



**“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 through worship, fellowship, study, evangelism and mission.

◇Message from Pastor◇

“To Answer God’s Love”

The season of Advent highlights the light of hope in the darkness, and the year of 2017 has been full of incidences that remind us of the darkness in this world. The Apostle John often emphasizes the images of the light and darkness in order to symbolize what Christ is and what our world is. He also stresses the Commandment of love: “Love God, Love your neighbor”, which made him to be known as “the apostle of love”. According to scholars, this epistle was written nearly 60 years after the Crucifixion of Jesus. The aged and possibly last surviving Apostle wrote to the followers of Jesus, beginning with his famous remark “My little children” or “Beloved”. John was concerned about the schism in the community. Earlier when the Jesus Way was facing severe persecution, the primary threat was mainly external for the community. At that point communal unity was essential for their survival. However, as the number of Christians among Roman citizens grew, conflicts began to grow not only around them, but among them as well. We know of similar things that have happened to us as well. Around the time of WWII, Japanese and Japanese-Americans faced hostility from those outside of our community. People tried to stay united to survive in this time of trial. But as the situation for the Japanese-American community improved drastically after 1980, internal conflicts began to surface time and again, over and over. These conflicts even caused splits of churches in the past. ◇ The division has been caused by human reactions, especially negative emotional reactions, such as frustration, irritation, and resentment. The resentment towards those with different viewpoints is still relevant today, and is not an issue Christians have left behind two thousand years in the past, but an issue that continues to echo in our time. “Whoever says, “I am in the light,” while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.” (1 John 2:9) No matter how much one says s/he loves God, if the person hates a brother or sister, that person is not in the light, and as such, is not in Christ. Christ is the light, and the light is hope. There is no such

thing as negative hope. “Whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go”. (2:11) The church John wrote to was just like the church that we are part of: a group of humans who sought the light, found the light in Christ, and desired to follow the light in the darkness. ◇The world is, according to John, a dark place because the world does not know Christ. Even though we try hard to be the people of God, we fall short in becoming the people whom God has created for His divine purpose. We are trying to get there, but it has been an uphill battle. We live against the mainstream culture in this world, one that idolizes wealth, fame, power, and human dominance, or in other words, a self-centered lifestyle. Christian love is selfless and Christ-centered. ◇ We care about our covenant relationship with God. We think about God, and who God is. And we think about the relationship between God and ourselves. However, there may be a potential stumbling block. When we think of us, we tend to focus on ourselves. Though we need to know who we are, the Christian faith requires us to be self-less. We ought to think of who we are, but we must act selflessly as children of God. After all, the Commandment of Love requires us to be selfless and to care for others. “Love God, Love Your Neighbor” the Commandment of Love is the heart and soul of Christian discipleship. ◇1 John 4:7-8 states the motto of this church that we display in front of the church building, “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**” What we ought to do is to discern God’s will, what God wants us to do in order to love one another, and how to give our hands to those in need. 1 John 2:8 says, “Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.” John also says in 1:5, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Even though we end up short of being God’s holy people, God never gives up on us. “O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever.” as Psalm 136 promises. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.” (1 John 3:1) God is perfect. God has given every one of us His steadfast love abundantly, even though no one deserves it. When God is revealed himself, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him will purify themselves, just as he is pure. “What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.” as John 1:4 says. Hope for us is not a mere noun, but a verb. Hope without action is not hope, just

optimism. Our hope drives us to act the love of God, love in Christ towards our neighbors.

1 John 3:18 says, *“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”* Our Hope moves us to serve one another and to serve those in need. Our hope transforms our negative emotions as humans to the light in the dark world, so that we can forgive and be forgiven. Our hope in Jesus makes us children of God. Let us respond to the love God has given us. This winter, please join us with our community service project called “Operation Compassion”. As the disparity of wealth in this city is further increasing, the population of those in need on the street increases. Simply sharing warm clothes, food, and kind words with those brothers and sisters pushes aside the darkness and shadows of this city, for Christ is the light of the world.



◇ Church Activities & Schedules ◇

- JAUC warmly invites you to join us to on:
12/24 11am: Christmas Eve Sunday/Baptism Service followed by annual potluck lunch
- 12/25 1pm: Christmas Day Communion Service
- 12/31 11am: The final Sunday Service of 2017

■ Sunday Morning Prayer Time

Call to prayer. There are many prayers needs at this time. Every Sunday morning, a prayer gathering will take place from 9:20-9:45 in the Social Hall. Please contact Rika Marubashi for questions.

