



## *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 and growing together in Christian discipleship

### ◆ Pastor's Message ◆

***Dear Members and Friends of JAUC*** As many of you already know, in the last Board of Directors' meeting, I notified them of my intention to resign effective July 31, 2011. I began my ministry at JAUC the first Sunday of August 2006, so I will have completed 5 years as pastor to you. ◆ It has been a unique privilege for Elizabeth and me to serve JAUC. When I arrived, it was for a one-year tenure as part-time interim pastor working 20 hours a week. My primary responsibility was to enable JAUC to have a successful soft-landing in a trying time. More concretely, I was asked to give biblically sound sermons, lead Bible Studies and help restore communication between the pastor and congregants. ◆ Now almost five years have passed. I believe I have been faithful in these responsibilities. Elizabeth and I have taken on more and more of the work of the church and have seen many folks grow in their faith and everyday lives. For this we give our heartfelt thanks to God and you. ◆ Having soft-landed, JAUC must fly now. For that, Elizabeth and I have come to realize that JAUC needs new pastoral leadership. It needs a pastor who can guide you in all areas of congregational life and lead JAUC for its future ministry. I have done some of that, but it needs much more hands-on pastoral leadership than a part-time pastor can give. ◆ We will return to our home in southern New Jersey and look forward to finding new challenges and responsibilities, although hopefully at a slower pace. ◆ We appreciate the support you have given us the past five years and pray that JAUC will continue to fulfill its unique ministry in New York City. In service to God with you, Yugo Suzuki

### ◆ Sunday Worship Sermons ◆

■ ***April 3 "Seeing the Invisible" 1 Corinthians 4:16-18*** A few years ago, I had my heart x-rayed. For the first time in my life I saw a clear picture of my own heart. But I did not see my soul. The soul was invisible. Of course, we all know that. And yet, we often fall into the illusion that only the empirically observable and verifiable are true. ◆ Paul reminds us of this

danger in the Bible, "What is visible is temporary, but what is invisible is eternal." He is talking about the grace of God. We can see it only when we put on the pair of glasses that Jesus wears. Jesus emphasized the same point with the following words. "Look at the birds in the air. Look at the lilies of the field." Your naked eyes can tell that they are innocent and beautiful." "But look again. There is more to what your naked eyes can see. Behind their beauty and innocence, there is the leading hand of a gracious and loving God. So look again." ◆ In the recent New York Times' article, the reporter says that he can see a new spiritual awakening among university students in Japan. Before the tragedy, all they were concerned about was how to get ahead in society and land a job at a prestigious company. But now, they are interested in solidarity with others. Selfishness is being taken over by mutual concern. What the eye of faith sees is the grace of God that is behind this spiritual transformation of Japanese university students. ◆ When we wear Jesus' glasses, we can see something profound. Through the eye of faith we can discern the guiding hand of God. So let us look closely at what is invisible. Let us look closely at the truth that nothing can separate us from God in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

■ ***April 10 "Lazarus, Come Out" John 11:38-44*** The brother of Mary and Martha, Lazarus becomes ill and dies. His two sisters are grief stricken. Moved by their grief and love for their brother, Jesus visits the tomb where Lazarus is buried and calls out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" At that, Lazarus appears, his hands and feet and face bound with strips of cloth. There is profound symbolism in this, and it is essential for us to understand it. ◆ In Jesus' days, the tomb stood for spiritual darkness we humans harbor in our inner beings: animosity, self-centeredness, anger and estrangement in general. In other words, human sinfulness. ◆ This episode teaches us four essential points as follows: One, we are living in darkness. We love neither God nor our fellow human beings. We are self-preoccupied, prideful, worry-filled, miserable, and insensitive. We are sinners. We are in the tomb. We are all Lazarus. ◆ Two, Jesus transforms us from a life of self-centeredness to a life of compassion and love. Jesus is the Transformer, Liberator and Savior. ◆ Then, three, Will we heed Jesus' call, "Lazarus, come out"? Or will we turn deaf ears to his call? It is well for us to be reminded that in order to hear Jesus' call clearly, we need to have a sensitive heart; otherwise we will miss it. This is the fourth point of the story. ◆ Let me share an episode sent to us through e-mail by our friend in Japan last week. There was a 9 year-old boy wearing only a T-shirt and a pair of shorts among the people lined up for food, his mother and little sister were missing and father had been swept away right before his

eyes. A charity worker gave him an extra bag of food. He then walked up to the front of the line and put it where the food was waiting to be distributed. Asked if he was not hungry, he replied, "I see a lot more people hungrier than I am." ♦ Don't you hear Jesus saying to us, "Come out of the darkness of self-concern. You can live lovingly and compassionately no matter what your situation. Indeed, nothing, even unprecedented earthquakes and tsunami and even death itself can prevent us from making our human life truly human. Jesus is with us.

