



*Together, the Body of Christ;
Individually, Its Parts" 1*

Corinthians 12:27

JAUC is a Christian community seeking to reach out, especially to Japanese and those who are interested in Japan in the greater New York City area, with the purpose of sharing faith in Christ

◆ Pastor's Message ◆

Why we observe Lent Lent focuses on the suffering of Jesus. This year, it begins on March 9 (Ash Wednesday) and ends on April 23 (Easter is April 24.) Why did Jesus suffer? It was because as the ultimate revelation of the will of God, he challenged the claim of the emperor Caesar to be Lord and criticized the peace of Rome as false peace. He even called the puppet king Herod a crafty fox (Luke 13:32). No wonder he was persecuted by the political and religious authorities of his time. Jesus faithfulness to the will of God led him to the cross. ◆ But Jesus' suffering was not only due to his rejection of their authorities as ultimate. His suffering was caused by those who were close to him. His suffering was caused by Judas Iscariot who sold him for thirty pieces of silver. His suffering was caused by Peter who denied him three times. His suffering was caused by the disciples who fled from him at the time he needed them most. Faced with the stark reality of the world, his disciples abandoned the prince of peace. ◆ And yet, Jesus on the cross cried out to God, "Father, forgive them!" Make no mistake. His words are meant for us. Lent is the time to realize it anew and repent. That is why Lent is important for us Christians. ◆ With that in mind, I would like to invite you to the following Lenten events at Japanese American United Church.

Ash Wednesday Worship - March 9 at 7 p.m., in the Sanctuary

Lenten Study - March 16-April 13 (five Wednesdays) 7p.m.-
8.30 p.m., in Fellowship Hall

Theme: "The Seven Last Words from the Cross"

Maundy Thursday Communion - April 21 at 7 p.m. Sanctuary

Good Friday Worship - April 22 at 7 p.m. Sanctuary

All are welcome. Please bring your friends.

◆ Sunday Worship Sermons ◆

■ **Jan.30 "The Peace of Rome vs. the Peace of Jesus"**
Matthew 5:1-12 "Blessed are poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and the peacemakers." The first century Palestine was under the imperial reign of Caesar and his puppet Jewish

king, Herod. Caesar and Herod used their powers to impose forced obedience on the people. ◆ The peace of Jesus was diametrically opposite to the peace of Rome. The poor in spirit - the poor and oppressed who were trying to get through a day without the minimum means of survival - are blessed because Jesus was bearing their burden with and for them. ◆ Then, those who mourn - persons who grieved over injustice, violence, and oppression, those - are blessed because their yearning was the same as God's yearning. ◆ Also, the meek - those who endured injustice, discrimination, and violence without becoming bitter and hate filled - are blessed because they did not lose faith in God in the midst of darkness. ◆ Lastly, the peacemakers - those who endured under Caesar and Herod without falling into despair - are blessed because they wanted what Jesus wanted: reconciliation and unity among people. ◆ Jesus rejected the peace of Rome and revealed the peace of God which is symbolized by Jesus' open table to everybody without any dividing walls. To yearn for such a world and to dream that dream with Jesus is difficult, but it is not impossible, because the ultimate ruler is the gracious and loving God whom Jesus revealed. To be convinced of this and find in that faith the source of joy, hope and courage - that is the peace of God Jesus has brought us.

■ **Feb. 6 "You are the Salt of the Earth" Matthew 5:13-16**
"You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." The metaphor of a pinch of salt and a lamp on a stand clarifies for us the purpose of JAUC. ◆ After the collapse of the Kingdom of David and Solomon, the people of Israel lost the purpose of life. The crowd who came to Jesus wanted to hear him speak about this particular question: what human life was all about. "The purpose of life is to be the salt of the earth." The people knew how a pinch of salt lent flavor to food. "You are to bring God's flavor to the world." Jesus continued, "The purpose of life is to be the light of the world." "You are here to make God's work visible. You are to make God's love and compassion as public as a city on a hill. You are light bearers." Then he concluded, "I am putting you on a light stand. So shine! Shine in the midst of darkness. Reflect my light. Be instruments of unity in God in the world where estrangement and separation prevail." ◆ A Japanese poet described this sorry situation of this world this way. 'I don't know what I live for. I often ask myself, "What do I live for? For women? For good food? For prestige?" Then my soul cries out wildly, "No, no, neither this nor that. Neither this nor that.' ◆ That is to say, JAUC is called to be a community of the faithful where the passion for unity is real, where compassion and mutual care are visible, and where energy and courage to live beyond business

as usual embrace all of its members: to bring God's flavor in the world, and to reflect God's light here and now.

