi

ELCA Missionary and Associate

MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY NEW YEAR, and THANK YOU FROM KUMAMOTO

During the previous Advent Season in 2022, Hitoshi and Satoko experienced the chaotic season due to both of their mothers' passing. However, this past Advent they went through regular busy season. As previously reported, Pastors Sumimoto and Adachi preside over 50 Christmas services in December.

This year, Hitoshi and Satoko experienced a special Christmas pageant during the Kumamoto International Service. This was because more children (over 13 this year, double from the previous year) started attending Kid's program due to TSMC's (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) large, new facility being built in Kumamoto.

Thank you for your support and prayers for Hitoshi and Satoko to be able to spread the Good News in this dynamic city in Kumamoto.



THE LORD JESUS WAS ALSO BAPTIZED --- Reflection ---

Last year's calendar for the Christian church concluded the six-month long Season After Pentecost with the week of November 26th. Then, on December 3rd, the Advent Season of the new year began, and the seasons are continually changing.

Advent season lasted less than four weeks, Christmas season lasts less than two weeks, and the season after Epiph-

ny will last until Ash Wednesday, February 14th this year. Then it enters the season of Lent. During these changing seasons, Christians are guided through the year of the Lord, 2024, reflecting on the first year of nativity, baptism, death, and resurrection of the Lord.

The first Sunday in the season after the Epiphany is remembered as "Baptism of our Lord". On January 7th, we reflect upon Jesus' Baptism reading the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark. The Nativity of Jesus is only written in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. However, descriptions of the Lord's baptism are found in all four Gospels.

To coincide with the Nativity, there are many events such as Christmas Sales, Christmas Concerts, Christmas Parties etc. these secular events often obscure the importance of Jesus. However, the Baptism of the Lord is very meaningful. After all, the story is not of the Lord Jesus baptizing someone, but of him receiving it. It can be said that this event is deeply connected to our baptism.

At the beginning of every Sunday worship service in 2024, the entire congregation reads the theme scripture given to Kuwamizu Church this year, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" from Psalm 121. And on the first Sunday of this year, as we listen to the story of the Lord's baptism, may we be convinced that His help and salvation are given to us who are baptized, no matter our circumstances. Amen.

(Hitoshi wrote this reflection for the Kuwamizu January Newsletter in Japanese and provided an English translation for this Newsletter.)