



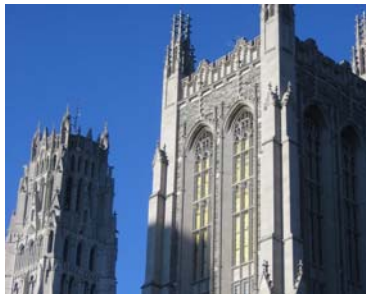
***“Together, the Body of Christ;
Individually, Its Parts”*** I Corinthians 12:27

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 through worship, fellowship, study, evangelism and mission.

◆Pastor’s Message◆

Snow, Rain, and then Sunshine In the end of February, we had several days of unusually heavy snow. The airports were shut down, and the city was in disarray. Then in March, there came terrible rainstorms. Trees were uprooted, and electric wires were severed. In some areas, people were without electricity for more than a week. But then the blue sky and warm sun appeared. People became buoyant and cheerful. This recent experience of ours may be used as an analogy to understand the joy of Easter that followed the darkness of Lent.

◆The disciples had been with Jesus 24/7 for three years. They had thought that Jesus was the Messiah. And yet, the fact that their master died on the cross as a common criminal devastated them. They could not shake off the memory that they had abandoned Jesus when he needed them most. Peter was overcome by the guilt that he had betrayed his master three times the night before the crucifixion. The disciples were in total despair. ◆To them, the resurrected Jesus appeared. “Jesus is risen. He is risen, indeed!” These words express the utter shock and incredible joy they experienced in their dramatic encounter with the risen Christ. They now knew that their three years with him had not been in vain. Jesus conquered death. He transformed darkness to light. Their past was forgiven; they were given a chance to start anew. ◆The meaning of the resurrection is clearly expressed in the words of the young man to the women crying in front of the empty tomb. “He has been raised; he is not here. But go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” (Mark 16:7) Galilee means our mundane life. The young man was saying: “You are empowered to live joyfully and lovingly in the world, because Jesus is present now. He walks along with you all the way. Rainstorms are gone and the sun shines warmly on your face.” That is what



Easter is all about. That is why Easter is the foundation of our hope and courage.

◆Sunday Worship Sermons◆

■ ***March 7 “Jesus Is the Good Shepherd” John 10: 11-15***

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep.” By risking his own life, the shepherd protects the sheep from the wolf. “Wolf” symbolizes every kind of domination, oppression, and injustice that deny the sacred worth of human beings. Jesus the Good Shepherd was subversive, because he left no doubt in the people’s minds that the Roman government was the wolf. The greatest colonial power in the world was devouring and scattering the Jewish people. ◆Jesus was subversive also by contrasting himself with the hired hands that ran away from the wolf, leaving the sheep completely at its mercy. Again, there was no mistaking that the hired hands were Herod, the puppet of Caesar, and the religious leaders in Jerusalem who were compromising their faith to keep peace with Rome. In short, Jesus stood up to the oppressors and their hired hands for the sake of the poor and the oppressed. ◆“I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.” When a person says to another, “I know you,” that person is saying, “We are bound together by the bond of love” that is seen between God and human beings, wife and husband, parents and children, and friend and friend. He meant that each individual is God’s most precious creation, therefore, irreplaceable and infinitely worthy. This affirmation is the foundation of our hope and courage. No power in this world can give us such hope and such courage. Jesus is a good shepherd to us today. ◆This is even more convincing when we identify who the wolf is for us. It may be worshiping money, or self-centeredness that makes us indifferent to the plight of neighbors, or ethnocentrism. Christian faith affirms that divine love revealed in Jesus Christ alone can protect us from the wolf that kills our body and spirit. Only Jesus who died for us can give us the courage to withstand the power of modern day wolves.

