



**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 ◆

Easter Faith Do you know Dr. Gordon Hirabayashi? He is a sociologist and a devout Christian (Quaker). He is known as a Japanese-American who protested the U.S. policy of putting the Japanese and Japanese-Americans on the West Coast into internment camps as enemy aliens at the break of World War II. I knew his father well. ◆ Mr. Hirabayashi, Sr. was a member of Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church in Seattle, Washington. When I became his pastor in 1971, he was confined to bed with cancer. I still remember our conversation in one of my visits with him. "You have lived a long and good life," I said. "That must be a great consolation." "Yes," he said. "But my main comfort is that soon I will get to be with Jesus." I was moved by his serenity in what must have been an extremely painful and difficult time. ◆ Mr. Hirabayashi knew that one day everything would come into focus, and he would see it all clearly, and what is promised today would be his tomorrow. But being with Jesus was not some purely future hope for him. No matter how lousy the present, expectation of a bright future kept him going in the difficult present. In other words, being with Jesus was a present reality for him. Mr. Hirabayashi was in some real sense already with Jesus. I came to realize that this confidence was the source of his inner peace. ◆ Come to think of it, that is the resounding affirmation of the Easter Faith, the sole ground for any real hope.

◆ Sunday Worship Sermons ◆

■ **March 6 "The Water of Eternal Life" John 4:7-15** In Jesus' time, the Samaritans were regarded as defiled and cursed people. The Jews never went close to a Samaritan village or even spoke to a Samaritan, fearful that they, too, might become contaminated. Jesus defied this way of thinking. He entered a Samaritan village and asked a Samaritan woman permission to drink from the well. ◆ This woman was not respectable even by Samaritan standards. She had had five husbands and now was living with a different man. And yet, Jesus did the unthinkable. His total acceptance of the

Samaritan woman was breath taking. His compassion elicited from her an honest and direct response. "Sir, give me the water of life so that I will never be thirsty again." Jesus responded, "I am that water. Believe in me." ◆ The living water is the unconditional and utterly inclusive grace of God. It is God's forgiveness given to all of us even before we repent. It was this precedence of forgiveness over repentance that the religious leaders of Jesus' time could not understand. ◆ Jesus says humans are so sinful that there was no way they can justify themselves to God. Human beings were sinful to the core. Try we may, we cannot overcome our sinfulness by our will power. All we can hope for is divine forgiveness. Unless divine forgiveness precedes our repentance, there is no hope for us. ◆ Does the precedence of forgiveness over repentance encourage the status quo? Does it make us lazy and complacent? Think of Peter who denied Jesus three times. Jesus' forgiveness enabled him to repent. And Jesus' forgiveness transformed Peter. Many years later he traveled as far as Rome to preach the Gospel; there he was crucified head down for the sake of Christ. What is the water of life? It is Jesus who forgives even before our repentance. It is Christ who keeps on forgiving. We cannot generate life for ourselves. We live by what we receive from God.

■ **March 20 "From Where will My Help Come?" Psalm 121** Japan is devastated by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, tsunami that destroyed thousands of human lives, and partial meltdown of nuclear reactors. In such a situation, what mystifies and even angers religious people like you and me is the silence of God. We wonder why God is not doing anything. Why do we hear no word from heaven? Does God care? Does he know we are pining? ◆ The Bible says that it is OK to ask those questions. The Bible is full of people who demand God to say something in times of trial. 22nd Psalm, for example, cries out to heaven. "My God, my God, why are you so far away? Can't you hear the words of my groaning?" The Bible also cautions us not to expect answers that satisfy our logic and reason. Do not expect any easy answers. ◆ In this context, we are to be reminded that nowhere in the Bible God promises trouble free life. What the Bible insists is this: God will never give up on us. He will be with us in the thick and thin. Then, too, the Bible declares that we humans are finite, imperfect, and limited in so many ways. We are human, not God. There are some things we may never know. This is a time to live without the answers. Christians go on living without the answers. ◆ So the Bible does not answer the question why, but it answers how. It answers how we should face suffering. Psalm 121 is important. It repeats the same message over and over again. "He who keeps you...The Lord will keep you...The Lord will keep your going out and

