

Japan Denominational Statistics 1994

1993 Statistics for the Largest Japanese Denominations

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DENOMINATION	MEMBERSHIP	CHANGE	CONGREGATIONS	CLERGY/ RELIGIOUS
Roman Catholic	433,199	+2,881	1,069	10,027
United Church of Christ in Japan (<i>Kyōdan</i>)	207,521	+3,261	1,713	2,712
<i>Nippon Seikōkai</i> (Anglican)	57,827	+775	317	361
Japan Baptist Convention	31,103	+1,170	322	461
Eastern Orthodox	25,611	+88	84	64
Japan Evangelical Lutheran	22,061	+267	154	167
Church of Christ Japan (<i>Nikki</i>)	13,593	-260	143	161
Seventh Day Adventist	13,311	+232	159	130
Immanuel(Wesleyan)	12,422	+211	118	262
Jesus Christ Church	12,421	+323	123	260
* <i>Kyōdaidan</i>	3,658	+53	78	157
Holiness Church	12,077	+209	156	342
Assemblies of God	10,948	+371	175	323
Reformed Church in Japan	8,807	+115	125	147
The Evangelical Alliance (<i>Dōmei</i>)	8,456	+228	168	292
Japan Evangelical Christian Church Association	8,029	+754	157	162
Salvation Army	6,481	-173	72	220
Holy Church of Jesus	6,614	+183	102	216
Church of Nazarene	6,254	+605	73	82
Japan Baptist Union	4,823	+24	74	112
*Independant Churches (<i>Renmei</i>)	28,869	+581	746	804
Korean Christian Church in Japan	4,115	-100	82	71

NOTES AND COMMENTS

ALL THE MAJOR denominations have shown some growth in the past year with the exceptions of the Church of Christ in Japan, the Salvation Army and the Korean Christian Church in Japan. One rather intriguing

discrepancy in the statistics is with respect to the Roman Catholic Church which saw a leap of some 12,000 in 1992, but only shows an increase of just under 3,000 in 1993. Furthermore, in the official statistics published by the Catholic Bishops Conference in

July 1993 (see *Katorikku Shinbun*, July 4, 1993), a growth of 3,500 is the figure given. However, the same article does mention that there were some 10,050 baptisms in the previous year. Harry Burton-Lewis very kindly ascribed this ongoing growth to the National Incentive Convention on Evangelization (NICE), whereas my own instincts would lean towards inadequate bookkeeping. As Michel Gaultier pointed out in his article, "The Catholic Approach to Evangelization: NICE," in the 1992 issue of *The Japan Christian Review*, NICE is a movement that seeks to change the direction of the Church in Japan and its ways of being in mission, rather than a series of meetings held at irregular intervals as more than a few at the grassroots parish level still seem to perceive it. Also the NICE movement is still in its early stages with its main focus one of trying to understand the social realities of present-day Japan within which we are called to engage in mission and witness. While not wishing to deny the potential of the NICE movement, more than a little apprehension surfaces when one recalls that the final document of NICE II seems to have been composed in the main by the convention secretariat, which had a strong clerical presence. Though the document was accepted by the convention plenum, strong reservations were raised by some of the younger delegates present regarding the whole shape and direction of the convention.

The influx of *nisei* and *sansei* families, a substantial percentage of whom are baptized Christians, from the Latin American countries is not yet reflected in the statistics of denominations such as the Catholic Church since they are still in the process of being integrated into the local community. Consequently, responding to their pastoral needs is a challenge that we have not fully confronted, though few would deny that they constitute a presence which we cannot ignore, particularly when one realizes that in some areas they probably outnumber those

Christians already present. Caution is further advised with regard to the Catholic statistics, since, for example, the Catholic diocese of Nagoya, probably one of the most active dioceses in the country, shows a gradual increase of just over 2,000 for the years 1990–1993 while there is no noticeable rise in the number of catechumens at any stage over the four years, the number staying at a fairly stable 350–400.

There are two points of difference with last year's statistics. First, I have unified all the statistics for the Independent Churches since the data available to me didn't allow for making the necessary distinctions. The reader should therefore keep in mind that behind the figure given for the total number of believers, 28,869, exist numerous traditions including the Reformed, the Baptist, the Pentecostal, and the Brethren traditions, to name those that are more easily identifiable. Secondly, with respect to the *Kyōdaidan*, whereas the membership for last year is listed as some 11,868 attending some 160 churches, this year the number is 3,658 members attending seventy-eight churches. Within the main body of the *Nihon Kirisutokyo Nenkan 1994* (Japan Christian Yearbook 1994) I could only find seventy-eight churches affiliated with the *Kyōdaidan*, and the Yearbook for 1992 gives a membership of 3,526. That the figures of last year for the *Kyōdaidan* are identical to those of the Holiness Church, which is listed immediately below it, should also act as a warning sign advising caution in this instance. This is one little discrepancy we are going to have to blame on the hands of the gremlins!

For all the years I have spent in Japan, I still find myself at the least intrigued, if not occasionally bewildered, by the tremendous variety of Christian Churches present in Japan. I asked myself what images the more public actions of the representatives, both official and unofficial, of our various Churches give to the people of Japan at

large. All the indications are present that more is surely to be gained in terms of both the quality and effectiveness of our witness by looking for more ways where we can celebrate what we have in common, and in offering a united witness to the Kingdom values that Jesus came to proclaim and incarnate for us. Further, to recall a key principle of education that is valid across all cultures, one needs to affirm first before

moving on to guiding and correcting. While those who seek to live the Gospel will always be a sign of contradiction in whatever society they live, in the living out of our prophetic vocation as disciples of the Risen One we should never forget that it was with leading strings of love that Yahweh led the Hebrews through the desert.