



## *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

### ◆ From Sunday Worship Sermon ◆

■ **Nov. 20: Rev. Takako Terino “My Father is the Vine Grower” *John 15: 1-8*** In the passage for today, the most famous section is where Jesus says “I am the vine and you are the branches,” but I’m calling this sermon title “My Father is the Vine Grower.” Because, the picture is not complete just with Jesus as the vine and we as the branches. This metaphor works only with the presence of God the Father as the Vine Grower. ◆ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.” Here at the beginning is the relationship between Jesus and God the Father. It is the job of the vine grower to prune the branches so that they bear fruit. The important point is, right after this, Jesus says “You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.” (v.3) Why is he talking about the disciples being clean? It sounds way out of context. But in Greek, which the Gospel was written, the word “to prune” used in the previous verse is exactly the same word as the word “to cleanse” as in Jesus saying “You have already been cleansed by the word.” Here Jesus reassures the disciples by telling them that “they all are indeed the branches that God is pruning, because you are to bear fruit.” ◆ Anyone who believes in Jesus and strives to follow him is a disciple of Jesus; sure, some are better than others at following Him, yet it is not for us to judge each other. So the words of this passage here are not meant to separate Christians from non-Christians, but they are meant for all of us who would incline our ears to Jesus’ words and his teachings. All of us who listen to Jesus’ teachings are already being pruned and being tended to by the vine grower, not because of our own accomplishment, but because of Jesus’ words, which are the will of God. If we are Jesus’ disciples, we are the branches that God prunes and takes care of, so that we may bear fruit. And this is the basis of our relationship with God. ◆ This work of “pruning” involves removing things that prevent our growth; God’s loving care would not leave us growing every which way we please. We all experience events in our lives when our plans have been stunted, an experience

that make us feel like a complete failure. We have our own picture of what a “fruitful life” looks like and can be easily disappointed. Even in the face of such experience, or rather, especially in the face of such experience, the word of Jesus, “we have already been cleansed by his words” comforts us and gives us hope to move on with life. We might readjust the course of life a bit, but we are meant to keep on growing, for God promises much fruit through us. ◆ The one who follows Christ is one who abides in Christ. But this relationship is not maintained by OUR desperate grasp on Jesus. Rather, this relationship is maintained because of the work and the will of God, who has in mind to bring much fruit through us. This is the foundational truth about our relationship with Jesus and with God. ◆ The verse 7 teaches us, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” This doesn’t mean that once you become a Christian, all your dreams come true. Christians are not spared from humbling experiences in life. But what this verse means is that, when our lives are in accord with what Jesus teaches, our desire will be in accord with Jesus’ words and in accord with the will of God. And it is God who brings us to that point, by lovingly pruning us. In verse 8, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” The fruit the disciples bear reveals the work of the God of Love in this world. The fruit that we bear is the Love of God that shines in the darkness of the world. That is God’s glory. ◆ Imagine, then, many branches extending from one vine. Because the careful and attentive Vine Grower tends to the branches, each bears much fruit, but all are connected to one vine. We, the disciples, are not only individually abiding in Jesus, but through Jesus the vine, we are organically connected with other branches. In Christ, we are all made alive together. Today’s passage teaches us not only of our personal relationship with Jesus and with God, but also of our identity as a member of the collective body of Christ, the church. In this sense, to abide in Jesus means to contribute to the work of the whole church as its living member. How are we upholding one another in this union in Christ?

■ **Nov. 27: Rev. Kei Okada “Eternal Love” *Luke 10:25-39*** The story of the Good Samaritan is well-known: A man was attacked by robbers and left on the roadside, half dead. While a priest and a Levite passed by, a Samaritan, who belonged to the group despised by the Jews, helped him. “Go and do the same,” Jesus says. What is important is the introductory part of this parable. One lawyer asks Jesus: “What shall do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus asks him what the Law teaches. As the lawyer quotes the Law, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbors as yourself,” Jesus

tells him: "Do this and you will live." The lawyer then asks Him who his neighbor is. This question reflects our human nature. His wording implies: "Who should I care for? Who are the people worthy to receive my care?" But Jesus' conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan, "go and do the same," completely overturns such petty intentions. The matter is not who is worthy to be a neighbor; the matter is, we must become neighbors of all people, especially those in need. This is the key to "live" in God's Sight. If you do not have love and do not become the neighbors of others, you are not living in a true sense. To receive salvation from Christ, to obtain the power to love, and to love others; this is the life of a Christians. ♦ Mr. George Yuzawa lived in such a way. He was interned in the camps during World War II; lost his sister; lost his house and property. Despite such painful experiences, he did not transform into anger and hatred but chose to love others and become a bridge between people. His wife Kimi accompanied him and shared in his works and sufferings. Let us respond to their legacy! Our Lord Jesus Christ is calling us to a life of loving others. Are you, and is this church, ready to respond to this call? Let us thank God for receiving such a calling at the beginning of Advent and pray for His Guidance.

