



**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 ◆

What distinguishes the church from other organizations of good will? What is the essential characteristic of the church that makes it stand out in the world? It is worship. A church without worshipping people is no church even if it is bubbling with bustling activities and strong finance. ◆ When I became pastor of Japanese American United Church, I was asked by the Pastor Calling Committee to rebuild a worshipping congregation as my utmost responsibility. My motto as your pastor has been this: "The church exists by worship just as fire exists by burning." ◆ What is worship? Preaching is essential of course, but it is not the only thing. Well prepared organ and piano music, sincere reading and hearing of the word of God, vibrant congregational singing, earnest prayers, a faithful choir, mutual greetings in the name of Christ are all essential elements of a worship service. ◆ With that in mind, Elizabeth and I have been working with you till now. We have been able to introduce to you some unfamiliar hymns, new and old. Your responses to my sermons have been encouraging. The organ and piano (thank you, Aita-san!) prelude and postlude have been well received. The enthusiasm of the choir has been contagious. The congregational greeting, "May the peace of Christ be with you," has been well accepted. ◆ And yet, not everything is hunky-dory. At a contentious meeting of the Building Restoration Committee, I introduced Paul's advice to churches in conflict: repentance, mutual civility, and prayer. Then I asked the members in attendance how they would respond to Paul's advice. One member replied, "Indifferent." That was the saddest moment in my 45-year ministry. ◆ At that moment it became clear that the spirit of worship had not sufficiently permeated into the congregational life. I became aware that for that to happen, new pastoral leadership (preferably full time) was necessary. Now I have become aware more than ever what JAUC needs to aim at from now on. ◆ Let me list some of them. Worship is not confined to 11-12 o'clock, Sunday morning, because everything we do and say is worship. Our prayer is not confined to collective and individual

prayers in Sunday services, because everything we do and say is prayer. Praise is not confined to singing in the sanctuary, because everything we do and say is praise. The greeting in the sanctuary, "May the peace of Christ be with you," needs to be carried to the boards and committees, because we need the spirit of Christ in everything we do and say. ◆ Come to think of it, those aims are what every church on earth needs to affirm and work for. The future of JAUC depends upon its success in this matter. So let me close my pastor's message with the following words as my fervent prayer. "May God bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." Numbers 6: 24-26

## ◆ From Sunday Worship Sermons ◆

■ "The Old Way and the New Way" Luke 7:41-47 The Pharisee named Simon invites Jesus for dinner. It is clear that Simon wants to use this occasion to slight Jesus, to take him down a bit. In Jesus' days, guests were usually offered water to wash their feet, and had fragrant olive oil poured on their head. That act was symbolic of acceptance and good will on the part of the host. Well, Simon the Pharisee did not offer Jesus any of these. ◆ Suddenly a prostitute walked into the room with a bottle of fragrant olive oil in her hands. Crying, she washed Jesus' feet with her tears and poured the perfume on them. Simon was shocked and offended because in those days, it was commonly thought that when a defiled person touched you, in that instance, you would be made defiled, too. ◆ Jesus completely denied this old way of thinking. He declared that God did not curse anyone. He loved this woman totally and absolutely. She could change her ways and start anew. "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." ◆ Jesus gave her exactly what she needed: compassion and encouragement. Jesus loved Simon the Pharisee just as much as the sinful woman. Jesus told Simon in no uncertain terms that he was arrogant, plagued with a superiority complex, devoid of compassion, and, therefore, unable to regard the woman as a precious human being loved by God. ◆ Let us be clear. Jesus' stringent firmness was not a sign of his rejection of Simon, but manifestation of his love. Jesus gave him an opportunity to change his ways: to be compassionate, to be open, to be what God intended him to be. ◆ What does all this have to do with us, members of JAUC? His message to us is clear. "You can change your ways. You can start anew, because that is God's intention for you." Here again Jesus the new way transforms us the old way. Thanks be to God.

