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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“*Akebono*”, which means i) sun-rise or dawn; ii) in the beginning, and thus implies the dawn of Japanese Christianity or the beginning of Christian mission in Japan, is a diocesan bulletin issued by NSKK Tohoku (North-East) Diocese. In the 2001 Christmas issue of the Bulletin, I have found an interesting article entitled “My Memory of Christmas”, written by a Ms. Johanna Emi Toeda, a member of Ohdate St. Paul’s Church. This is a heart-felt story, which I would like to share with the readers of NSKK Newsletter. The following is a summary of the article:

“It happened at the end of a year 30 years ago when I worked for a nursery. Christmas was over, and it was the very last day of work for the year. When I finished my work, it was rather late. I took the last train to get home. As I was sitting on the train, a man, apparently drunk or ill, rushed into the train just before it started. He sat in front of me. There were only a few passengers in the train.

I was a bit scared because of him. I took out my favorite bible from my bag, praying, ‘Oh dear Jesus, please protect me from evil.’ The local train with weak electric lights was passing through wide-open fields and lonely mountains, and I felt so helpless.

Then, suddenly the drunken man said, “Hey sister, read me the Psalms from xxx to xxx!” I was very surprised and looked at him. What I saw was that large tear-drops were rolling down his cheeks, and he said, “You, sister, have reminded me of my dear Jesus Christ, whom I have forgotten for a long time.”

He asked me to sing some Christmas hymns for him, and I sang “Silent Night, Holy Night” for the man. When the train was about to arrive at the terminal station, he entreated me to give him the Bible: “I hardly dare to ask you, but could you possibly give that Bible to me. I promise that I will keep this Bible for my whole life!” Although this was my dear bible, I could scarcely refuse his request as his entreaty was so serious, and I decided to hand the bible to him. When the train arrived at the station he vanished into the darkness, on the opposite side from the ordinary exit where the station-master was collecting the tickets. He may have stolen a ride on the train.

Since then, at every Christmas time, I vividly recollect this incident, and I have remembered what he said to me: “I promise you that I will keep this Bible for my life,” and I think of him and wonder how and he is and how he is getting on now, hoping he is doing well and is happy. At the same time I re-affirm to myself that the Bible is a road-map of my life.”

The above is a summary of Ms. Toeda’s article, which moved me profoundly.

Looking at the present state of the world, I strongly feel how the world has neglected the bible. The great power of the bible has not been changed from the beginning. However, it is but a step from justice to violence; the strong easily get the weak into a tight corner: this is what happens in this world now. Under these circumstances, we must recognize that the bible is our last and only refuge.

At the time of Lent, we must spend each day faithfully and strictly following the words of the bible. Thus, we will be fully prepared for the forthcoming Easter Day.

E. Hajime Suzuki

Visiting the Republic of Korea by the Delegation of Japanese Christians

Recently Japan has been leaning rapidly to the right politically. Namely, there are the problems of making a false representation of the past in Japanese history textbooks for Junior High School students, the visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to help U.S. Forces retaliating against the terrorism that occurred in New York, and so on. Those who are most worried about the serious situation in Japan recently are the people of South Korea and Korean Christians. They have issued many protest statements against those actions.

A delegation of Japanese Christians visited the Republic of Korea (South Korea) from December 3rd to 5th, 2001, and had a conference with a delegation of Korean Christians, and we issued a Joint Communique as shown below.

Here I will relate the characteristics of the conference we held in South Korea.

1. Our delegation consisted of Catholics (Council of Peace and Justice) and Protestants, including the League of Evangelical Churches in Japan and the Church of Christ in Japan, besides N.C.C. groups.
2. The Korean delegation, comprising Catholics and Protestants, got together in a hall with us and we offered prayers and held consultations.
3. We confirmed to each other that we should meet regularly hereafter and exchange opinions and to work realize eternal peace in Asia based on faith in Jesus Christ, striving to combine our efforts to pursue our common objectives.
4. We visited the Korean Diet. We met Mr. Eichin Kim, who went on hunger strike to oppose the adoption of Japanese history textbooks for Junior High students. We also

met Christian Diet members and told them our of our aims in visiting South Korea, and we gained some valuable knowledge of South Korean affairs.