your coming in.” Six times in eight verses it repeats the same message. “The Lord is your keeper. ♦ God is with you. God is in the midst of you. God is among you. God is sharing your burden, your tears, your sweat and blood. In this time of an unprecedented disaster, God’s message about how we should act is ringing clear: help, share, pray. ♦ We should not speculate what eternal life is like. But we know, we are convinced that God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ will take care of all the victims as well as people who perished in tsunami, or who died in the shelter without medicine and treatment in his own way. God who gave his only Son to reconcile the world to himself will take care of them all right. God is not silent, after all. That is our hope, our Christian hope that braces us for the living of these days.

◆ Building Repair Report ◆

Building Restoration Report: The Committee met on March 15 and 27. Many new people have taken an interest in what is happening for this project and have joined the committee. We found that as a committee, it was difficult to come to a unified decision, given the scope of the project. Among other things, the architect was urging us to make decisions about what to do with the façade and kitchen in order for the project to move forward. Also during this time, different opinions about the quality of work performed were brought up by different people, although nothing serious was found. There is also a lack of detail in invoices given to us, which we are working on getting from the construction manager. Although we had hoped to finish all Phase 1 work with the Architect/Construction Manager we had hired, it was decided to terminate our relationship due to these issues. ♦ Currently our goals are: (1) to finish the remaining work in Phase 1, namely repair of the roof, tiles on the façade, and the installation of Emergency Exit signs and lights; (2) to clear building code violations. Fire Department Inspectors recently visited JAUC and informed us that the kitchen can be categorized as a "commercial kitchen". If we fry anything, we must install a new fire extinguisher system, called an Ansul system. One bid received was for \$12,000 but we are getting other bids. If we do not install the Ansul System, the kitchen will be designated an "incidental cooking" kitchen (meaning we cannot pan fry or deep fry any foods and only cook soups/stews or bake in the oven). In addition we will be subject to bi-weekly inspections by the Fire Department. ♦ An inspector of the City Buildings Department also visited and pointed out that we need to have a "Certificate of Operations" and pay an annual fee. There is a possibility that we filed it years ago, and we are checking records.

◆ Preparation for Children’s Summer Camp ◆

This year, SMJ (Special Ministry to the Japanese)’s, “Children Discovery Camp” will be held at Camp Quinipet, 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. The fee is \$1,300 per child. Brochures with details are available at JAUC, so please forward them to households with small children. Rev. Jun Yoshimatsu of Good Shepherd Church is the Camp Director.

◆ Earthquake Relief Fund ◆

From Rev. Suzuki As the Japanese people face unprecedented disasters, many church agencies have started fundraising for relief activities. The Board of Directors of the Japanese American United Church met last Sunday (March 13) afternoon and decided to call upon every member and friend of the church to give generously through the two denominations to which we belong: United Methodist Church and Reformed Church of America. Their relief agencies are closely connected with United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) and National Council of Churches in Japan (NCCJ). The monies will be used for restoration and recovery needs in northern Japan. ♦ I would like you to keep in mind that our donations will be a long term one. The magnitude of the disasters is truly unprecedented and requires our continuous support and prayers. ♦ Please make your checks payable to JAUC and note clearly “Japan Relief.” We will acknowledge every donor in the Geppo.

◆ Earthquake Related News ◆

■ **JAUC members and friends in Japan are safe** Ms. Maiko Sato’s parents, who live in Sendai, were confirmed safe, but due to lack of water and electricity, temporarily moved to a shelter. Ms. Tomoko Suzuki was on the way to Sendai to visit her family when the earthquake stopped her train. Both Ms. Suzuki and her family are safe. So far all the JAUC members and friends who have checked in as safe.

■ **Amount of the donations collected** The donations for the earthquake victims, collected by JAUC, totals \$8,091.00. We will send the accumulated total to the denominations at the end of April. However, we will continue to collect and send funds once every three months.

