

NSKK NEWSLETTER

NIPPON SEI KO KAI Provincial Office

65 Yarai-cho, Shinjuku-ku,

Tokyo 162-0805 JAPAN

Fax +81-3-5228-3175

Editor : E. Hajime Suzuki

Tel. +81-3-5228-3171

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Christmas 2001 is near, and we will soon enter upon the Year of 2002! At this time of the year we specially pray , more than ever, for true peace.

In the Peace of Christ let us pray for:

Those who were killed or injured by the indiscriminate terrorism in the U.S.A. in September 2001, and their families and relatives;

All the leaders in the world to make efforts in finding a way to solve this tragic event, not by revenge with armed force but by reconciliation through peaceful means;

Those criminals who died with a false conception of justice;

Those Afghans who are in terror of war, in particular for refugees, children, and women who are suffering from the continuous conflict.

These are part of our daily prayers which we, all the members of NSKK, are saying after the abominable simultaneous multiple terrorism in the U.S. on 11th September 2001 and the subsequent combat in the Central and West Asia.

Everyone in the world sincerely hoped that the year of 2001 should have been a first step towards a hopeful new century, but regretfully it was contrary to our expectations. The year 2001 has been a year in which a number of tragic events occurred one after another, for which we all have to pray.

Turning our eyes to the present Japanese situation, we have encountered various social issues and problems which could devastate current Japanese society, such as successive bankruptcy failures of companies attributed to the economic depression, or the increasing number of lay-offs office workers, resulting in the rapid increase in suicide by males between 45-59 years old. Domestic devastation may increase juvenile delinquency and crime. We are now seriously asked to consider what the roles of Christian churches are, and how the Christian churches should act in such circumstances.

The boss of my neighbour across the hedge used to work at a Japanese property insurance company that claimed bankruptcy just a week ago, because the company cannot afford the indemnity for the loss of airplanes caused by the simultaneous multiple terrorism in the U.S.. Thus terrorism has influenced the daily life of the citizens.

Let all of us continuously pray for Christ 1 s Peace, giving to the leaders of international society the true wisdom and power to abolish destruction and murder; and giving us, the public, peace and order in society, so that we will greet a peaceful New Year.

E. Hajime Suzuki

How NSKK deals with human rights issues

Japanese society is confronting human rights issues and problems in many forms, for example both natural and social. The natural form of human rights means issues concerning gender, children, elderly people and the family, which present human rights problems as a social phenomenon. It includes discrimination against women, negligence of children 1 s rights, indifference towards welfare for the ageing, and the disabling or destruction of families caused by physical or psychological disorders, mental diseases, self-confinement indoors or domestic violence.

The social form in reality involves political, economical and social discrimination relating to race, belief, gender, or social/family status. Each form interrelates with each other and becomes complex; thus there has been no distinction between natural and social

forms, which cannot be separated, resulting in the existence of natural-social problems.

Social-form human rights issues include discrimination against a specific community which is unique to Japanese society, discrimination against the Ainu people, discrimination against Okinawans, against Korean residents in Japan (including those from North Korea), alien laborers, the homeless, people with mental or physical handicaps, patients with Hansen's disease, those living with AIDS/HIV, sexual minorities, or those forced into work assignments by sex.

Japan has long adopted the Tenno (or Emperor) System, in which a rank system peculiar to Japan has been firmly established, leading to a problematic and discriminatory social structure.

As advocated in the 1998 Lambeth Conference, if human rights means the protection of each individual's dignity, it is our responsibility to acknowledge the significance of each individual existence, to secure and protect the 'fullness of humanity', and the whole Christian church should consider how to solve these human rights and discrimination problems, which completely deny these essential claims.

In NSKK there are various committees actively working on human rights problems, such as problems relating to the discrimination against a specific community in Japan, Japan-Korea co-operation, the Emperor System, the Yasukuni Shrine (regarded as National Shinto Shrine until the end of World War II), and 'Justice and Peace' (mainly dealing with issues on Okinawa).

It was a great regret for NSKK that serious infringements of human rights and discrimination occurred within the NSKK community. Consequently, there are NSKK members in each Diocese who are specifically assigned to deal with human rights/discrimination problems. They are collaborating with civil movements, ultimately aiming at political and social solutions of the infringement of human rights as a whole. They are, in particular, actively participating in activities in the national movement for establishing a National Action Programme relating to 'The Decade of

U.N. Human Rights Education Ǝ, and ʘ A Basic Law for the Liberation of Specific Communities Ǝ, which requires us to reconsider the fundamental concept of Japanese human rights policy. They are positively involved in the activities for ʘ Struggling against the Sayama (the name of a city near Tokyo where a school girl was raped and murdered) discriminatory trial Ǝ, which is a false accusation that has required retrial over 40 years, and ʘ Dowa (literarily means ʘ same Japanese Ǝ) issues Ǝ (discrimination against a specific community), in collaboration with partners from other religions. It needs no saying that these activities cannot fully solve the human rights problems in Japan.