## ◆ Preparation for Children 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 children 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 Related News ◆

■ **Japan Earthquake Relief Fund** JAUC started collecting donations for the victims of the March 11, Japan Earthquake. As of April 30, we have received \$11,373.50. 25% of the Easter Offering (\$1,256.00) is also allocated to the Earthquake Relief Fund, so the total amount of donations collected equals \$12,629.50. This amount will be equally divided and sent to both the United Methodist Church and the Reformed Church of America within this week. The relief agencies of these denominations are closely connected with United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) and National Council of Churches in Japan (NCCJ). All the monies will be used for the restoration and recovery needs. Still 120,000 sufferers are reportedly living in shelters, and long-time relief effort is needed. We will continue to collect donations for those that sufferer. ♦ By May 6, the following casualties and damages caused by the earthquake and the tsunami have been confirmed at: 14,841 killed; 11,746 missing; 5,277 injured; 77,174 houses were destroyed. At least 3 churches were completely destroyed.

■ **Rev. Yamamoto's Presentation** Rev. Andrew Yamamoto, the supervisor of the Asian Mission of the RCA (Reformed Church of America), went to Japan in March. There he assisted in the RCA's effort to bring food and supplies to those living in shelters in Ishinomaki and other locations. On May 1, Rev. Yamamoto held a meeting at JAUC and reported the details of the present condition and the denomination's relief efforts. According to Rev. Yamamoto, most of the sufferers are

receiving sufficient amounts of food, water, and other supplies (though some items such as toilet paper are still needed), and the victim's most earnest wish is "to return to a normal life as soon as possible." During the presentation, Rev. Yamamoto showed many photographs of the area devastated by the tsunami. We were shocked by the dreadful power of the waves: One photo shows a residential area where all of the houses were washed off of their foundations, and others showed a car hanging from a roof top. Rev. Nathan Brownell, who was the JAUC pastor until 2006 and is currently serving as a missionary in Yokohama, also went to Higashi-Matsushima and other locations to support the RCA's relief work. Rev. Yamamoto also had photos of Rev. Brownell and his family.

■ **Sunday School helps with a Charity Event** A charity bazaar to support earthquake orphans was held at St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery on April 10. Sunday School teachers and Mothers made *ohagi* to be sold at the event. Some members of JAUC also participated in the bazaar.

■ **Rev. Akira Sato** The Fukushima First Bible Baptist Church, where Rev. Akira Sato is pastor, closed as the church is located in the Nuclear evacuation zone. Rev. Sato served as a guest speaker for the 2006 Family Camp. He is currently staying at a church near Tokyo, His testimony can be found on [www.f1church.com](http://www.f1church.com).

## ◆ Church News in General ◆

■ **Congregational Meeting** A congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, June 12. A progress report on the activities of the Building Restoration Team will be made. Please join us.

■ **[Announcement from the Board of Directors] Regarding Pastor Calling Process** Because Rev. Suzuki is leaving at the end of July, we have to look for a new pastor as soon as possible. The Board of Directors (BoD) discussed this matter at the Board meeting on May 7, and decided that the BoD would take charge of the process of pastor search. During past two years, the Pastor Calling Committee did extensive research for the pastor search process and the denominations' appointment system in order to find an assistant pastor for JAUC. Though this time we have to look for a full-time pastor rather than an assistant pastor, we will use their research results for our search. We want to express our sincere gratitude for the members of the Committee and for their hard work. We will regularly update the congregation regarding the search process.