■ ***March 14 “The Elder Brother of the Prodigal Son” Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32***

The parable of the prodigal son has a second part to it. It has to do with his elder brother. The story goes like this. On the way back from the fields, the elder brother hears the sound of music and dancing. A dinner party is going on. He finds out that it is to celebrate the return of his younger brother who spent many wasteful years in a far off country. He has come back as a broken and desperate man. When the elder brother learns the reason for the celebration, he refuses to join in. After all, he has been working hard for his father, while his brother was living a life of corruption. The elder brother

protests to his father, “I deserve a big dinner party, not him. Father, where is your sense of fairness?” The father replies, “Son, listen. This brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found. That is why we celebrate. Come and join us.” ♦ What does this story tell us? First, the Father is God. Second, God’s compassion is infinite. When we repent, God forgives. Third, God’s absolute and unbounded love contradicts our sense of fairness. Fourth, the elder brother symbolizes all of us, because we want God to behave according to our sense of fairness. We are often like the elder brother who says, “My brother does not deserve a welcome party. Chase him away and hold a dinner party for me.” But the fact is the father’s love extends to the grumbling elder brother. God loves us even when we complain, even when we turn our backs to him. God waits patiently for us. ♦ Importantly, this story has no proper ending to it. We are not told whether the elder brother continued to refuse his father’s invitation or finally accepted his invitation to the party. Why? That is Jesus’ way of saying that you and I are responsible for putting our own conclusion to the story. Will we stubbornly stand at the gate or enter the gate? Let us put the right conclusion to the end of the story. Let us say, “Yes” to God’s invitation. Our hope rests in God whose patience has no end. God in Jesus Christ never gives up on us.

◆Leadership Retreat◆

A two-day retreat, intended to encourage and develop church leadership, was held at JAUC on March 5-6, and more than 20 church members attended. The session on March 5th opened with Mr. Dean Kusakabe speaking about the goal of the retreat. “When we see the list of the JAUC leaders in 2005, we find that almost 40% of them have since left leadership due to their return to Japan or to health concern. Fortunately we have emerging new leaders, but it is our important and urgent task to raise and train the future leaders of JAUC. Church life is not easy; sometimes we are hurt, but the cause of this difficulty is our sins as weak human beings, and there is no church free of problems. We hope we can help each other to build our church, despite the problems. Leadership is a process; it is not as if special people suddenly pop up and start leading others. The Character of each leader is gradually formed through long experiences.” ♦ After Praise Time, Rev. Suzuki delivered a message about church leadership. “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and the main role of the church leaders are to help this process. A local church like JAUC is the most significant arena through which disciple making occurs. When we think about church leadership, it is inspiring to see the examples of the leaders in the Church in

Acts. As we can read in Acts, there were disagreements and emotional conflicts even among Apostles such as Peter and Paul. Nevertheless, they could overcome these problems because they were bound by one conviction that ‘Jesus is Lord.’ Their church became the foundation of today’s Church. What leaders should do are: (1) Cultivate one’s personal relationship with God through Prayer, Study, and Practicing as we believe; (2) Share a common vision; (3) Grasp the reality of the church’s condition and Discern priorities; (4) Develop action plans; (5) Monitor the progress of the plans and evaluate them; (6) Recognize one’s own weakness and, if necessary, do not hesitate to repent. ♦ On the second day, after Communion and Prayer, the participants divided in small groups and shared reflections about Rev. Suzuki’s message. Later what was discussed was presented to the whole group. Various opinions were shared; for example, one group pointed out the differences between Christian and Secular leadership; another group presented various resources which JAUC could use to fulfill our Vision. In the afternoon, the participants had a planning meeting to prepare for future church events. We hope that what we learned through this retreat will strengthen and encourage all the members of our church.

◆Spiritual Growth-Small Group◆

■ **Schedule Change:** There are some changes for the April meetings of the Bilingual Women’s Group (SG1): They will meet on Friday, April 9 (from 7pm) and Saturday, April 24 (from 12pm) at Ms. Sonoda’s.

◆Prayer Requests◆

Please remember the following people in your prayers: Roberto Acevedo, Jayne Arbon (Mrs. Kasuga’s daughter-in-law), Michiko Gorman, Yuko Ito, Toshio Iwasa, Sue Kubo, Noriko Kumada, Seika Liu, Fumiko Matsumoto, Minako Noma, Ai Oguchi (from Westminster Japanese Church), Hisako Okuda, Kazunori Tabe, Mary Yamada, Junji Yoshida

◆News◆

■ **Introduction of “Passing of the Peace”:** Concerns were raised that the Greeting during Sunday Worship Service had become too long and was disrupting Service. Based on Rev. Suzuki’s recommendation, we changed the style of the greeting: From March, worshippers should simply greet those to their right and left with the words “The Peace of Christ be with you.” This phrase is a traditional word of blessing used from the time of the Church in Acts, and this “passing of the peace” is still used in many churches around the world.

