



## Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

Rev. Hitoshi and Satoko Adachi

ELCA Missionary and Associate

### THANK YOU FROM KUMAMOTO

#### 90th Anniversary of Kuwamizu Church

Happy Easter! Four years have passed since May 2018, when Hitoshi and Satoko started serving in Kumamoto. More than half of these years, they have experienced the pandemic in Kumamoto. There were various restrictions until March, but in April, people started gathering again. People in Japan are still wearing masks, sanitizing hands, using increased ventilation, etc. But other than those commonsense measures, no major restrictions exist now. So, people enjoyed beautiful cherry blossoms blooming or other springtime activities. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

And at this milestone of four years of service in Kumamoto, Kuwamizu Church celebrated its 90th anniversary. Prior to the start of Kuwamizu Church, Jiaien Social Services was established in 1919, and 13 years later, in 1932, Jiaien staff and others gather at Jiaien's Kindergarten facility to worship and serve.



On January 24th of that year Missionary Schlinger and Ms. Mitsu Hatanaka chaired the Church founding meeting with 21 adult members and 23 children. And in the same year, on June 26th, Appointed Pastor Noriyasu Iwanaga arrived at the church. Remembering those beginnings, on April 24th of this year, a commemorative service was held. In that service, Satoko served as the organist, Hitoshi served as the presider, and Pastor Sumimoto preached.

#### Kyushu District Assembly

In Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, District Assembly is held every other year. This year is the year the assembly occurs. And at first it was scheduled for March 21st at Ku-

wamizu Church. However, due to concerns about the pandemic, it was postponed a little bit over one month and held on April 29th. Pastor Adachi and Pastor Sumimoto together are serving as pastors for Kuwamizu and Matsubase congregations, but Pastor Sumimoto was serving as District President. But in this assembly, Pastor Sumimoto completed his term and the new president, Pastor Shirakawa, was elected. Pastors Sumimoto and Adachi focused more on local churches such as Matsubase.

#### Matsubase Charity Cello Concert

As an example, at Matsubase Church, which celebrated its 70th anniversary last year, a charity cello concert was held on April 30 for the purpose of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine.

Mr. Tomoki Iwanaga, the grandson of the first Japanese pastor of the Kuwamizu Church and active in the media, came to Matsubase as the cellist. In a local region like Matsubasemachi, a leading cellist like Mr. Iwanaga and his accompaniment, Tomoka Harada, rarely perform in a small venue, so more than 100 people attended the concert. It was a wonderful concert. It was a day when Hitoshi and Satoko felt the significance of the existence of the church, as they heard replies from people who had a cerebral infarction and back pains that were truly comforted and, in some cases, healed during the performance. They sincerely hope for peace among the Ukrainian refugees.



## NEW FACES from the US and GERMANY

Due to the pandemic, last year, no one could come to Kumamoto as a J3 missionary from ELCA. This year, although she was delayed 6 months, Ms. Laura Slezak arrived in Kumamoto in early April and started working for Kyushu Gakuin High School, where Hitoshi also teaches.

There is also a strong connection between JELC and Lutheran Churches in Braunschweig, Germany. In the past they sent a high school graduate volunteer/trainee each year to JELC and in a congregation in Tokyo they have attended Japanese worship, helped Japanese Kindergarten children, learned about Japanese culture, etc. for about one year. However, due to the pandemic, the program was stopped in 2020. At the end of last year, the program was resumed but for the resumed program, Kumamizu Church was selected. Therefore, it was again 6 months delayed, Ms. Lilian Kirchner arrived early April.

They both joined Easter coloring event on Easter Sunday at Kumamoto International Service.



### HOPE in "Didn't Find" Reflection by Hitoshi

This year, April 17th was Easter and June 5th will be Pentecost, so every day in May is a part of the Season of Easter. It makes us wonder what the Lord Jesus is talking about in the days of Easter in such a tragic situation of the world.

From the scripture on Easter Sunday, "So they went in, but they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 24: 3), the word "didn't find" is echoing in Hitoshi's mind and reflecting about it. The women

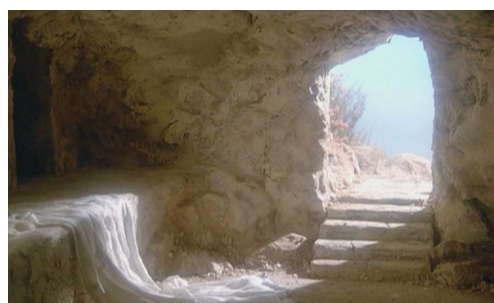
took the fragrant oil to put it on Jesus' body, but that task was not completed.

Hitoshi remembers participating in an egg hunt with kindergarten-aged children on Holy Saturday. Eggs are plastic egg-shaped toys that can be split into two halves. (Normally overuse of plastic toys and decorations is discouraged, but the brightly colored eggs are reusable.) Teachers filled the eggs with chocolates and other sweets for the children to enjoy.

Children searched for such eggs. Some children found many, and some children couldn't find any and started crying. Also, even if one found them, there was a child who did not have sweets for some reason, so he was very disappointed. Leftover candy was shared with the children who were unlucky during the egg hunt.

Children who cried and were disappointed during the egg hunt seems like events in our lives. Especially in time of war and the continuing pandemic. Some people are uncertain about the future.

Even If you are unsure about what want to do, or if you can't get the job you want, do not despair. Hitoshi thinks the story of the resurrection gives. "Didn't Find" was rather good in context. The absence of Jesus' body in the tomb is tied to his defeating death and his resurrection. During all the difficult times, the resurrected Lord Jesus encourages us, gave us hope, and is still alive and walks with us. God's enduring love and mercy helps us live our lives no matter the circumstances. Amen.



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