It is an immediate necessity for NSKK to teach the importance of getting over our tendency towards discrimination and prejudice, to promote enlightening or interrelating activities, and to establish a comprehensive system by which all dioceses and churches will be involved in problems which have more or less been ignored or which may happen in the future. It is important for all members of NSKK to fully understand the present human rights issues existing in Japanese society.

Rev. Nobuyuki Tamitsu
(Charge of Human Right Issues)

Living together with street people

In Nagoya city, a group of volunteers estimates that 1500 to 2000 people who can find no other way to live are living on the streets. In the big parks of the central city and under the elevated highways, we see a range of huts made of plastic blue sheets, but under the eaves of buildings around train stations, they are seen sleeping merely on sheets of cardboard or, in some parks, sleeping on benches shivering with cold. As a result, thirty to fifty people lose their precious lives on the streets or in similar situations in a year.

For the past twenty years, the administration office of the local government had not made any fundamental policy, but merely taken perfunctory measures. This year, because of the

instruction of the national government, the administration has reluctantly started to take action.

To support the street people, there are various kinds of activities, such as food service, night watch, labor /medical/ life consultation, and literacy classes. These activities are done not only by volunteers, but the street people themselves also participate.

Food is served on every Monday and Thursday from 7pm under the elevated highway, with the cooperation of ecumenical Christians (Anglican, Roman-Catholic, UCCJ, Lutheran). Around 500 meals are served each time; the materials and the funds are donated from all over the country. Because the purpose of serving meals is not just providing food, but to create a society in which these kinds of activities become needless, we offer space and time, which is called “YORIAI” (meaning getting together), so that people can exchange information and make friends while they prepare the food. Also entertainment such as video shows and a game corner, and medical service by volunteers are always provided. Barber service is enjoyed by the people, who rarely have chance to get a haircut.

When Tokai region was attacked by a flood last year, diocesan office of Chubu, took the role of a distribution base to provide clothes and food for the victimized street people.

St. Mark's Church in Nagoya provides a bath, rest place, barber, and clothing service once a week. In St. Stephen's Church to which I belong, on Christmas, Easter, and at the bazaar, we welcome the street people for our prayer service and after the service we have fun together. Some of them have become our real sisters and brothers, being baptized and confirmed. The encounter with them has been really an abundant gift for us all.

It is not so clear what our church should do to create a society in which nobody has to live on the streets. I pray and hope to live together with them as human beings from now on.

Mary Eiko Takagi / St. Stephen's Church, Nagoya

Japan-Korea Youth Exchange Program —-We did a big job!

The Japan-Korea Youth Exchange Program was started in Osaka as a relief work-camp for victims of the earthquakes in 1995. Since then, Anglican youths of both Japan and Korea have been visiting each other for the exchange program every year. Up to the fifth meeting, the program had been mainly arranged by the grownups and the youths had just participated in what had already been arranged. However, from the sixth meeting, a different phase was begun; we ourselves, the youths, joined in to make the initial plan, and at the last step, we made a statement to express our own desire and policy for the further activities. This year, we made and carried out the plan based on the statement which we made last year.

The theme of the meeting this year was, ✕ Let us walk along together ☾ the people of Kotobuki-cho (Yokohama city) and the Korean residents in Japan ☽. While many other exchange programs between two countries were canceled because of the ✕ distorted Japanese history textbook ☽ issues, we decided to carry out the plan. The reason why we chose the theme as above was that we thought we should never forget the Korean residents (who have always been discriminated against in our society) when we had exchange programs with Korean youths. We have experienced and learned a lot about the Korean residents and the people who live as daily wage workers in Kotobuki-cho and Kawasaki city.

On 18th and 19th Aug., we had an over-night visit to several churches in Tokyo Diocese, in separate groups, where each group had good fellowship with the congregation, meeting people of various generations, and some had a meaningful discussion on the textbook issues, which we could not take up in the main program. We also had a chance to make a field trip to Yasukuni Shrine.

The purpose of this Exchange Program of the Youths of Korea and Japan is to learn the history and the culture of each other, and also to find a way to walk along together for a better future. It is our hope that this meeting will extend our encounter to a broader extent,

not only for the current participants but including more people. This time we were pleased that we could accomplish our purpose to a certain degree.

Though what we do may not seem so great, is it not important that we could think of each other 1 s history and future as of a dear friend 1 s, not as that of somebody whom we do not know well, by making more encounters among each other?

Mari Kawasaki/ A staff member of the program