

# The Christian Year in Review

## Significant Events of 1992

Harry Burton-Lewis

### JANUARY

- 2 The Salvation Army observes the visit of international officers, holds open-air meetings in Ueno area.
- 9 Catholic human rights observer Wada Tetsurō detained and evicted from East Timor by Indonesian police.
- 15 Nagoya Catholic Bishop Soma Nobuo awarded Asahi Social Welfare Prize. Sixth Annual Assembly of Christians for Reform of Alien Registration Law meets at Osaka Jogakuin and calls for fair treatment for all in ernational living in Japan and elimination of prejudicial finger-printing regulations.
- 18 Asian Rural Institute in Nishinasuno awards certificates to participants from fourteen nations at its 19th graduation ceremony.
- 28 National Christian Council of Japan (NCCJ) and Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace submit a letter to Justice Minister Tahara Ryū, as king for suspension or abolition of capital punishment.
- 28–30 Evangelical Federation of Asia steering committee meets at Amagi to plan a consultation of evangelical churches from throughout Asia to be held in Singapore in late 1993.

### FEBRUARY

- 11 Liebenzeller Church, Evangelical Church Association, and independent Christian churches issue statement supporting world peace and opposing the emperor system.
- 15 Bishops appoint a commission to study pastoral care for spiritual problems of Catholics who have been divorced.
- 18 Church of the Nazarene annual conference approves a statement of confession for war responsibility.
- 26 Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice invites Japanese youth to join in a peace mission to be dispatched to East Timor.
- 29 Japan YWCA issues statement calling for Japan to join in unarmed efforts to support “the things that make for peace” and to refrain from participation in armed peace-keeping operations.

### MARCH

- 6 Japanese in scores of ecumenical prayer meetings throughout the country join Christians around the globe in observing World Day of Prayer.
- 19 Roundtable Encounter for Catholics and mainline Protestants holds its tenth session at Catholic Bishops' Conference Headquarters.
- 22 Marti Turunen, who first came to Japan from Finland as a Lutheran missionary and is now a naturalized Japanese citizen, is elected to the Yugawara Municipal Assembly.
- 24–31 NCCJ observers include Catholic Bishop Sōma of Nagoya as part of a delegation meeting with Christians in North Korea.
- 31 Christian groups register concern to the government as current statutes expire regarding treatment of discriminated-against areas (*buraku*) and persons.

### APRIL

- 5 Leaders of the Non-church (Mukyōkai) Christian movement gather in Tokyo to celebrate the founding of the new Mukyōkai Research Institute.
- 7 West Japan Mission Institute is founded, located in the Takamatsu Christian Center.
- 15 Former Protestant minister Mizoguchi Akira is ordained the first married Japanese Catholic deacon at age 65. He and his wife joined the Catholic Church a quarter of a century ago.
- 19 The Catholic Committee for Faith Education issues an “urgent report” calling for increased emphasis on reaching middle school youngsters with the Christian faith.
- 22 NCCJ and the Roman Catholic Bishop's Commission on Ecumenism hold a discussion meeting to commemorate a decade of formal dialogue sessions.
- 23 Seigakuin University establishes the first Protestant-related university press in Japan.
- 29 Four smaller denominations merge to form the 7,000 member Japan Evangelical Church Federation following six years of merger discussions.

### MAY

- 6 Hosokawa Morihiro, a descendent of Christian heroine Gracia Hosokawa, leaves Liberal Democratic Party to form new political reform movement.
- 7 NCCJ and Roman Catholic Church denounce Japanese participation in armed peacekeeping (PKO) activities.
- 13–15 More than sixty superiors of religious orders and mission societies join 15 bishops in a conference at Atami to discuss adaptation of their spiritual gifts to the needs of Japanese society and the mission of the church in Japan.
- 19 Japan Evangelical Association follows other Christian groups in issuing a statement of concern that Japanese participation in PKO activities is a step toward militarism and renewed ultranationalism.

- 21 An alliance of Christian women's organizations protest dispatch of Japanese troops for PKO in Cambodia or elsewhere.
- 24 Swedish gospel singer Lena Maria, who has severe physical limitations, inaugurates a successful concert tour under auspices of Lutheran churches.

## JUNE

- 5 Faculty and students at Ibaraki Christian College, affiliated with the independent conservative Churches of Christ, issue a petition opposing PKO participation.
- 12 The Audio-visual Aids Commission (AVACO) of the NCCJ awards its 1992 Prize for Outstanding Service to Father James Hyatt of Tokyo Diocese.
- 26 Wesleyan Holiness Church is established at a meeting at Yodobashi Church in Tokyo, the latest of over a dozen small denominations of holiness background in Japan.
- 29 Covenant Churches and the Evangelical Free Church join in an affiliation of Japanese churches rooted in Northern European independent church traditions.
- 30 Following the notable success of the first program, the Catholic Bishops' Conference approves a second National Incentive Convention for Evangelization (NICE), with an emphasis on families.

