



Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

Rev. Hitoshi and Satoko Adachi

ELCA Missionary and Associate

MUCH LESS EVENTS for SPORTS DAY

During the fall season, they usually have numerous Sports Events in Kumamoto. However, due to Corona restrictions, there were much less events this year. For example, Jiai-en wide spectacular annual Sports Day event was completely cancelled because of the concern for seniors.

There are three local nursing care schools of Jiaien, and management thought that the overall risk level was lower, therefore, all three schools had their own smaller scale sports events. To reduce the number of adult attendees at the site, they limited the number of parents and grandparents allowed to attend. Therefore, chaplains were also not invited to come to the event sites, but Pastors Sumimoto and Adachi were asked to pray from their own church offices.

However, at Kuwamizu Kindergarten, which is a legally different entity from Jiai-en, they decided to have four mini 40 minutes Sports Events for each class, 0-2 year old babies, 3 year old pupils, 4 year olds, and 5 year olds. So, chaplains came out to the field, prayed together, and enjoyed watching small children' running around and performing.



RESUMING VISITATIONS

To prevent the spread of the virus, in many care facilities visitations were prohibited beginning in February. However, some facilities are gradually easing their restrictions. Below, Hitoshi reports his joyful visit to meet and speak with Mr. M. Uchinuno at a care facility in Kumamoto, even though it was limited to 30 minutes and through transparent vinyl meeting at their floor's entrance.

In early 1950s, when Mr. Uchinuno was still

a baby, he had meningitis and it effected his left foot. Ever since he remembered, he grew up as a disabled child, but he could still walk by himself without vending his left knee. When he was around 20 years old, he lived near Kuwamizu Church and started attending the ministry called "Kohitsujikai" meaning "Little Lamb Club," in which Christians, including disabled people, attend together one Saturday a month.

At 23 years old, he was baptized. Several years later, he went back to his hometown, Hitoyoshi and was living there. In his late 50s, he was involved in an accident when he was riding his bike delivering newspapers. His spine was severely injured and his most of his body was paralyzed except he could slightly move his left arm. After one year of hospitalization and another year of rehabilitation, he started living in the care facility in Kumamoto. When Hitoshi visited him before the pandemic, he visited his room, or if he was out of his room, someone was always pushing his wheelchair.

However, this time, Hitoshi was amazed that he was able to use an electric wheelchair that can be operated with his left arm and without someone's help. He was happily waiting at the floor's entrance and greeted me with a big, warm smile. This time, he expressed his feelings reflecting upon his baptized life, he said, "There are many things happening in my life, I'm glad and thankful that God gave me life."

Also, although he can only attend church a few times a year, he says, "I feel peace in the sanctuary every time I come." This year, he has not been allowed to leave the facility, but if possible, he will attend church for 2020 Christmas.



HITOSHI's REFLECTIONS

Lacking One Thing In this year of pandemic, the word from Jesus, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21 NRSV) is affirmingly echoing in Hitoshi's thoughts.

These are the words Jesus said to the rich man. Maybe when he heard the phrase "you lack one thing", he might have thought that he would gain or increase that thing that Jesus would say next. However, the next thing Jesus said was to reduce what he had. He was lacking in reducing. In this pandemic, have we realized that we've been lacking in reducing what we did for ourselves and giving up our own assets? We are guided, instead, to use our resources to help those who are suffering in difficult circumstances.

Bowing Our Heads Due to COVID19 and numerous disasters happening in Kumamoto, Hitoshi listened to a person saying, there is no hope. If he only believes that hope is getting or earning more of something, he might be right. However, there are hopes and many blessings that God provides even in this situation, in other words, in reducing or giving up many things.

There is a famous hymn, "Count Your Blessings". This hymn was included in the 1891 Baptist Hymnal and sung many times during a chaotic period, during incidents, like the Spanish Flu pandemic, World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, etc. in the early 20th century.

Going further back in history, around the 13th century BC, the Israelites, who were slaves in Egypt, faced many difficulties and complained during their 40-year journey from Egypt to Israel. Some people even said, "It was still better when they were slaves in Egypt." Even during their complaints, according to God's voice, Moses guided them by setting up tents, building an altar, and worshipping the Lord. They followed clouds during the day and fire during the night, heading for the land of Canaan. In Psalm 103, that was written later, it says, "do not forget all his benefits." They learned that the difficulties they have encountered were not the true prob-

lems, but that the people had forgotten God's benefits was the problem.

It is important for us living in the present age to remember the grace, the natural environment in which human beings can live and, in that environment, human beings were created by God. And how much of the Lord's grace do you still receive?

During such a comfortable autumn, Hitoshi and Satoko feel the uncountable blessings at this harvest time. In their case, they are given a place to live called "Nuyamazu," and a few minutes walk to the south, it opens into a paddy field between two rivers. In early September, they still saw green rice stalks that were growing rapidly upward and in autumn, they saw golden rice stalks lined up all over. The rice stalks that bows their head to the ground seem to symbolize that they're truly grateful for the blessings, like sunshine, water, nutrition etc., it received from the heavens and the earth. Similarly, humanity should bow our heads to the continued blessings God freely pours unto us. Thanks to be God.



THANK YOU!

Thank you for your continuing support, prayers, and thoughts for the ministries in Kumamoto. Hitoshi and Satoko worried about the typhoon coming too close to Kyushu in early September. Because of it, Satoko could not fly back to Kumamoto as scheduled. However, the worst situation was avoided and since then, people in Kumamoto have been enjoying a wonderful autumn.

Hitoshi would like to express additional thanks for your prayers and thoughts for the healing of his injury. The doctor gave Hitoshi final permission to resume normal walking at the end of October, almost three months after the incident. Hitoshi thanks you and the Lord!

ELCA Global Mission Support & Contact Information

You can give through your synod office or mail your check to Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Make checks payable to "ELCA Missionaries" with "(Hitoshi and Satoko) Adachi GCS2051" in the memo line.

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