## ◆ Church Activity & Schedule ◆

■ **Guest Preachers for Sunday Service** The following pastors will deliver the message at our Sunday worship service for December and January: Dec. 11 – Laity's message (Ms. Chizuko Imado); Dec. 18 – Ms. Hitomi Urushizaki, a seminarian of Calvin Theological Seminary / English version; Mr. Petr Kornilov of Calvin Theological Seminary; Dec. 25 – Rev. Andrew Yamamoto; Jan. 1 – Rev. Yugo Suzuki; Jan. 8 – Rev. Stanley Wayne; Jan. 15 – not decided; Jan. 22 – Rev. Takako Terino; Jan. 29 – not decided.

■ **Christmas Programs** In celebration of Christmas, we will have a potluck lunch after Christmas worship service on Dec. 18. Please write the name of the dish you will bring on the sign-up sheet posted on the Social Hall bulletin board. We also need many helpers who can help decorate, serve, dish-wash, and clean up. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated. ♦ Christmas Eve Service is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 24, from 7PM. Rev. Andrew Yamamoto will deliver a message, while we sing Christmas hymns a cappella. Christmas Sunday Service will be held Dec. 25, also conducted by Rev. Yamamoto. ♦ Christmas caroling / visitation is scheduled for Dec. 10. We will gather at JAUC and visit several members who cannot come to the church due to health conditions.

■ **Building Restoration** The church building restoration project will be completed very soon. White stucco siding has

already been installed on the building façade, and the window frames of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floors were fixed. The installment of Emergency Exit signs and lights will be completed within the next week. As soon as the city authorities' permit is issued, the Ansul System will be set in the kitchen. ♦ Besides for this, the heating pipe in the basement was repaired for \$3,200, while the plumbing in the 3rd floor men's bathroom was fixed. The disabled oven in the kitchen was sold for \$200.

■ **Parsonage Repair** The repairs to the parsonage are complete. The basement was waterproofed and the driveway was fixed.

■ **Free Movie Nights** Free movie nights have been held, once a month, at JAUC since November. The titles of the films which will be screened in January and February are: "Fireproof" (Jan. 7 from 7PM); "The Chronicles of Narnia: Part 1" (Feb. 4 from 4PM). Language is English, but Japanese summaries will be provided. Please invite your friends! Several new people came to the screenings in November and December.

■ **Monthly Finance Report** For October, pledge offerings are \$4,930.00, income total, including special offerings, are \$8,442.15 and expenses are \$8,352.79. Total income for January through October is \$138,270.84, while total expenses are \$140,958.99.

**Request from Treasurer:** Please send all donations of 2011 to church office before December 31. Thank you.

■ **Alpha Course** The fall session of "Alpha," the introductory course for Christian Basics, ended in November. The spring session will start from early February. For further details, please contact Ms. Rika Marubashi-Downs.

■ **Thanksgiving Celebration** About 90 people came to our Thanksgiving Sunday worship service and annual dinner. We gratefully thank everyone who helped during the event.

■ **Isabella Services** 25 people attended our Isabella worship service on Dec. 4 and sang Advent / Christmas songs.

■ **2012 Children's Camp Planning** The first planning meeting of the 2012 "Discovery Summer Camp" was held at JAUC on Nov. 28, chaired by Rev. Jun Yoshimatsu. The 2012 Camp will be held from July 12 to 28. The theme is "Everybody is different, and that is good," based on a famous poem by Misuzu Kaneko. The key Scripture verses are "Love your neighbors as you love yourself," "You are precious in My Sight," etc. The fee, for camp, will be \$1,400 per person.

■ **Delays in Newsletter Delivery** We are sending about 200 copies of our newsletters by "bulk mail." Recently it turned out that delivery of this type of mail often took 2 weeks. We will do our best to post our newsletters as early as possible.

## ◆ Church Members & Friends ◆

■ **Passing of Mrs. Lily Kamitsuka** Mrs. Lily Kamitsuka, the beloved wife of Rev. Dr. Arthur Kamitsuka, peacefully passed at Isabella Home on Nov. 27. She was 89. She celebrated Thanksgiving with her family three days ago. Her memorial service will be held at Isabella's Larson Library on Saturday, Dec. 17, from 10:30AM (Please confirm with the Church Office). Mrs. Lily and Rev. Kamitsuka were together for 63 years. Please remember Rev. Dr. Kamitsuka in your prayers.

