

Japan Denominational Statistics 1995

1994 Statistics for the Largest Japanese Denominations

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DENOMINATION	MEMBERSHIP	CHANGE	CONGREGATIONS	CLERGY/ RELIGIOUS
Roman Catholic	437,600	+4401	1,054	10,040
United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyōdan)	207,690	+169	1,700	2,387
Nippon Seikōkai (Anglican)	57,644	-183	318	344
Japan Baptist Convention	31,541	+403	320	469
Eastern Orthodox	25,611	0	84	64
Japan Evangelical Lutheran	22,156	+95	153	158
Church of Christ Japan (Nikki)	12,802	-791	142	160
Seventh Day Adventist	13,557	+246	156	131
Immanuel(Wesleyan)	12,570	+148	118	238
Jesus Christ Church	12,456	+35	127	263
Kyōdaidan	3,666	+8	77	158
Holiness Church	12,355	+278	159	347
Assemblies of God	11,077	+129	179	348
Reformed Church in Japan	8,943	+136	127	156
The Evangelical Alliance (Dōmei)	8,839	+383	175	304
Japan Evangelical Christian Church Association	8,029	0	169	162
Salvation Army	6,327	-154	68	231
Holy Church of Jesus	6,751	+137	102	216
Church of the Nazarene	6,249	-5	73	82
Japan Baptist Union	4,830	+7	74	103
Independent Churches (Renmei)	30,213	+1,344	779	(N/A)
Korean Christian Church in Japan	6,262	+2,147	82	81

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Due to a change in the publication schedule of the *Kirisutokyō Nenkan*, the data for 1994 is based on statistics available as of May 1994. This is in contrast to previous years when the data given was that available in October of year of publication. The statistics

given for the Roman Catholic Church are the exception as these are as of December 31, 1994. The Roman Catholic statistics show a change of some 4,401, which is almost double the usual annual increase. This leads one to presume that our figures ultimately include all those baptized over a two-year period but not included in previous figures.

Consequently, the figures given in last year's issue of the *Japan Christian Review* need to be revised upwards from 433,199 to 434,820 to reflect the official figures reported as of December 31, 1993. Including clergy and religious this gives us a total Christian population of Japan of 1,065,564, which in turn represents an increase over the previous year of nearly 15,000. As with last year these figures need to be treated with reservation due to a lack of uniformity of criteria for establishing who should be considered a member of the wider Christian communion (see news item for June 6-7 in this year's "The Christian Year in Review").

Pastoral experience urges one to welcome the small increase that can be noted, but not to presume that all counted as members of local congregations are as active in Christian practice and witness as one would hope. We should also remember that statistics per se are probably not the most appropriate final arbiter for assessing the overall significance of the Christian communities' presence in Japanese society. It might prove interesting and useful at some point to examine the situation with respect to "mission schools." Have they managed to maintain their enrollments in spite of the rising costs of education? Other possible parameters that could lead to a more objective assessment of the effectiveness of Christian mission in Japan need to be explored.

Although the figures do not quite match up I was intrigued to note that the overall increase, nearly 15,000 was reasonably similar to the 12,000 who signed pledge cards committing themselves to Jesus Christ at the Billy Graham Tokyo International Revival. My own suspicions are that such people are best classified as sympathizers, though some may eventually make their way into mainstream Churches. One reason for offering such a comment is that, at least with respect to the Roman Catholic Church, those who participate in catechetical programs that the Church offers tend to be

seeking a different kind of worship and witness than that which the Rev. Billy Graham and his counterparts offer. Furthermore, of those whom it has been my privilege to accompany on their journey of faith to date, the road to baptism, to asking to receive the Sacrament of Christian Initiation, has been one they have walked for many a year before our paths crossed.

Various thoughts crossed my mind as I compiled the denominational statistics, and on reflection I find they can be linked to the idea of what can be gained from looking to areas where the Christian Churches engage in common witness to gospel values. While one looks in vain for a significant number of examples of ongoing ecumenical dialogue or shared worship, or of dialogue with Shinto or Shinto-based New Religions, the number of official and unofficial events and activities linked to justice and peace issues seems to increase with the passing of years. What this phenomenon means with respect to the missionary presence of the Christian Churches in Japan is probably a topic worth pursuing. If nothing else the right wing of the political spectrum in Japan is more than aware of the Christian Churches as groups that have very different values from their own, and as people who live out their lives in a different meaning horizon from their own.

After nearly twenty years of working in Japan or with Japanese Christians, am I alone in wondering when our liturgical or ritual practices will take more significant steps on the road to inculturation? My present work finds me a member of the staff of an international formation community in which the student body has a strongly international flavor, and one of the frequently heard comments of the non-Japanese is that our liturgies are very "Roman," in an orthodox, traditional sense. Coming, as quite a few of them do, from other Asian countries where inculturation is moving apace, they find themselves looking in vain for an

Asian flavor in our prayer and worship. I would like to note, for example, that the revised rite for the celebration of Christian Marriage for the Catholic Church is by all reports a direct translation of the Vatican-published Latin original, with no attempt being made to respond to local custom or needs. One is forced to ask if our work of gospel witness only results in leading those who respond to worship in a style that is

marked solely by the traditions of those who first proclaimed the Gospel on these islands. If our proclamation that in Christ Jesus God became incarnate, one like us, means anything surely it must be that Christ is also waiting to be born not just in the minds and hearts of Japanese, but also in their flesh.