

NSKK NEWSLETTER

日本聖公会管区事務所だより

NIPPON SEI KO KAI Provincial Office

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The Nippon Sei Ko Kai Year Book 2002-2003 was published in December 2002. It contains the location of each church and mission station, as well as the number of clergy (pastors) and lay persons in the 11 Dioceses which constitute the Nippon Sei Ko Kai. It also lists the theological colleges, monasteries/convents, and educational institutions related to the NSKK. It also gives social welfare organizations and other related organizations. It contains statistical data concerning the number of clergy of the NSKK (bishops, priests, deacons), ordinands, and lay readers. It gives the number of Sunday schools, number of children and instructors, number of lay persons, and the amount of pledges/donations, which indicate the current status of each diocese and the Nippon Sei Ko Kai. The NSKK Year Book is edited by NSKK Provincial Office and in recent years has been published after the General Synod that is held every two years.

In order to grasp the situation and changes within the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, I am going to compare the statistical data from the "NSKK Year Book" as of 31st December 2001 with those of 31 December 1991.

Number	1991	2001
Church	278	280
Mission Station	40	36
Priest	300	251
(Including part-time priest	340	299)
Lay Reader	90	195
Sunday School Children	6,537	4,524
Lay Person	37,692	35,986
Active Communicant	29,135	28,125
Baptized per annum	746	481

The annual changes seem to be trivial but when we compare the figures for the year of 2001 with those of 1991, we find that considerable changes have occurred within NSKK.

The most significant change is the decrease in the number of parish priests, from 300 to 251, a decrease of 50. The number of retired priests continuing to work, inflate this number and should not be relied upon in the future. It is time, therefore, for all members of the NSKK to consider seriously that we need to foster within young people the willingness to engage in missionary/evangelical work within Japanese society. It is

interesting to note that, contrary to the decrease in the number of priests, the number of lay readers is increasing, an increase of about 100 during the last decade. This indicates that the laity participates voluntarily and actively more and more and in church life.

The number of church-goers also decreased. Now the annual number of baptisms has dropped below 500. All these figures clearly illustrate the serious current situation facing the NSKK.

According to the “Religious Year Book of 2001” (compiled by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in Japan), the total number of all Christians is 924,562, which accounts for less than 1% of the whole population of Japan. Members of NSKK are part of this figure.

Although the outlook for Christianity seems to be pessimistic, it is quite true that there are a number of people who are searching for Christ’s Providence in Japan. Several years have elapsed since the Japanese economic situation broke down. It is often said, when people’s daily lives are devastated, that they are increasingly willing to go to church. In particular, church-goers are increasing in Roman Catholic churches, though mainly because of ‘overseas workers’. At present Japan is under a dark shadow suffering from the affliction and despair of bankruptcy, unemployment or suicide all of which are whirling around our society. What are the people searching for in the Christian church? Is it possible for the church to respond to their request?

Reading the latest NSKK Year Book, as an active member of NSKK, I am keenly thinking of these issues, which we are directly confronting at present.

E. Hajime Suzuki
Editor-in-Chief

Bp. Williams’ Memorial Fund: Its Historical Background and Activities

<Historical Background>

One of the typical phrases to depict the beginning of modern Japan is “Civilization and Enlightenment”. The influence by the onrush of the modern civilization from the West, in particular philosophies such as utilitarianism and scientism, was great. On the other hand, there existed an overt and covert discrimination against Christianity as a heresy. It was under these circumstances that the Rev. Channing Moore Williams (later consecrated bishop) who had been sent to Japan via China as a missionary from the Episcopal Church of USA (Anglican) in 1859, was seeking the chance of propagating the Gospel of Christ. He envisaged the importance of education for the youth as much as the ministry of the Church. From 1874 on he founded schools which later became Rikkyo School, Heian Girls School, and Rikkyo Girls School.