■ **"I am the Good Shepherd "John 10:11-15** "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." He protects his flock even at the cost of his own life. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." ♦The sheep for Jesus were the sick whom Jesus healed, the blind whose sight he restored, the mentally ill whom he liberated, and the marginalized whom he empowered. The wolves were those who hindered Jesus' ministry. They were the scribes and the Pharisees who looked down upon the marginalized, who regarded the poor and oppressed as cursed by God. ♦Are we the sheep or are we the wolves? The correct answer may be that we are both. One day we may be on the receiving end of unfair criticism. But another day we may dish out harsh and unfair criticism against those with whom we disagree. We vehemently protest unkind words hurled at us, but we do the same to others whom we dislike. We are sheep and wolves, victims and victimizers. ♦ When we are victimizers, Jesus reveals to us in no uncertain terms that we are callus and cold and need to change our ways. Jesus' love for us victimizers has an element of stringency, discipline, and rigor so that we may repent. That is what we need. But when we are victims, Jesus the good shepherd is infinitely gentle and full of mercy and compassion, because that is what we need. ♦ Jesus loves us whether we are sheep or wolves. He gives us what we need. His love never excludes anyone. Jesus the good shepherd loves us all, sheep and wolves, victims and victimizers alike.

## ◆ Preparation for Children' s Summer Camp◆

This year, SMJ (Special Ministry to the Japanese)'s "Children's 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 is the Camp Director. We hope that as many as 25 children will participate.

## ◆ Earthquake Related News◆

■ **Japan Earthquake Relief Fund** By April 30, JAUC had collected \$11,373.50 for Japan earthquake relief. Together with the 25% of Easter Offering (\$1,256.00), it was sent to United Methodist Church and Reformed Church of America. 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), and all the monies will be used for the restoration and recovery needs in northern

Japan. Still 99,000 sufferers are reportedly living in shelters, and long-time relief effort is needed. We are continuously collecting donations for these sufferers. Within May, \$756.80 was donated to the relief fund. ♦By June 3, the following casualties and damages caused by the earthquake and the tsunami have been confirmed: 15,327 were killed; 8,343 are still missing; 5,277 were injured; 77,174 houses were destroyed. At least 2 Protestant churches were completely destroyed by the tsunami.

■ **Rev. Paul Suzuki's Presentation** Rev. Paul Suzuki, who worked in Japan for many years as a missionary of a Christian organization "Hi-b-a," held a small meeting at JAUC on May 20. Rev. Paul served as a lay leader at JAUC twenty years ago. He was in Chicago this spring, but as he heard the news of the Japan earthquake, he went to Japan at the end of March and headed to the areas devastated by the tsunami. At the meeting, Rev. Paul screened the video images of Minamisanriku and Takayama, the towns wiped off by the tsunami, and emphasized the necessity of a long-term support for the sufferers. Especially impressive was a report about a church in Isinomaki. Usually only 5 or 6 people attend the Sunday service of the church, but after the earthquake, 30 people, mostly non-Christians, came to the service. When they found that the Scripture passages were not printed in the programs, they copied them by hand! Similar scenes were seen at other churches too. This shows that people's inner desire for God surfaced as a result of the disaster. We hope we can help them! Rev. Paul will go to Japan this July again.

## ◆ Building Restoration◆

**Congregational Meeting** Much of the repair works from the Phase 1 has been completed. However, some work still remains. In addition, since the start of the project, we have received several violation notifications from the City Department of Buildings and the Fire Department, and these violations must be cleared as soon as possible. On May 22, the Board of Directors approved the amount up to \$75,000 to cover the expense of all these remaining items. In order to obtain approval of the congregation, the Board decided to hold a congregational meeting on Sunday, June 12, from 1:30pm. The church has already sent invitation letters with the details to all church members. Please read them and come to the meeting.

## ◆ Church Schedule◆

■ **Fujinkai Bazaar** The Fujinkai will hold a bazaar on Sunday, June 19, from 1:15pm. The proceeds will be donated to the church's Japan Earthquake Relief Fund and the Building

Restoration Fund. We are collecting the items to sell, such as clothes, kitchen wares, books, etc. If you want to donate these items, please put them into the cardboard boxes in the social hall. The sales of the lunch on the day will also be added to the sales of the bazaar.