■ **Memorial Sunday Service / Visit to Cemeteries** May 29 is Memorial Day Sunday. During the worship service, we will

dedicate white carnations in memory of members, relatives, and friends who passed away during past year. Rev. Suzuki will offer a prayer. If you have the name of someone you want to print on the program, please report his or her name, the age, and the date of passing to the Church Office by May 24. ♦ The annual cemetery service held by the Japanese American organizations will be held at Mt. Olivet Cemetery and Cypress Hill Cemetery on May 30. If you want to join, please make a reservation for a bus seat. The Bus is reserved by the Nikkeijin-kai (For reservation: 212-840-6942. Fee: \$15). We are planning to leave the Nikkeijin-kai at 10AM, and we will visit Mt. Olivet first, followed by Cypress Hill. The JAUC vault is in Cypress Hill, and Rev. Suzuki will conduct a memorial service there.

■ **Spring Cleaning** The second church cleaning is scheduled for Saturday, May 14. This time, we will clean the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> floors. There will be two shifts (morning / afternoon). Please join and help us!

■ **Japanese Bible Study** Rev. Suzuki's Japanese Bible Study will restart from Sunday, May 15. We will study the Old Testament. The study will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, from 1:15PM.

■ **Hymnal Workshop** Mrs. Elizabeth Suzuki will hold a "Hymnal Workshop" on Sunday, May 29, from 1:15PM. Based on the new English hymnal, we will explore how we should prepare our hearts for worship service by hymn-singing and what kind of songs are in the hymnals. Please join!

■ **Spring Alpha Course!** "Alpha," the introductory course for Christianity Basics, started May 11. The sessions are held every Wednesday, from 7PM. There will be 13 sessions ending July 13. For further details, ask Ms. Rika Marubashi Downs.

■ **Supporting a Child through World Vision** The Fujinkai has been participating in the child sponsorship program of World Vision since March. World Vision recently sent us the photo and the profile of the child receiving our support. Her name is Zamzam Shukuruani Iddi, a four-year girl from Tanzania.

■ **JAKU Event** Japan Korea United (JAKU), the Christian organization of Koreans and Japanese working for the Salvation of Japanese in New York, will hold an evangelical meeting at JAUC on Thursday, June 2, from 7:30PM. The main speaker is Mrs. Lee Songhe, the wife of Rev. Tetsuo Nakajima. Rev. Nakajima is an interesting figure: he used to be a yakuza (mafia) in Japan, but after a dramatic conversion, he became a pastor! The program is offered both in Japanese and Korean. JAKU will have two more meetings in New Jersey and Manhattan on May 29 and 30, and Rev. Nakajima will deliver messages at these meetings.

## ◆ News regarding Church Members ◆

■ **Mrs. Butler's Passing** Ms. Laura Yoshiko Butler, of Brooklyn, who had been a member of JAUC for many long years, passed away on Feb. 4. She was 73. In the past, Mrs. Butler often attended Fujinaki meetings. May God comfort the hearts of her husband Mr. Philip Butler and other family members.

■ **Dr. Omura's Passing** Dr. George A. Omura, medical oncologist, brother of June I. Goldberg and son of the late Bunji K. Omura and Martha P. Omura, died in Birmingham, AL on April 19. He is survived by his wife, Dr. Emily F. Omura, four children, and five grand-children. A memorial service will be held May 23 in Birmingham.

■ **Memorial Service** The memorial service of Ms. Aya Kuwayama, who passed away on March 21, will be held at JAUC on June 25, afternoon.

■ **Chizuko Imado graduated!** Ms. Chizuko Imado finished her two-year course for a Certificate in Christian Ministry at The New York Theological Seminary. The graduation ceremony is scheduled for May 21. Congratulation!

## ◆ Prayer Requests ◆

Please remember the following people in your prayers: The sufferers of the Earthquake in Japan, Roberto Acevedo, Rev. Barbara Alexander, Hisayo Asai, Michiko Gorman, Tazuko Hosaka, Yuko Ito, Toshio Iwasa, Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka, Yone Kanzaki, Sue Kubo, Harry Kuwada, Fumiko Matsumoto, George Mukai (Bayside), George Mukai (now in Oneonta, NY), 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: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays 1pm at Sonoda's
- SG2. Japanese Women's Group: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays 11am at Kusakabe's
- SG3. Bilingual Men's Group: 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays 9:30 at JAUC (Kusakabe)
- SG4. Japanese Small Group: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays 2pm at JAUC (Kasuga)
- SG5. "The Vine" Japanese: 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays 2pm at JAUC (Kobayashi)
- SG6. "Testimony & Prayer Meeting": Last Friday 7pm at Sagae's
- SG7. English Small Group: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays 1:30pm at JAUC (Yoshida)