■ **Charity Concert at JAUC** A concert for earthquake victims was held at JAUC on March 26. About 100 people came. Ms.

Naoko Aita, Ms. Noriko Kumada, Ms. Yukiko Tanaka, and several other musicians participated. The audience was touched, especially by the powerful gospel singing of Peace & Serenity Ministries and the Cocolo Gospel Choir. The total amount raised was \$1,655.25. The Fujinkai members raised an additional \$186 from the sale of *onigiri* and water. The donations were sent to Japan Society Earthquake Relief Fund.

■ **Sunday School will help a Charity Event** A charity event to support the earthquake orphans will be held at St. Marks-of-the-Bowery Church on April 10 (Rain date April 17), from 1pm. Some of teachers and children of JAUC Sunday School will also join and sell *ohagi*.

■ **Bishop Park's Encouragement** Bishop Jeremiah Park of the United Methodist Church attended JAUC worship service on March 20 and delivered a message of encouragement. "You are not alone. All the members of the United Methodist Church in this district are supporting you. God is always with us and protecting us." Bishop Park was visiting Haiti on March 11, and as soon as he heard the news of the earthquake, he prayed with the Haitian church members, who had survived the 2010 earthquake. We thank him for his kind words.

■ **Interfaith Service at the UN Chapel** An interfaith service was held at the United Nations Chapel on March 18, and Rev. Suzuki delivered a message as a representative of Japanese Christians in NY. Several JAUC members also attended.

■ **Rev. Akira Sato** The Fukushima First Bible Baptist Church, where Rev. Akira Sato is pastor, closed as it is in the Nuclear Reactor evacuation zone. Rev. Sato served as a guest speaker for the 2006 Family Camp. Currently staying at a church near Tokyo, his testimony can be found on www.f1church.com.

◇ Church News in General ◇

■ **Passing of Ms. Aya Kuwayama** Ms. Aya Kuwayama, who had been a longtime JAUC member, passed away on March 21. She regularly sang in the Choir and served as a Greeter. The Memorial Service date has not been set. She will be missed.

■ **Lent Schedule** Lenten study meeting of Rev. Suzuki is held in the JAUC Fellowship Hall every Wednesday from 7pm until April 13. The theme is "The Seven Last Words from the Cross." Maundy Thursday Communion is scheduled for April 21 from 7 pm in the JAUC Sanctuary. Good Friday Worship will be held on April 22 from 7 pm. ◆ Easter Sunday (April 24) After worship service, we will have a potluck lunch. Sign-

up sheets are posted on the bulletin board in the Fellowship Hall, so please check them.

■ **Spring Church Cleaning** Church cleaning is scheduled for April 16 and May 14. There will be two shifts, one in morning and one in afternoon. Please come when you are able.

■ **Leadership Retreat** The leadership retreat, originally scheduled for April, was postponed to May 21. The program, consisting of workshops to develop church leadership skills, will start from 10 am and end at 3pm. Ms. Gerri Yoshida will serve as coordinator. Please join!

■ **Alpha Course will start again** "Alpha," the introductory course for Christianity, will start again at JAUC from May 4. Please invite your friends!

■ **Ms. Kumada will perform in a musical** Ms. Noriko Kumada will perform in a passion musical "The Glory of the Resurrection," presented by Kenny Smith's Peace & Serenity Ministries at PS11/William Harris School on April 16.

◇ Prayer Requests ◇

Please remember the following people in your prayers: Those that continue to suffer from the Earthquake in Japan, Roberto Acevedo, Rev. Barbara Alexander, Hisayo Asai, Michiko Gorman, Yuko Ito, Toshio Iwasa, Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka, Yone Kanzaki, Sue Kubo, Harry Kuwada, Fumiko Matsumoto, George Mukai (Bayside), George Mukai (Oneonta, NY), Mariko Nakamaru (who had eye surgery), Minako Noma, Ai Oguchi (Westminster Japanese Church, Atlanta GA), Hisako Okuda, Akira Yamazaki (Ms. Horiuchi's brother), Tazuko Hosaka, 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 & 4th 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)