Christian education is to help young people develop their personal integrity grounded upon the Christian faith and their ability to serve for social reform and well-being. Thus his educational endeavor was said to have inspired many. Soon, however, Japanese politics evolved into nationalism and thence prevented his educational vision from

growing to maturity. Finally war broke out, church activities were suppressed and schools were forced to carry out a militaristic education.

Immediately after the war the Church and Christian schools, which had gone through such bitter experiences, started to rehabilitate their activities with assistance from overseas especially from the American Church. The rehabilitation effort of the Church and Schools took place independently of each other and gained marked achievements. While these developments had their own merits, they held, however, a latent problem that would have to be faced later. The enhancement of being independent in regard to human and economic resources meant, for the Japanese Church to be independent of her "Mother Church" which had hitherto supported her; and for the Christian schools to be self-governing apart from the Church which had sponsored them. Under such circumstances it was vital to affirm the recognition that the Church and the Christian schools stood on a common principle, and also to establish a close means of mutual support and association for each other.

However, the situation proceeded in a different direction in accordance with the rapid academic and cultural development and the economic advancement. These hastened the wave of secularization affecting the institutionalized Church and schools.. For one thing the Church had to face the pressure of this strong wave and for another the Christian schools struggled to define what a Christian education ought to be. In consequence, the impetus to bring up Christian leaders weakened.

<How The Fund Was Established>

This historical background, which caused apprehension among those concerned, led to the foundation of the Williams' Memorial Fund. The immediate incentive was the exchange program of Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University which had been maintained since 1966 with the help of the Episcopal Church of USA. Dr. Norio Ogata who was elected president of Rikkyo University in 1975 wished to broaden and transform the program into a more vital one and having consulted with NSKK and other Anglican schools in Japan proposed a fund in memory of Bp Williams to be established as a joint project between NSKK and the Anglican schools.

Two programs were proposed:

- (1) to invite lecturers from overseas who were outstanding scholars in a set area and were speaking from a Christian point of view.
- (2) to provide research students from developing countries with opportunities to study in Japan including some chance of personal exchange.

At that time the whole Anglican Communion adopted a new concept of mission for the new age focusing on the "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence (MRI)" movement. It appealed to the whole Communion to participate jointly in God's One Mission as "Partners in Mission (PIM)". Bp Williams Memorial Fund was an apt response to this appeal. This agendum was tabled at the 34th general synod of NSKK in 1977 and passed unanimously. The fund-raising campaign started right away and called on churches and schools for support, and also applied for an allocation from the Venture in Mission Fund that the American Church had just initiated. The campaign aimed at 200 million yen for the first stage. At present the Fund is holding approximately 180 million yen.

Since it was expected that a long time would be needed to establish the endowment fund, a decision was made to expend the necessary money out of the fund already collected in order to carry out the proposed activities. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Bp Michael Ramsey, was invited as the first lecturer in 1979. He readily accepted our request and with his wife came to stay in Japan for six weeks visiting churches and schools in both Kanto (east) and Kansai (west) for lectures and preaching. He made a marked impact on all who attended these events. Indeed he was the ideal person as the first lecturer of the Fund. To date ten lecturers have been invited and each has made a valuable contribution from their own particular expertise. Ms. D. Lubguban from the Philippines was the first in the program of inviting research students. She came in 1981 and studied industrial psychology at Rikkyo University. Up to the present twenty-four researchers have been selected from developing countries. Their stay in Japan also brings about cultural exchange. Each one stays in Japan for about a year and a half, including a period to learn the Japanese language. The schools jointly share in their accommodation, studies and sojourns, This is part of PIM.

It has been a quarter of a century since the Fund was established and the enthusiasm seen in the early days seems to be declining. Social and economic reasons may be part of the reason for this trend. As we recall the historical background and the devoted efforts made by many in and out of the country to start the Fund so we should examine the present state of the Fund. And to plan for its future: lest the light of hope lit by Bp Williams should fade. It was said of him "He introduced the Way but not himself."

