



Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

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EASTER BLESSINGS and THANK YOU

Hitoshi's third anniversary of missionary life in Kumamoto just passed on April 30th and Satoko's May 28th anniversary is coming soon. They could not anticipate how drastically the world would change in three years, but this is the new normal. They feel God's Love and Mercy through the risen Lord who defeated death. They always thank you for your prayers and thoughts supporting God's ministry in Kumamoto.

Although they hear good news that vaccinations are going well in the States, almost none of their friends in Kumamoto received it except one member who attends International Worship and works for a hospital as a nurse. In these continued pandemic conditions, major Japanese cities are now experiencing the fourth wave of Covid-19. Even in this situation, Hitoshi & Satoko and people in the communities they interact are healthy at least.

The previous newsletter mentioned the concern for the International Service because of J3 transitions, but amazingly volunteers for the International Service appeared and God is allowing them to continue Sunday evening English services. However, challenges continue. Hitoshi and Satoko beg your pardon, again, for this short newsletter.

GOD WORKS AMONG SMALL CHILDREN RAISED IN NON-CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTS

In past newsletters starting in May 2020, it was repeatedly reported that children visited the Adachi's home almost every day. During visits children read easy Christian picture books, saw Icons, colored Easter eggs and so on in their living room. There have been opportunities for children to ask questions about Easter because most children have never celebrated it before. However, one day, one of the eldest junior high school girls, who comes most often, started to teach other younger children about the Bible, saying that the Bible is a best seller and is the most read book in the world. Hitoshi and Satoko don't remember when they said such things to that girl, but a phrase from a famous hymn, "Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see" comes to Hitoshi & Satoko's minds very often recently.

They may soon start telling more metaphorical Bible stories according to God's will.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

- Hitoshi's Reflection

We hear that more women are losing their jobs due to the pandemic, at least, in Japan. Looking at the United States, there has recently been explicit discrimination against Asians. Deeply rooted discrimination by sex, race, ethnicity, etc. are still occurring all over the world.

Hitoshi remembers the story of Rev. Stephen Bowman, who preached sermons to the ELCA congregation leaders in the United States over a decade ago. He often used the phrase "They Are Us," and made it the title of the book he published. When meeting with people from countries around the world trying to move to the United States, the title of the book makes people in the US remember that they were also immigrants. In other words, all the people living in the United States were immigrants, dating back to their ancestors.

Hitoshi had some experiences talking to the Navajo people, who are indigenous people. One of them told Hitoshi that he thinks his ancestors came from Mongolia through Alaska to North America around the 12th century. He also taught words with similar pronunciations in Japanese and Navajo, such as "acchi, meaning there", "kocchi, here", and "senaka, back". This made Hitoshi think that many of the Japanese and Navajo people had migrated from Mongolia to the Japanese islands and the North American continent through Alaska respectively.

Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Hitoshi thinks that we are told to put ourselves in the position of our neighbors. Even in Kumamoto, a local city in Japan, at grocery stores, they see many people who migrated from other countries, especially from South Eastern Asia. Hitoshi is now giving sermons to people in congregations in Kumamoto, most of them have lived in Kumamoto for generations, what if you were a person who recently moved from an overseas country? If you are a man, what if you were a woman? If you're a woman, what if you were a man? Or what if you were part of the minority gender? Jesus asks us to love our neighbor, remembering that God loves each and every one of us unconditionally, and that Jesus works with us to make everything good. Amen.

