



*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 ◆

Suffering, Perseverance, Character, and Hope We cannot live productively without hope. The Jewish psychiatrist named Victor Frankl spent four miserable years in a Nazi concentration camp. After the war, he wrote his life experience in the book entitled, "Night and Fog." He says that those who thought that something good might happen in the future survived, whereas those who could not think of anything that was hopeful died. ◆ Hope is not the same as simple optimism. Simple optimism crumbles in front of unspeakable cruelties and monumental challenges. Simple optimism easily falls into despair. Simple optimism lacks resiliency and perseverance; therefore, it cannot be truly hopeful. Hope does not escape from challenges. Hope does not fall into despair. Hope looks squarely at the reality of the world and says, "Nevertheless." Peace is the serenity of mind that comes to a person who hopes against hope. ◆ Paul is a man of hope. He knows peace born of hope even in the midst of suffering. He writes to the Christians in Rome the following words: "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance produces character; and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts." Let us be clear. Paul is not saying that we can experience hope only when we escape from suffering. He is not saying that peace is possible only to those who know no conflict. Paul's life is full of suffering. Conflict is a daily experience. And yet, he insists that he has hope; he knows peace. His hope is hope against hope. His peace is peace in the midst of suffering. ◆ How is such hope possible? It is possible, because Jesus promised us, "Come to me all you who are heavy laden. I will give you rest." Herein lies our ultimate hope.

◆ Sunday Worship Sermons ◆

April 4 "Christ Has Risen" Mark 15:1-8 After Jesus was crucified, his disciples were in total despair. Those precious three years they had spent with him turned out to be for nothing. When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, another

Mary, and Salome, they were frightened to the core at the news of the resurrection. At first all the immediate disciples rejected the news of his resurrection as foolish babbling. And yet, eventually this incident transformed those disciples. Peter was a good example. He had betrayed Jesus three times the night before Jesus' crucifixion, but after he encountered the resurrected Christ, he became a courageous proclaimer of the Good News and was crucified head down as a martyr for Christ in the city of Rome. ◆ Their resurrection faith can be summarized as follows: in God's own time all their tears would be wiped away and that suffering and pain experienced on this earth would receive complete healing, and that death would be no more. That is true with us today. Because of Easter, we can be hopeful even when we face unspeakable disappointments and deep sadness, even the death of our loved ones. ◆ Nelson Mandela who had been confined for almost twenty years in prison in South Africa as the price for combating apartheid said, "It was Easter faith that held me up." Martin Luther King said, "I do not fear death because I believe in Easter." Mother Teresa said, "I can smile at those who were dying in my hospice because Jesus triumphed on Easter." Easter faith is the foundation of our hope and courage.

■ **April 11 "I Have Seen the Lord!" John 20: 11-18** Jesus' resurrection completely overwhelmed Mary Magdalene. She could not understand what had happened and did not know how to describe it. The Bible has no categories to explain it either. We only hear Mary's cry, "I have seen the Lord!" ◆ What does this mean? One: Jesus is not dead. He is alive. The crucifixion did not end in despair but in hope. Two: God said, "Yes" to everything Jesus stood for. It was the will of God that Jesus healed the sick, that Jesus was gentle to the despised people of the land, that Jesus stood for the poor and oppressed, and that Jesus shared bread with anyone who came to him. ◆ Three: Jesus overcame death. Here, death does not mean only physical death, but also means every form of injustice and incongruity. It is wrong for people to be hungry. It is wrong for the rich to oppress the poor. It is wrong for women and children to be treated cruelly. Injustice is wrong. It is against the will of God. Then four: Jesus is lord, and the powers of this world are not. So Mary's words, "I have seen the Lord!" witness the transformative power of God in the world. Easter happens again and again. ◆ Let us imagine one scene: A traveler is walking a lonely road. He is exhausted, and the night is dark. He feels as if he could not go on. He



collapses. When he looks up, he sees a glimmer of light in the distance. At that, the exhaustion is lifted. The traveler is empowered. He stands up and begins to walk. The traveler is you and I. The light is Mary's exciting cry, "I have seen the Lord!"