◆ Building Repair Report ◆

Building Restoration Report: On Sunday, March 13, from 1:15pm, we will have a joint Board of Directors and Board of Trustees meeting to report and discuss the total amount of the repair fee which was spent, plan for a future budget, and possible fundraising. Anyone who is interested is welcome. Please continue to pray for the Team as it looks toward the next steps that need to be made.

◆ Preparation for Children's Summer Camp ◆

This year, SMJ's (Special Ministry to Japanese) "Children's Discovery Camp" will be held at Camp Quinpet, on Shelter Island, from July 10 to July 22. This Camp is a place where children can meet Christ through programs and fellowship with other kids and counselors, and it is gradually becoming a well known event in the NY Japanese community. The fee is \$1,300 per child. Brochures with details are already available at JAUC, so please forward them to households with small children. ◆ Rev. Jun Yoshimatsu of Good Shepherd Church in NJ, the new Camp Director, visited JAUC on Feb. 22 and called us to support the Camp with organizing a support group within our church and sending volunteers to SMJ's Camp Committee Meeting. Currently SMJ needs more volunteers (especially male) who can serve as camp counselors. Copies of the guidelines for volunteers are available at the Church Office, so please check it if you are interested. If you want to support the Camp with offerings, please write a check made payable to

◆ Church News ◆

■ **Rev. & Mrs. Suzuki's Journey to the Holy Land** Rev. and Mrs. Yugo Suzuki safely returned from their trip to Israel. The following is Rev. Suzuki's narrative of their journey: **Our Trip to the Holy Land** Elizabeth and Yugo recently visited the Holy Land for ten days. The following are some of the places we visited and our impression of them. ◆ Our first visit was the Sea of Galilee. The Sea is 13 miles long and 6 miles wide. Since Biblical times it has been famous for its abundance of fish. As you know, some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen, and he did much of his preaching by its shores. The blue water was surrounded by verdant grass and olive trees. The entire scenery was exquisite. We were reminded afresh of Jesus' saying, "Consider the lilies of the field. ..even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." ◆ Caesarea, a

Mediterranean sea shore, was another place of natural beauty. The ocean blue of the Mediterranean Sea and the bright white of the sand and rocks under the strong sun were breathtaking. It is where Herod the Great built a lavish summer villa and a splendid city dedicated to the Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar. The villa and the city were created on the sweat and tears of the ordinary Jews whom Herod sacrificed for the selfish purpose of preserving his status as a puppet king. ◆ Bethlehem, the traditional site of Jesus' birth, was another story. It is where thousands of Palestinian refugees live. It is surrounded by high walls that separate the Palestinians from the Jews. Their poverty was evident in their small and dilapidated living quarters and the worn-out clothes many of them wore. We saw the irony of history that the poor and oppressed are marginalized and isolated from the rich and comfortable. ◆ The most spectacular was Masada, an isolated mountain top fortress 1300 feet above the banks of the Dead Sea. We saw two luxurious palace complexes built by Herod the Great. The cable car operates daily to carry sightseers from the foot of the mountain to the top. Elizabeth chose the option of climbing that took 45 minutes. At the foot of the mountain, Herod built dams and canals that collected the rainwater into gigantic cisterns. The water was then carried by donkeys and slaves to the top of the mountain. We cannot imagine the amount of human labor required to build and maintain such great palace complexes for the purpose of manifesting the splendor and glory of the powerful. ◆ In Jerusalem, we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is built around what is believed to be the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and Resurrection. Sadly, however, Golgotha, the tomb, and the burial chamber are all covered by the Church in such a way that we were not able to discern what they really looked like in those days. ◆ In any case, we thoroughly enjoyed the trip. We would like to go there again in the near future. Now we have to sort through the 800 pictures Elizabeth took.

■ **Church Cleaning** Our annual church cleaning is scheduled for April 16. We need many helpers. Please join us!

■ **Leadership Retreat (April)** This year, we will hold a "Church Leadership Retreat" at JAUC again. The scheduled dates are Friday, April 1 starting at 6pm and Saturday, April 2, starting from 9:30am to 3:30pm. The theme of the event is: "Discovery Workshop: sharing stories of God's grace working in JAUC in order to discern His future direction." There will be a dinner on Friday and breakfast on Saturday. Ms. Gerri Yoshida will serve as the coordinator. Ms. Yoshida is also planning to hold a storytelling workshop at JAUC on March 27 and a leadership skill workshop on April 17.

