



Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

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ELCA Missionary and Associate

THANK YOU FROM KUMAMOTO

As always thank you for your prayers, thoughts and support. In Japanese there is a word described in Chinese characters as 「三寒四温」 pronounced "San-Kan-Shi-On" The meaning of the first character 「三」 - San is "three", the second 「寒」 - Kan is "cold", the third 「四」 - Shi is "four", and the last 「温」 - On is Warm. The four letters together mean that it is cold for three days and warm for four days. This expression is used to describe the gradually warming season. It can be said that Kumamoto is just experiencing the time of "San Kan Shi On". I think that it also overlaps with the season of Lent and hopefully it parallels our life journey, too. May this coming Lent be richly blessed by our crucified Lord, Jesus Christ.

WELCOME AND FAREWELL J3s!

On Thursday morning, January 10th, Erin Ryan, Jordan H. Collins-Brown, and Erica Bryer arrived at Kumamoto airport accompanied by Paul Hoshizaki who serves the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association. Three days later, on Sunday January 13th, the Kumamoto church, Kyushu Gakuin and Kyushu Luther Gakuin hosted a welcome party with pastors, officers and volunteers from 14 churches in the Kumamoto area. Although it was a little early, a farewell party for Emma Nelson, Hannah Jensen-Reinke, and Randy Tollent was also held. These three people will leave Kumamoto after the last service on March 17th gave wonderful speeches in Japanese and made some people cry...may the Lord, Jesus Christ be with each person coming to Kumamoto and leaving Kumamoto!



CHARITY SALE AND CHARITY CONCERT

It seems unusual even in Japanese church, but there are three bazaars a year at Kuwamizu Lutheran Church where Satoko and Hitoshi are serving. Precisely speaking, the beginning of February and the beginning of July, two bazaars are three-day "Charity Sale" events, and in the beginning of November there is another bazaar called "Yokabuy Bazaar" where meals are served. "Yokabuy" is a combined word from Kumamoto dialect and English, I believe that means "purchasing good things." So from Saturday, February 9th, to Monday, February 11th, this time was a Charity Sale, focused on selling second hand winter clothes. Furthermore, as a meaningful coincidence, Hitoshi & Satoko's son, Shin, came to Kumamoto from Los Angeles, in early February and he played a piano solo charity concert at the event. Because Satoko and Hitoshi are the parents of Shin, this opinion is of course biased, but they believe the 85 people attending the concert were greatly moved by the performance.



A church hosting a bazaar three times a year may seem a little old-fashioned by the urban church in the US. However, Hitoshi & Satoko believe that re-selling gently used clothing and reducing waste helps the environment and makes God happy; it's a win-win scenario. At the end of the Charity Sale, about \$2,000 was raised which was the highest amount in years and the charity concert added another \$1,000.

The funds raised will support Jiaien facilities, Kibo No Ie (House of Hope in Osaka) and so on.



PASTORS' RETREAT, REFORMATION 502, AND

SEMINARIO Since Hitoshi and Satoko came to Kumamoto, Pastor Hitoshi has been blessed with learning opportunities. In February there were the following opportunities:

Pastors' Retreat from Feb. 4th through 6th: There were two foci of training in the three-day retreat. During last year UNESCO decided to add 12 sites, in southwestern, Japan to the World Heritage list.



These sites are linked to Japan's history of persecuting Christians. One of them is Sakitsu Village located on the Amakusa Islands in Kumamoto Prefecture. Pastors visited Sakitsu Church and met with Father Watanabe. This was the area that has suffered from ongoing decline, but due to its registration as a World Heritage site, there has been revitalization of the tourism industry and ultimately God makes people who visit the area realize their own sins. Another focus is a harassment study. Among congregations of United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) there have been several issues relating to gender inequality and harassment. Lutheran Pastors learned about how it occurs and how to deal with it from Rev. Natsuko Toda, who serves on the Missionary Cooperation Committee of UCCJ Kyushu District. Whether you are conscious of gender issues or children's issues, after the conference you realize that sin exists deeply within human beings.

Reformation 502: Pastors in the Kumamoto area have been in charge of learning about Reformation 500 for the past three years. Hitoshi was assigned to take charge of the final session on February 22nd. The theme was entitled "Together with Christ" which talked about the similarities between Martin Luther's "Justification through Faith by Grace Alone" and the Orthodox Church's concept of "Theosis". The reference literature was "Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther" by Carl E. Braaten (Editor), Robert W. Jenson (Editor). In the book, there were several papers but the sem-

inar focused on "Justification and Theosis in Lutheran Orthodox Perspective" by Tuomo Mannermaa.

Kyushu Seminario: There was another learning opportunity in the Kyushu District. Pastors took turns teaching each other. On Tuesday evening, February 26th, Pastor Mitsuchika Seki from Minamata Lutheran Church led a group of 10 people to teach about the book that discusses Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In the lecture, it was pointed out that "in many churches, Jesus Christ is just an object of faith and Jesus who lives vividly in this world has disappeared from the perspective", which Hitoshi whole-heartedly agrees with saying, "Amen". As Jesus is with us, we, who come to church may serve others as Jesus lives vividly within them.

REMEMBERING POWLAS

The missionary, Ms. Mode Powlas, lived in Kumamoto from 1918 till 1959, although she had to come back to the US, during World War II. From 1919, she dedicated herself to founding Jiaien and expanding its operation. This year, Jiaien celebrates its 100th Anniversary in November. Even 9 months before the official celebration, in order to remember her dedicated work, we had a service and banquet on Saturday, February 16th, because her birthday is February 15th. When I reflect on the history of Jiaien and think about why she miraculously devoted herself to the Jiaien and joyfully served the Japanese community, Hitoshi can only say that Jesus in her established the Jiaien and the Lord in her managed it. Through Baptism that occurred in her life and through Holy Communion she received, God entered into her and served the community in Japan. It was a necessity to build Kuwamizu Church, where Hitoshi and Satoko are serving, and through the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion people receive at Kuwamizu, God also enters into church servants and enables them to serve the Jiaien communities, like Jesus serving communities today.



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