■ **Passing of Mrs. Kimi Yuzawa and the Yuzawa Memorial Ceremonies** Mrs. Kimi Yuzawa, the beloved wife of the late Mr. George Yuzawa, passed away on Nov. 26. She was 94. As a faithful wife, she supported George's energetic activities for 71 years. By using her skill as a great cook, she also contributed much to the church bazaars. ♦ The memorial



ceremony for the Yuzawas was held on Nov. 27 at JAUC during part of the Sunday worship service conducted by Rev. Kei Okada. During the ceremony, Mr. Kazuo Yamaguchi, Mr. Fujio

Saito, Ms. Aileen Yamaguchi, and Ms. Patricia Yuzawa-Rubin delivered speeches and shared their memories of the Yuzawas. The hymns sang during the service, "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations" and others, were George's favorites. ♦ On the same day, from 2:30PM, a gathering for the Yuzawas' was held at The Japanese American Association. Ms. Susan Onuma directed the ceremony, while Rev. Jun Yoshimatsu read the Scripture. Another program was held at Isabella Home on Nov. 28. The Choir members of Isabella, including Ms. Yoshiko Watanabe, sang. ♦ "George often brought flowers to those in hospitals, but he always brought vases with him, because he knew that the patients did not have containers to put the flowers into. In addition, he visited them three days later to change water. He was the man who knew the significance of follow-up, not a man who just does something." "Behind every good man, there is a good wife. Kimi was such a wife." These memories of friends remind us of the words of Henri J. M. Nouwen: "we are often concerned about what we do or still can do, but we are most likely to be remembered for who we were. If the [Holy] Spirit guides our lives ... then the Spirit will not die but will continue to grow from generation to generation."

■ **Ms. Arai's Visit** Our long-time sister Ms. Shigeko Arai, who returned to Japan several years ago, came to NY in November and attend our Sunday services Nov. 6 and 13.

■ **VIP Meeting** At the VIP meeting on Nov. 14, Rev. Stanley Wayne shared the story of his life. Rev. Stanley, who served as a missionary in Tokyo and taught at several universities in Japan, is currently working as a lawyer. At the meeting on December 12, Mr. Yuki Imaizumi will perform classic dance and share his testimony. Mr. Imaizumi, a ballet dancer, accepted Christ while he was studying at La Scala Ballet School in Milan, Italy, in 2005.

■ **On Martial Arts: Rev. Sasamori's Talk with Beat Takeshi** Rev. Tatemi Sasamori, the pastor of our sister church Komaba Eden, in Tokyo, had a talk with Beat Takeshi, one of the most famous entertainers in Japan and an internationally-known film director. Their dialogues are printed in the journal *Shincho* 45 (September 2011). Rev. Sasamori is the master of a traditional Japanese sword fighting style (*kendo*) school named *Onoha-Itto-ryu*, and his church also has a training center on the premises. Their dialogue, which covers 12 pages, of the journal, focuses on the spiritual secrets of *kendo* and the common characters between the spirit of traditional Japanese martial arts and Christian ethics. For example, according to Rev. Sasamori, "if you lose a match, you must not get angry. It is only your fault, and since your opponent has pointed out your weakness by beating you, you must be thankful to him. That is the true spirit of *kendo*." Takeshi was very impressed by Rev. Sasamori's opinions and concluded by saying: "The politicians and the bureaucrats of our country should visit this church and learn the spirit of martial arts and Christianity from you; then they may become better!"

## ◇ Prayer Requests ◇

Please remember the following people in your prayers: The sufferers of the Japan Earthquake, Rev. Barbara Alexander, Hisayo Asai, Michiko Gorman, Martha Horiuchi, Toshio Iwasa, Rev. Arthur Kamitsuka, Sue Kubo, Harry Kuwada, Tazuko Hosaka, Fumiko Matsumoto, George Mukai (Bayside), George Mukai (Artist), Ai Oguchi (Westminster Japanese Church), Hisako Okuda, Yuriko Tomita, Akira Yamazaki (Ms. Horiuchi's brother)

## JAUC Small Group Ministry

Small Group is the JAUC program for church members' spiritual growth. Through fellowship in a group, we will share how we can live as Christians in our daily lives. Please join one of the small groups below.

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: 1<sup>st</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)