■ **Donation for Child Sponsorship** Starting this March, the Fujinkai decided to participate in a Child Sponsorship Program with World Vision. They will support a child living in the Third World with \$35 a month. Photographs and letters of the child will be delivered to our church. Please join in our work with your donations! For details, ask Ms. Kumiko Bauman or Ms. Chizuko Imado. If the amount of the donations is more than anticipated, we will consider the possibility of increasing the number of children we support.

■ **Day of Remembrance** The annual Day of Remembrance will be held at JAUC Saturday, April 9. Please join if you are able.

■ **Aishukai Retreat** Our Aishukai Retreat will be held Oct. 8 – Oct. 9. This time, the retreat will be held at Warwick Retreat Center in Upstate NY. We will not invite a guest speaker but organize programs and take time to pray and meditate on God's glory and the future of JAUC. We need to confirm the number of participants. If you are interested, there is a sign-up sheet in the social hall, so please sign up.

■ **VIP Meeting:** The January VIP meeting was held at JAUC on Feb. 14, and Rev. Masahiko Sagara, the coordinator of SMJ (Special Ministry to Japanese) who returned to Japan on Feb. 19, shared memories of his NY life. In Japan, Rev. Sagara will work at Aoyama Gakuin High School in Tokyo. This monthly meeting of Japanese Christians living in NY and NJ is held at JAUC every second Monday, from 7:15pm. ♦ On Feb. 26, VIP held a concert, at JAUC, with Mr. Noboru Morishige, a Japanese Christian musician.

■ **Correction regarding Mr. Mukai's Moving** In the February newsletter, it was stated that Mr. George Mukai, who had been living at Isabella Home, moved to New Hampshire in January. However, this was a mistake: He moved to Oneonta, NY.

■ **News from Friends Aboard** Ms. Maiko Sato, who had been studying fashion at an institute in Paris since summer 2008, returned to Japan. She will start working in Osaka from March. ♦ Ms. Yoko Mazza, currently living in California, visited JAUC on Feb. 6. Her paintings were exhibited in a group exhibition held in a gallery in Chelsea in February.

■ **English Church Library** Our church's English library in the social hall contains wonderful books: famous Christian classics by John Wesley, Watchman Nee, William Berkley, A.W. Tozer, C.S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Augustine or newer books, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, and ones by Charles Colson, Billy Graham. Please check them!

■ **Request from JCFN** We recently received the following request from the Japanese Christian Fellowship Network, a Christian organization who has deep connections with JAUC: Chris Ishida, 19, from Glenview, IL, is a freshman at Pitzer College. He was diagnosed with Severe Aplastic Anemia and needs a marrow transplant. His best chances for a match will most likely come from an 18-30 year-old male of mixed Japanese and Caucasian descent. Please pray for Chris' healing and forward this information to others so that it will reach potential donors. For the test, all you need to do is get a simple cheek swab. The details about his case is on the website: <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/chrisishida>

◇ Prayer Requests ◇

Please remember the following people in your prayers: Roberto Acevedo, Rev. Barbara Alexander, Hisayo Asai, Michiko Gorman, Kazuko Inoue, Yuko Ito, Toshio Iwasa, Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka, Yone Kanzaki, Sue Kubo, Harry Kuwada, Fumiko Matsumoto, George Mukai (Bayside), George Mukai (now in Oneonta, NY), Mariko Nakamaru (who recently had eye surgery), Minako Noma, Ai Oguchi (from Westminster Japanese Church, Atlanta GA), Hisako Okuda, Akira Yamazaki (Ms. Horiuchi's brother), Kimi Yuzawa

JAUC Small Group Ministry

Small Group is the JAUC program for church members' spiritual growth. Through fellowship in a group, we will think and share how we can live as Christians in our daily lives. You may join one of the small groups below which you expect to meet your need. The following schedules are subjected to temporary changes. Please check the "Church Activity News" section of JAUC Newsletter and see whether there is any change.

- SG1. Bilingual Women's Group: 2nd & 4th Saturdays 1pm at Sonoda's
- SG2. Japanese Women's Group: 2nd Tuesdays 11am at Kusakabe's
- SG3. Bilingual Men's Group: 2nd & 4th Sundays 9:30 at JAUC (Kusakabe)
- SG4. Japanese Small Group: 2nd Sundays 2pm at JAUC (Kasuga)
- SG5. "The Vine" Japanese: 4th Sundays 2pm at JAUC (Kobayashi)
- SG6. "Testimony & Prayer Meeting": Last Friday 7pm at Sagae's
- SG7. English Small Group: 3rd Sundays 1:30pm at JAUC (Yoshida)