The appeal to issue the joint communique was made suddenly, and we did not have enough time to make thorough preparations. But fortunately we were able to work out a way to issue the following communiqué, getting the Korean delegation's heartfelt consent. It was really an event of great significance to issue a joint communique on this occasion.

The Joint Communique of the Delegation of Japanese Christians
and South Korean Christians on the visit to the Republic of Korea.

We, the Delegation of Japanese Christians, consisting of 18 Christians of Catholic and Protestant denominations, visited the Republic of Korea for 3 days from December 3 to 5, 2001, having been deeply worried about the situation of present Japan, which was going on the road to the war again. The Delegation of Korean Christians warmly received us and Christians of both countries decided to discuss with each other and work out together how to realize God's will and eternal peace in Asian countries.

During the period of militarism Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula and tortured people there. Churches in Japan at that time could not halt the militarism. In particular, military forces compelled Korean Christians to pay their respects at Shinto shrines. We committed a great sin in forcing Koreans to do so, as they had previously worshipped only their God in Heaven and loved their neighbors as the Bible taught. We, the members of the Japanese Delegation repent deeply of the past errors and sins we committed before God and our neighbors, and would like to have their forgiveness. We decided from now on not to throw away the sacrifices and martyrdoms they suffered under Japanese militarism.

But when we entered into the 21st century, our nation was forced to face the problems of raising the national flag and singing the national anthem at school ceremonies, the false representation of history in textbooks for Junior High school students, the visit of Prime Minister Koizumi to Yasukuni Shrine, and the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to support war action. Before we have recognized and corrected our past faults, we are going to be involved again in the preparation of another war which seeks to justify aggression. In these circumstances we Christians in Japan have been developing movements against those tendencies. We were rewarded with good result in blocking the adoption of the textbooks that the "Group to Create New History Textbooks" recommended. But on the whole, we Japanese Christians have a guilty conscience about the fact that we were not able to prevent the stream of new right wing political movements. The nationalist tendency will continue to strengthen. Therefore we have to look straight at the history of Japan, and we should continue to make every endeavor to achieve peace and reconciliation from now on.

We Christians believe that Jesus Christ broke up the wall of hostility, realized our peace and brought us reconciliation with God. We would like to spread His Gospel to people and to realize God's will in this world.

We pray God that his Guidance will be on our mutual endeavors between Korean and Japanese Christians to take the best measures concerning our present difficult tasks.

Looking forward to celebrating the Nativity of Jesus Christ, our Lord of Peace.

(Shoji Tani, Bishop of Okinawa)

Anglican Peace and Justice Network Meeting

Over forty representatives from the Anglican Communion around the world have attended a conference on Peace & Justice and related issues and problems at a retreat center in the outskirts of Auckland, New Zealand. Many lively discussions took place and the delegates shared information. Representatives reported on the following subjects; update on the present situation in the world since the last conference which was held in South Korea in 1999; 11th Anglican Consultative Council which was held in Scotland in September 2000; and reflections on resolutions of the Lambeth Conference which was held in 1998. In addition there were exchanges of valuable views from individual situations concerning the event on September 11th in America. Handbills from individual national churches regarding September 11th were distributed as well as reports at the conference.

Regional reports were given from Brazil, Great Lakes (which comprise Congo, Burundi, and Rwanda), Zimbabwe, Palestine, and Sri Lanka, and on the Anglican ministry in these areas, and also on the Jubilee Ministry and its activities in Episcopal Churches in North America. These reports included information on regional problems and tasks, and after each report a lively discussion and question-and-answer session took place. For instance, HIV/AIDS problems exist not only in Africa, but also in many other areas and relate to problems concerning women, youth, poverty and economics, and they need serious discussion and consideration. The same applies to the problems relating to urbanization and poverty. An opinion was raised that rather than spending a vast amount of money to hold a conference like this to discuss the issues and determine the resolutions and then waiting for action, the money should be better spent on solving the problems in these areas. However, it is important to understand the problems and opinions of the regions and to exchange information, without which it is not possible to take appropriate action. Although the majority of the problems are similar, different regions have different views on them and their actions are also different. I felt the important thing, therefore, is to have a positive attitude so that each delegate returns to his or her individual church/country with information gained during the conference ready take action, rather than having a passive attitude of waiting until the report after the conference. It was reported that NSKK is campaigning for all dioceses to donate 0.7% of their annual budget for a Development Fund for HIPC's ,and regions which need such a fund for appropriate programmes were asked to contact NSKK.