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■ **Spring Alpha Course and Alpha Prayer Meeting:** The Alpha Course, an introductory course for Christianity, will start from April 21 for thirteen sessions. The sessions will be held every Wednesday from 7pm. In addition, on Tuesday, April 13, JAUC will host the Alpha Prayer & Worship Meeting for all of the NY churches who will present the Alpha Course. The meeting will start at 7pm in the Social Hall, and there will be Praise music and dynamic prayer. Everyone is welcome to join us! A celebration dinner is also scheduled for April 21.

■ **VIP Meeting:** The monthly VIP meeting was held on March 8 at JAUC. Mr. Kazuhiko Honyashiki gave his Testimony and explained how he received his calling and why he decided to go to seminary. After his Testimony, Ms. Noriko Kumada, the former music director of JAUC, played three organ pieces from Oliver Messiaen's "The Glorified Bodies."

■ **Origami Outreach Event:** On March 20, about 60 people attended the free screening of the award-winning film "Between the Folds." After the screening, people joined an origami workshop held by Ms. Gerri and Ms. Hatsumi Yoshida.

■ **Church Cleaning:** The annual Church Cleaning was held on Saturday, March 13. We thank all those who participated.

■ **Ms. Yasue Mochizuki** returned to Japan on March 26, after completing her sabbatical year at Columbia University. She will return to Kwansai Gakuin University in Nishinomiya, Hyogo, continuing to research and teach on international organization. During her stay in NY, she served in the JAUC Choir. We pray that God will bless and guide her new life in Japan. ◆ **Mrs. Haruho Quintana** and her family also returned to Kyoto, Japan on March 9. "I accepted Christ in the US, inspired by many Christians whom I met here. Although Salvation comes only from God, He uses human beings for His Plan. Indeed, He has used the people of JAUC to sustain my faith. I believe we can meet again, but even if we cannot on this earth, we surely can meet in the Kingdom of God. This is a wonderful Grace which we Christians have." (from her testimony during Sunday service) ◆ **Mr. Kazuhiko and Mrs. Miki Honyashiki** returned to Japan on March 11.



■ **Children Summer Camp 2010:** The "Discovery Camp" will be held at Camp Quinipet in Shelter Island from July 25 to August 6. We accept 3rd-10th grade. If you are interested, please check inserted brochure in this newsletter.

◆ Board of Directors & Managers ◆

The March joint meeting of the Board of Directors / Board of Managers was held on March 6 (during the Leadership Retreat). The Building & Maintenance Committee proposed to increase the funds to \$60,000 to repair the basement, kitchen, and bathroom of the parsonage. After discussions, the proposal was approved. The committee will explore whether the driveway of the parsonage needs to be repaired. The present condition of the driveway does not allow for proper drainage and may damage any renovation done to the basement.

◆ Special Offerings ◆

In addition to Pledge, Special and regular offerings received during worship service, we also appreciate your offerings by mail. From February 21 to March 14, we received the following Special offerings and offerings by mail: Katsuko Bolster, Tatsuo Honma, JASSI, Yoshiko Kasuga, Noriko Kumada, Harry Kuwada, Koji Matsumoto, Mariko Nakamaru, NY Day of Remembrance, Ohara Flower, Sumiko Okada, Sunday School, Edna Suzuki, Rie Tora, VIP. ■ We also acknowledge with sincere appreciation the following offerings for Haiti Relief (2/21-3/14): Naoko Aita, Anonymous (2), Fujinkai, Akira Yokozeki (in total: \$385)

◆ Gratitude from the Geppo Team

Due to her tight work schedule, Ms. Masayo Sonoda stepped down from her position in the Geppo Team. Ms. Sonoda has faithfully served as the chief editor of the Geppo for several years. Using her experience and skill of computer editing, she drastically changed the format and the contents of the Geppo. Thanks to her efforts, the Geppo is now read by many more people outside JAUC. We express our sincere gratitude for Ms. Sonoda's past service.

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 and we will grow together spiritually through learning and prayer with members of a small group.

- SG1. Bilingual Women's Group: 2nd & 4th Saturdays 1pm at Sonoda's
- SG2. Japanese Women's Group: 2nd Tuesdays 11am at Tokita'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)