■ United Methodist Women (UMW) group

On the second Sunday of November, an international group of women gathered for an introductory meeting to discuss the start of a women's group at JAUC. We came together to create a space where we can support one another as we grow spiritually, learn more about our faith, meet various life challenges, and serve The Lord as advocates of social justice. While we are still sorting out the details, we remain excited about what we are becoming as the Holy Spirit guides us in this journey. Also, we are learning more about the United Methodist Women's "sisterhood of grace" and are considering how we connect work with their network of faithful women. ◇United Methodist Women is comprised of a large body of women throughout the United States. This “sisterhood of grace” is committed to growing spiritually, developing leaders, participating in education that transforms, and engaging in compassionate service and passionate advocacy. These interrelated core commitments

frame the way to engage in mission: spiritual growth and theological reflection that seeks to understand ourselves, our context and our world equip us to respond to God’s call to serve and to change unjust systems that do not reflect the heart of God. Through its educational resources, leadership training, and network of mutual support, the United Methodist Women also prepares laywomen to lead where they are and in places they never thought they would be—in their church, United Methodist Women, work settings, community, state and nation. ◇At the local level, the purpose of the organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church. Its vision is to turn faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, youth and children here and around the world. ◇We will have an organizing meeting on the second Sunday of December (the 10th) on the 3rd floor during lunch. If you are interested, please come join us. Mary Cheng from UMW will join us again and provide more valuable information about the organization and the possibilities.

(Antoinette Jones)

□ Building Maintenance □

- The work to resurface the roof is almost done.
- The repair work of the ceilings of the 4th floor apartment and of the 2nd floor mezzanine will begin soon.



- The Board gratefully accepts donations from church members and friends to help cover these extraordinary costs. Checks to “Japanese American United Church” (Please note: no abbreviation will be honored by banks.) may be designated for "Building and Maintenance;" and online donations are accepted at www.jauc.org.

□ Discovery Camp □

The Discovery Camp has turned towards its 40th anniversary, and is stepping into a new season. We gratefully accept your donation for next year’s camp. Please make out checks to: Japanese American United Church, Memo: Camp.

◇ Church Members & Friends ◇

† Arifumi Goto of Japanese Christian Church of NJ, and former JAUC member and leader passed away in Hawaii where he was visiting for a vacation. May the mercy and grace of Christ be with family and friends of JCCNJ.



Motai family, George Mukai, Nanako Oguri, the Shimojima family, Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki, Kiyotoshi Takahashi, John & Lucienne Yoshinaga.

* Please let us know your prayer requests.

■ Call for the volunteers to visit our housebound members. Please let us know if you would like to join the visiting team.

◇ Local Church Network ◇

■ *JCFN/VIP monthly meeting* will be Sanae Miyazaki organ concert on Monday December 11th at 7:15pm in the JAUC sanctuary and social hall. Please enter from the right side door with interphone.

■ *Leonia Japanese Service* The SMJ (Special Ministry to the Japanese; Coordinator: Chizuko Imado) is holding a Japanese worship service at the Presbyterian Church in Leonia, NJ (181 Fort Lee Road, Leonia) every 1st and 3rd Sunday, at 3pm. If you have any Japanese friends living in the Fort Lee area, please recommend the service to them!

□ Prayer Requests □

In your daily prayers, please remember to pray; God's wisdom and power to end gun violence and the lead of the Holy spirit for us to act for the strict and sound gun control; the Lord's comfort, healing, and provision for the victims of natural disasters such as Hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and wildfire; the Spirit's lead for those who maintain own Christian faith in the families with the different faith traditions; grace and justice for people with disabilities; encouragement and opportunities for the unemployed and underemployed; for universal healthcare to all; for our friend Japanese ministries, for those who are in isolation losing the light, for our challenging building issues, and for a new season of JAUC ministry. Please also pray for our sisters, brothers, and friends who are struggling with health issues: Junko Clarke, Dennis Gurski, Michiko Gorman, Darryl Holliday, Grace Huber, Valerie Aiko Igarashi, Teruo Inoue, Eiko Ishii, Paul & Hisae Isihara, Joe & Yoshiko Kasuga, Young Kim, Kenneth Kubo, Kerry Kubo, Hiroshi & Yoshiko Kurihara, Jessica & Gunay Teneoglu and the



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