The New Zealand Anglican Church prepared a programme to experience the life of the Maori people who are the indigenous people in New Zealand. 99% of them are Christians. We were treated with

dishes which included a similar dish to Japanese potatoes baked underground, and fresh sea food such as sea urchin, scallops, crabs, abalones, mussels which had just been caught in the nearby sea. We also met Maori women who had tattoos around their mouths. In the past their land was taken and they were deprived of their language and culture. But now there are schools which teach the Maori language and culture, and we felt efforts are being made to keep an ancient cultural inheritance as well as the heritage from Britain, not only among the Maori people but people in New Zealand in general. It was interesting to hear the role of the church, which has been involved in reinstating justice for the Maori people which was once taken from them. (Etsuko Maruyama, Partners-In-Mission Secretary)

Korea- Japan joint Academy of Anglican Theology

In our relationship between Anglican churches in Korea and Japan, it must have been right and natural that the recognition of history and human rights issues was regarded as the most important, and exchange between people was given the first priority.

This is because the historical facts of the invasion and colonization of Korea, and the serious problems in our present society such as discrimination against Korean residents in Japan caused by the historical relationship, are matters of our own mission commitment. However, from the continuous and active interrelation, a new joint project was born by means of theological study.

When the first “Anglican joint Theological Conference of Korea-Japan” was held in Korea in 1997, both groups of theologians came to the common understanding that in the era called “post modern”, theology and church should set up a new structure which was different from the past, and they affirmed that it was crucial to discern clearly the local situation of North East Asia, and to grope for a positive meaning for living as Anglicans in the region. For the churches standing in this specific cultural, social and religious context, a more independent and subjective theological way is required that does not depend only on the importation and interpretation of British or American theology.

The Korea-Japan Joint Academy of Anglican Theology was established to pursue Asian Anglican theology and a reinterpretation of Anglicanism in Asia by means of a joint study of Korea and Japan. In completing the initial framework of the Theological Conference, we chose the “Academy” style, so that people who engage in theology could study and research together free from the existing frameworks such as the province or diocese. Needless to say, teachers of theology are not the only people who study theology, but all who seek for the truth of the Bible, all who try to find ways of expression which can be shared in the form of a common understanding of devotional life, are people who study theology and thus theologians, and we invite all of such people to this Academy.

After the general assembly of the Academy, the first academic report was presented. It was unexpected but natural that the report was a research on the ecumenical movement which had a broad view of dialogues with other religions, because the study of Anglican theology in North East Asia cannot be discussed apart from the relationship between other denominations and other religions.

The second meeting will be held in Korea this year. The Anglican Church of Korea is far more positive in educating theologians than NSKK, and many excellent people are already actively working. I pray that the activity of this Academy will bring about the revitalization of theological study and a perception of the importance of theological education in NSKK.

(Rev. Hiroto Kayama, Tokyo Diocese)

The Inauguration of the 10th Bishop of Yokohama

The Rt. Rev. James Satoru Endo was consecrated and installed as the 10th Bishop of the Diocese of Yokohama, on January 11 at St. Andrew's Church, Yokohama.

Crib for Peace House at Bethlehem

Responding to the call of the Anglican Communion Office to exhibit cribs coming from Provinces of the Communion at Peace House, Manger Park, Bethlehem, the Diocese of Kyushu, in particular Mr. Tanaka and Bishop Igarashi, worked hard to produce a crib using traditional Japanese dolls called Hakata-ningyoh. Though Mr. Tanaka wanted to bring it to Bethlehem by himself, because of the war situation there he just couldn't do it. When the Rev. Canon John L. Peterson came to Japan to attend the CUAC meeting, Bishop Igarashi and Mr. Tanaka presented the crib to him at NSKK Provincial Office on March 15.