



# Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

Rev. Hitoshi and Satoko Adachi

ELCA Missionary and Associate

## BLESSINGS on EPIPHANY and THANK YOU!

Even in moments of darkness, sorrow, and hardship, may the spirit of Jesus Christ light your way! Over one and a half years have passed



since Hitoshi and Satoko arrived at Kumamoto in early Summer 2018, and they are now entering into the last year of the second decade of the 21st century in Kumamoto. They are so thankful for your thoughts, prayers, and support for their wonderful journey as they continue God's ministries in Kumamoto, especially Jiai-en's 100th anniversary.

## JIAI-EN 100th ANNIVERSARY

It was announced in the last several newsletters, finally a series of anniversary ceremonies occurred during November weekends after many careful planning meetings in which Pastors Sumimoto and Adachi from Kuwamizu Lutheran Church always prayed at the start.

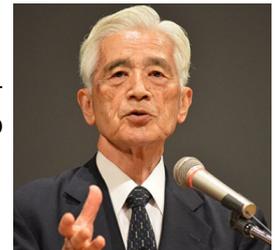
On Saturday, November 9th, Jiai-en has three nursery schools: Aiko (which means the light of love), Hikari (meaning the light) and Shion (meaning Zion) nursery schools. Therefore, the three schools' joint anniversary service and their celebration event occurred on Saturday, November 9th at Kuwamizu Lutheran Church. Pastors Sumimoto and Hitoshi led the service and after the service, 5-6 year old students from each school performed in celebratory plays. One of the students from Hikari nursery school is disabled and uses a wheelchair. She could not perform like other students. So, she was just watching while everyone else performed near the altar. However, at the end of Hikari's performance, two teachers raised her up near the altar together with her wheelchair and she performed a very important role, she pulled a rope that dropped a banner that said, "Happy Birthday for Jiai-en". Many people watching were impressed by the perfor-

mance. Hitoshi believed that the disabled student brought awareness to why altar access for everyone is vital. The current design of the altar is not barrier free and inconvenient for disabled persons using wheelchairs. A fully accessible church, including altar, is important for parishioners and clergy alike as we go boldly into the future.

On Saturday, November 16th, the 100th anniversary ceremony, lecture, and banquets were held. The ceremony began with a beautiful choral performance, in which many of the choir members are graduates of Kyushu Gakuin (a Lutheran junior high/high school), then the Kumamoto prefecture governor and Kumamoto city mayor and two other guests gave speeches. The last speaker was Mr. Shiro Abe, a former Director of the Yokosuka Christian Community Center. He was very influenced by Mr. Soichiro Shi-



On Sunday, November 17th, the first worship from 9 a.m. at Kuwamizu Lutheran Church was mainly for Sunday School children. Over 60 children from Jiai-en, its staff, a few graduates, and a local family gathered together. Hitoshi gave a message from scripture for the 100th Anniversary, Romans 12:15 "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." In the 10:15 worship, over 170 people gathered and Pastor Sumimoto focused on the word, "Immanuel" promise.



## MEETING WITH FORMER MISSIONARY'S GRANDDAUGHTER

One of the great joys during the 100th year anniversary events was to meet with Ms. Yumi Matson and her partner. She was raised in Jiai-en until two years old, then adopted by Pastor Wilbert Erickson's daughter and her spouse. Pastor Erickson is a former missionary serving for Jiai-en. Due to her adopted parents' professions, she was raised in bilingually (English and Japanese). She was taught to respect both cultures. She experienced both joys and hardships. Hitoshi and Satoko read her essay about her life journey, so far, and were quite moved. Now she is working in Yamanashi prefecture about 60 miles west from the central Tokyo. Hopefully the readers of this newsletter will have an opportunity to read her essay in English in the future.



## PLENTIFUL BLESSED CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Due to illnesses of neighboring pastors in Kyushu, Pastors Sumimoto and Adachi were asked to cover more churches in Kyushu, especially because Pastor Sumimoto is currently serving as Kyushu District president. Accurate figure has not been counted, but at least two pastors together led over 70 services during December. The following articles highlight just a few of them.

**Christmas Eve Service at Matsubase Lutheran Church:** The number of attendees for the Christmas Eve service there have decreased in recent years. Hitoshi preached last year for the first time and this year is the second. In the last year, the attendees were probably less than 50. This year, however, it increased. Over sixty people attended the service and the concert afterwards. The same choral group, from last year, performed. Hitoshi believes that one of the reasons must be that a local community started to use church space for senior citizen's exercise on Mondays starting in November. Hitoshi and Satoko feel it's important for Christ's churches to be open and available to local communities.



**YMCA Suizenji Kindergarten's Christmas:** As Kuwamizu Lutheran Pastors, Pastor Sumimoto and Adachi are invited to go to Christian Educational institutions and to give sermons. Sometimes, students, teachers, and parents come to the Kuwamizu Sanctuary and worship. In the picture, over 120 pupils and over 50 parents (and some grandparents, too) attended the service. Hitoshi feels that it is a great opportunity, too, for proclaiming the good news to adults.



**The Manger:** In Kuwamizu Lutheran Church, from the 1st of Advent until Epiphany Sunday, the manger is continually displayed on the altar. In many children's messages for the Kuwamizu Church school and many other kindergartens, Hitoshi focused on the manger and asked a question, "how do you feel if you had to stay in this manger when you were born?" Almost every child answered "No, I do not want that." Then, Hitoshi told the story that Jesus was laid down in the manger and the son of God is together with you even when you feel desperate alone.



## LEARNING BRAILLE

In the September 2019 newsletter, Hitoshi and Satoko reported the article about Mr. Mitushiro Iwamoto, the blind yachtsman, raised in Jiai-en. When they met with him, Hitoshi and Mitsuhiro exchanged their business cards, however, Hitoshi felt embarrassed because he gave a normal business card without braille. That situation motivated Hitoshi and Satoko to start learning the basics of braille. Kuwamizu Lutheran Church and Jiai-en together have been holding braille classes every Friday night from September to December every year for over 40 years. Hitoshi and Satoko could attend only 40 percent of classes, they received certificates signifying they're braille learning beginners. At least Hitoshi knows the very basics of braille and is now ready to send a business card with braille to Mr. Iwamoto.



## ELCA Global Mission Support & Contact Information

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