■ **April 25 Rev. Kei Okada "A Neighbor to him who fell"**
Luke 10:25-37 Here Jesus Christ teaches us that in order to live fully as human beings, we must love God and our neighbors. In this passage, a lawyer asks Jesus "...who is my neighbor?" ♦ Behind these words, we can see his implied questions: "Who do I NOT have to be a neighbor to? Who are the people we do NOT need to love?" We human beings love to divide all things in such a way. Jesus' answer completely overturns the very premise of the lawyer's question. He tells the parable of "the Good Samaritan" and says "Go and do likewise." In other word, He says: "[YOU] become a neighbor to those in need!" ♦ In Matthew 25, Jesus invites those who helped the hungry, the sick, and prisoners to His Kingdom and states: "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these brethren, you did it to Me." Here Jesus compares people in suffering with Himself. The image of the unfortunate traveler in Luke 10, beaten by robbers and left lying half-dying, reminds us of the image of Jesus suffering on the cross. Whose neighbors are we now? Let us pray for God to guide us, so that we can become neighbors of those suffering and share with them the Gifts of God.

◆ Repairs to Church Building ◆

Around 3pm on April 12, a tile attached to the facade of the JAUC 4th floor suddenly fell to the sidewalk. Thankfully, no one was walking in that area at that time. Since there still was danger that the other tiles would also fall, following the NY City Building Laws, the Building and Maintenance Committee and the Board of Directors immediately decided to construct a protection bridge over sidewalk in order to protect pedestrians. The bridge, which cost approx. \$8,500 for construction, was completed by 5pm on April 21. We will start repairs after we investigate the cause of the fall and check the condition of the outer wall. We have been talking to professionals on this matter. We give a sincere prayer of thanksgiving to our Gracious God for protecting all who pass in front of our church. It is truly a miracle that there were no injuries.

◆ Summer Camp and Retreat ◆

◆ **Children Summer Camp 2010** The bilingual "Discovery Camp" will be held at Camp Quinipet in Shelter Island from July 25 to August 6. We accept 3rd-10th grade, only those who

can attend for both weeks. The total fee is \$1,300 (including insurance, etc.). The deadline for the applications is Wednesday, June 15. If you are interested, please check the brochure, available at our church. The director of the Camp will be Rev. Masahiko Sagara of the Union Japanese Church.

◆ **2010 East Coast Family Camp** The 2010 East Coast Japanese Church Family Camp will be held at Ellenville, NY, from Saturday, Sep. 4, to Monday, Sep. 6. The guest speaker is Rev. Hiroshi Sakakibara, the famous pastor and director of World Vision Japan, known through his TV evangelism. Leading Christian musician Mr. Makoto Iwabuchi will also attend. There will be simultaneous English translations for those who do not speak Japanese. This is a very rare occasion when hundreds of Japanese Christians living in the US gather in one place and praise God together. Please join! If you apply before May 30, you can get a discount. The secondary deadline for reservations is July 11. Please check the details in the Camp brochure, available at JAUC. Additional News: Mr. Iwabuchi is planning to have a concert at JAUC on Sep. 7. Do not miss this special event!

◆ News ◆

■ **Pastor's Vacation** Rev. and Mrs. Suzuki will be taking a vacation from April 21 to May 12 and will be visiting Japan. During this period, guest speakers will deliver the sermons during the Sunday services.

■ **Mr. Yoshinori Shiraishi, his wife Mariko, and their son Ken Amadeus** moved to Hawaii on April 12 for Mr. Shiraishi's newly commissioned project. Both Mr. Shiraishi, an accomplished architect, and Ken were baptized at JAUC. We pray that God will bless and guide their new life.

■ **Memorial Day Events** On Sunday, May 30, the Memorial Sunday service will be held at JAUC to commemorate those persons that passed, from the last to this year's Memorial Day. Please notify the name, age and date of passing of those who have passed to the JAUC Office. The Joint Memorial Service with Japanese American Association (JAA), JAUC, NY Buddhist Church, NY Japanese School, Consulate General of Japan, and Nippon Club, will be held on Memorial Day, May 31, at Mt. Olivet Cemetery and Cypress Hill Cemetery. Rev. Yugo Suzuki will lead the service at Cypress Hill. JAA will provide the bus for both cemeteries. Please make reservations for the bus ride at JAA (212)840-6942. The bus will depart from front of JAA at 10:00am.