## JULY

- 1 NCCJ registers an appeal showing Christian concern regarding the affect on other Asian countries of possible revived Japanese militarism as a result of Self-Defense Force cooperation in so-called "peace keeping operations" overseas.
- 3 Christian groups hold a press conference at Waseda to explain the dangers and distinctions of the Unification (Moonie) Movement in response to media attention to the scheduled participation by Japanese celebrities in a Moonie mass wedding ceremony in Korea.
- 12 Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and United Church of Christ in Japan leaders, clergy and lay people gather for a Church Music Symposium at Christ Church in Kanda.
- 13 Japan Evangelical Association registers concern about Japanese participation in overseas peacekeeping operations.
- 18 "Jericho Japan '92" outdoor evangelistic effort at Yomiuri Land amusement park in Kawasaki makes contact with thousands of people in a five hour program.
- 30 Japanese Catholic bishops reject a request from the Japan branch of Amnesty International for financial support.

## AUGUST

- 2 A Catholic-sponsored competition for songs linking faith and life at tracts 179 entries, with first prize going to "Called By You", written by a Christian woman from Nagoya.

- 6 Japanese Christians join with Amnesty International in appealing for an end to the death penalty.
- 9 Over 7,000 people from 16 countries gather at Tokyo's Kokugikan arena for a rally of the indigenous Original Gospel (*Genshi Fukuin*).
- 15 Prayer meetings around the country, in contrast with Shinto-led observances, commemorate the end of World War II and the losses suffered in the atomic bombings.
- 18 Christian groups hold a press conference to repudiate the mass wedding in Seoul and other unscrupulous activities of the Unification movement.
- 23 A caravan sponsored by the UCCJ Buraku Liberation Center embarks on an 82-day campaign with appearances throughout Japan to raise awareness of discrimination.

### SEPTEMBER

- 13 More than 120 Japanese Catholics, headed by Bishops Tanaka of Kyoto and Misue of Hiroshima, are sent as a delegation to a world conference on religion at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.
- 15 A study conference of UCCJ members from Reformed and Presbyterian traditions attracts 500 people from 135 local congregations to Fujimi-chō Church in Tokyo.
- 28 Jesuit Father Jaime Coelho seeks to meet with visiting Indonesian President Suharto to discuss killings of students in East Timor. Security guards and Japanese police seek to arrest the priest.
- 30 Sixteen Christian organizations, including the YWCA, Salvation Army and NCCJ, call upon the Ministry of Education to see that school textbooks accurately portray the suffering of Asian "comfort women" forced into prostitution by the Japanese army during World War II.

### OCTOBER

- 5 Japan Evangelical Association sponsors a seminar in Osaka centering on the theme of relations between the churches of Japan and Christians in the second and third world nations.
- 18 The Catholic Episcopal Commission on Social Issues announces renewed calls for environmental protection and elimination of social discrimination.
- 23 The *Japan Christian Review* releases its first issue with a worship service, lecture and publication party at UCCJ Ginza Church.
- 30 Thirty representatives from Catholic dioceses meet in Niigata for a session of the Ecumenical Commission of the Bishop's Conference to explore issues related to unity and cooperation with the Anglican Church.

### NOVEMBER

- 11 Japan Catholic Center opens. The new address is:  
Nihon Catholic Center, Shiomi 2-10-10, Kōtō-ku, Tokyo 135  
) (03) 5632-4411 (03) 5632-4457

- 14 Minamata disease, caused by industrial pollution, is the focus of a meeting endorsed by Christian groups and sponsored by the United Nations University.
- 17 Philippines dedicates a bronze memorial to Takayama Ukon, the Christian feudal lord exiled to Manila in the 17th century.
- 31 The home of Seigakuin University professor Sumiya Mikio, chair of a committee seeking to arbitrate the dispute between local farmers and the Narita Airport Authority, is damaged by rockets allegedly fired by radical opponents of the airport.

## DECEMBER

- 3 Evangelical church leaders denounce a quasi-Christian new religious group variously known as the JMS Movement or Morning Star, based in Korea but growing rapidly in Japan. In several ways similar to the Unification movement, the group uses mind control methods in approaches to students and young adults.
- 8 Meetings are held in three locations to continue the spirit of prayer for world peace exhibited on the occasion of last year's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- 11 A petition by Lutherans calls for the withdrawal of Japanese Self-Defense Forces from military peace keeping and police activities in Cambodia.
- 19 Leaders from six pentecostal groups gather in Tokyo to discuss recent schisms and potential for future collaboration.
- 20 Prayer groups are initiated for a nationwide evangelistic rally scheduled for the Kōshien Stadium in November 1993 and the Billy Graham Crusade scheduled to be held in the Tokyo Dome in January 1994.