■ **Spring Alpha Course** “Alpha,” the introductory course for Christianity Basics, started June 1. The sessions are held every Wednesday, from 7PM. There will be 13 sessions ending August 3, and you can join from any session. The topics this month are: “Why did Jesus die?” (Jun. 8); “How can I be sure of my faith?” (Jun. 15); “Why and how should I read the Bible?” (Jun. 22); “Why and how do I pray?” (Jun. 29). For further details, please contact Ms. Rika Marubashi Downs.

■ **Church Workshop** The “Discovery Workshop,” led by Ms. Gerri Yoshida, was held at JAUC on May 21 to consider the future direction of our church. About 12 church members attended. At the beginning of the event, Rev. Yugo Suzuki led a devotion based on Ephesians 2:14-16. He emphasized (1) The foundation of the Church is worship of God; (2) The Church existed by its mission, prayer, and worship as fire existed by burning. During the session, the participants considered what kind of Grace we were receiving from God and what we should do to spread His Good News. Many good ideas of future ministry programs were presented, but it was also pointed out that most importantly, each member should consider deeply what he or she can commit to do for God. The participants agreed to consider what they could do to carry out these ideas by the next meeting. The next session is scheduled for Sunday, June 26, from 1:15pm.

■ **Visit to Cemeteries** The annual cemetery service organized by the Japanese American organizations was held on May 30. First, there was a ceremony at Mt. Olivet Cemetery with flower offering and reading of messages. Then 15 people moved to Cypress Hill Cemetery, where the vault of JAUC is located. Rev. Suzuki conducted a memorial service. We did not have a burial this year. We thank Rev. and Mrs. Suzuki for a full-day’s service!

■ **Baby!** In April, a baby was born to Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Silva, who had served in JAUC’s SAF (Sunday Afternoon Fellowship) around 2005. She is named “Luna.”

## ◇ Local Church Network ◇

■ **VIP Meeting** The May VIP meeting was held on May 9. Ms. Yoko Shibakawa of Philadelphia Japanese Church talked about the significance to support people in Japan not only materially but also spiritually. The June meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 13, from 7:15pm, and Rev. Yugo Suzuki will give a talk.

## ◇ From the JAUC Archive ◇

**The Great Kanto Earthquake** How did JAUC react to the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, which devastated Tokyo and the nearby regions? Before being united in 1953, JAUC was separated in three independent churches. One of them, the Japanese Christian Institute, was issuing evangelical newsletters titled *The Progress*, and the volumes between 1923 and 1924 are still preserved in the JAUC Archive. According to these newsletters, the Women’s Group of the church collected 1,300 items of clothes, shoes, hats, and gloves and sent them to Japan. They also received commissions from the American Red Cross to sew 75 pieces of clothing in total. In addition, a considerable amount of donations were offered by many members. The December issue of the newsletter prints a letter from a church member (friend?) in Tokyo which vividly describes the tense atmosphere of the capital immediately after the disaster. The same issue contains a message of Rev. Sojiro Shimizu, the pastor of the church, regarding the wonderfulness of faith as God’s Gift. It is concluded with the following words: “During this Thanksgiving season, we want to deepen our gratitude for our living faith and the spiritual Gifts received from God. Even if an earthquake destroys our houses and the water wipes off all things, nothing can take away our faith in God, which makes us to be with Christ. This faith is the greatest wealth, knowledge, and ability, above everything in this world. Because of this faith, together with Christ, we Christians have won a victory over the world.”

## ◇ 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, Yuko Ito, Toshio Iwasa, Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka, Yone Kanzaki, Sue Kubo, Harry Kuwada, Fumiko Matsumoto, George Mukai (Bayside), George Mukai (Oneonta), Minako Noma, Ai Oguchi (from Westminster Japanese Church), 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.

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)