■ **Spring Alpha Course:** The Alpha Course, an introductory course to Christianity, will start from April 21 for thirteen weeks. The sessions will be held every Wednesday from 7pm. If you are interested in participating or volunteering, please contact Ms. Rika Downs or Ms. Gerri Yoshida.

■ **Fujinkai Bazaar:** Fujinkai is scheduling a bazaar at JAUC on Sunday, June 20, from 2pm. The money raised will be donated to both the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund and JAUC's building repairs. Fujinkai is currently gathering items to sell at the bazaar. If you have anything, please deposit it in the boxes labeled "Fujinkai Bazaar" located on the 1st and the 3rd floors. For additional details, please contact Ms. Motomi Togashi.



■ **VIP Meeting:** The monthly VIP meeting was held on April 12 at JAUC. Mr. Hironori Izumi, a member of the Greenwich Japanese Church, gave his testimony of faith and recounted how through his difficult years in college, he learned to entrust everything to God.

■ **Reunion in Japan** In late March, Mr. and Mrs. George Honyashiki, Ms. Haruho Quintana, Ms. Junko Shimojima, Mr. Takashi Yamada and his fiancé Ms. Yuka Saito, Ms. Mizuki Uchino, and Ms. Kaori Kusakabe (visiting her parents in Japan) attended a Christian event held in Saitama, near Tokyo. Everyone had a good time at the "mini reunion". It is wonderful to hear that our friends are keeping contact and supporting each other spiritually even after they return to Japan.

■ **Church Library** We recently purchased two new books for JAUC's English library. They are: Timothy Keller's *The Prodigal God*, a widely-read work written by the pastor of Redeemer Church in NY and *God Has a Dream*, written by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Please make sure to stop by the library!

◇ 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, Yone Kanzaki, Sue Kubo, Noriko Kumada, Seika Liu, Fumiko Matsumoto, Minako Noma, Ai Oguchi (from Westminster Japanese Church, Atlanta GA), Hisako Okuda, Despina Prodromidis (Ms. Hogan's daughter), Kazunori Tabe, Junji Yoshida

◇ Board of Directors & Treasury Report ◇

The Board of Directors (BoD) Meeting was held on April 17.

◆ **Building & Maintenance** The BoD agreed to pay \$20,000 to start a repair work of the parsonage (The BoD and the Board of Managers have agreed to prepare \$60,000 for this project). We are planning to start with the repairs this June. ◆ **Treasury** Ms. Kumiko Bauman reported the income and the expense of JAUC during January and February 2010. The total amount of the income is \$19,772: \$11,799 of them is from pledge offerings, \$3,798 from special offerings, \$2,719 from transfers from other accounts, and \$1,456 from interests. The total amount of expense during the above period is \$24,303.

◇ From Old Church Records ◇

When we were checking the 1970s and 80s records of the JAUC Sunday School, we found a story told by Ms. Toshiko Shimomura, who passed away last October. This story was told to her class on Nov. 8, 1981. We think Ms. Shimomura wrote this story herself. Since it is not only funny but contains deep meaning, we would like to share this: ◆ "An aged crab headed toward her summer house near the sea. However, she found a telephone pole in her way, and could not go forward. She complained, but as she did not want to change her direction, she started climbing the pole up, up, up, and down, down, down. She started walking again, but what should she find in her way? Another telephone pole! Loudly grumbling and complaining, she started climbing the second pole. She climbed up and down hundreds of poles, and when she finally reached her summer house, the summer was almost over, and she would soon have to head back. Of course, she climbed up and down all the telephone poles again, to return home. Aren't we like this crab, stubbornly following what we think is right, not stopping to listen and changing our ways? Sometimes such a stubborn heart can be a sin!" Thank you Toshiko-san.

JAUC Small Group Ministry

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

- 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)