Rev. Robert Tetsuro Nishimura
Board of Trustees
The Bishop Williams' Memorial Fund of
Nippon Sei Ko Kai

Waging for Peace in Japan

The war on Iraq has begun contrary to our strong desire for a peaceful solution. Christians in Japan, as well as many people all over the world, are in great sorrow and are praying earnestly for the quickest end to the war.

On March 11 our primate the Most Rev. James Toru Uno issued a statement on Iraq in which he emphasized how we must listen to all those who suffer, especially the people of Iraq. Voices against the threat of war by the USA have been heard clearer and louder in the NSKK since last Advent. The first voice raised was when a voluntary women's group had a prayer meeting for peace. They listened to a report from a priest who had visited the Middle East in the previous summer. Since then many Christians including NSKK members, not only in Tokyo but in many local cities, have been actively waging for peace. The newly organized "Council for Peace and Justice, Diocese of Tokyo" also issued a statement opposing the Iraq war and called for prayer and action from the people of the diocese for peace. On March 21 the Tokyo diocese was having its annual general meeting when 50,000 people gathered for a peace rally in a park nearby St. Andrew's Cathedral. A motion was adopted to ring bells and take a break and express our solidarity with applause while the peace march passed the Cathedral. It was a heart moving moment and a great encouragement to all the people walking. On March 25 the Council for P&J,

Tokyo had a meeting to hear the report of a layperson who had just come back from Iraq as a member of the International Civil Investigation Team. Almost 160 people gathered from many churches including other denominations to hear his story and watch the video report. It was with much pain and with sincere concern that the participants joined in Prayers for peace.

Japanese Christians, a small minority in our society, are trying to work together ecumenically after our government started to show a more militaristic policy in the 1990's. "Christian Network for Peace - Sticking to the Peace Constitution" was founded by more than twenty denominations and Christian groups. Later we were confronted with the government's legislation to deal with emergencies. At that time religious people, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians got together and set up "The Religious People's Network for Peace".

Green banners of "Christian Network for Peace" have been seen every day since mid January and throughout February in front of the US Embassy to oppose the US led attack on Iraq. Now every Friday before going to the Embassy we stand near the Diet building to appeal to the government not to take part in the war in any way. We cannot give up, but much more has to be done to wage for peace here and all over the world.

Mary Junko Matsuura

The Rt. Rev. Toshiharu Okano was assigned to Brazil as a missionary

The Rt. Rev. Toshiharu Okano a former Bishop of the Kyoto Diocese left Japan for Sao Paulo, Brazil on January 16th, 2003. He decided to lead the worship in Japanese for the native Japanese members of St. John's Church in the Diocese of Sao Paulo, Episcopal Church of Brazil. There has been a century long history as thousands of Japanese immigrants struggled through blood and sweat to survive the harsh labor conditions there. The retired 78 year old bishop, together with his wife, wanted to care for those Issei Japanese (the first generation of Japanese immigrants). St. John's Church is far away from Japan on the other side of the globe but the bishop had a strong call from God to take care of those aged Isseis and to praise God together from this time on.

The Japanese Mission, Episcopal Church Brazil used to have its headquarters at St. John's. St. John's, where seventy percent of the members now are of Japanese descent, is celebrating its seventieth anniversary this year. But these Japanese are second and third generation and the senior priest is Brazilian with an assistant Japanese priest.

At the end of 2001 the priest who was ministering in Japanese returned to the Kobe Diocese in Japan and the Church Committee has been eagerly looking for a priest to minister to the small group of Issei members. The Rev. Okano responded immediately to their eager request.

The validity of a Mission visa is for one year only with a possible renewal for a further year. The Rt. Rev. Hiroshi Itoh, the Bishop of the Diocese of Sao Paulo said that as long as the health of the Bishop and his wife remain good all the Isseis would like to have them for two years.

May God bless the Rt. Rev. and Mrs. Okano's health and their future ministry.

