

# The Christian Year in Review

## Biennial Reports

Brendan Kelleher, SVD and Hazel B. Terhune

*Simply for practical reasons this special report is in two sections that cover overlapping but different two-year periods. The first by Brendan Kelleher covers recent events connected with the Catholic Church in Japan. Kelleher has written in a noticeably personal style, reflecting his own involvement in the events and changes that have occurred. Hazel Terhune is also very much involved in what she has outlined in the second section regarding significant happenings throughout the Japanese Protestant community. Even so her section is in more of a timeline format, with which JCR readers will be familiar from previous issues. Guest Editor*

### **Roman Catholic Review** **Significant Events of 1996–1997**

Next to the subway station I use quite frequently is a rather large bookstore. While to one side is the usual display of magazines and new books, on the other is a stand with a most unusual mix of books. Half are concerned with the World Cup; in recent weeks one cannot open a newspaper or a magazine without encountering articles or photographs of Japan's soccer stars. It was however the books on the other half of the stand that caused my eyebrows to rise, for they were all concerned with Nostradamus and related themes. The religious books section of the store, while containing a reasonable selection on the mainstream religions, also had more than enough books on cults, new religions, the occult and spiritualist themes. In a religious environment where such works find a ready audience I have often wondered how the Roman Catholic Church's current focus on the celebration of the millennium, or the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 as it has been designated, is being received at the grassroots level here in Japan.

According to some commentators, given the presence of a milleniarist strand in Polish literature, it was almost inevitable that John Paul II make the celebration of the millennium a significant theme of his pontificate. The flow of documentation and directives from Rome has been almost ceaseless, leaving one no time to digest them. Perhaps along with some other Catholic communities around the world, the Church here in Japan doesn't seem to have been able to embrace the celebrations with as much enthusiasm as Rome expected. Directives have been issued at both the national and the diocesan levels, and any major gathering or conference of note has put some mention of the Holy Year 2000 on its agenda. The first of three special years (1997) of preparation has just passed—it was a year dedicated to Jesus Christ—and we are now in the year of the Holy Spirit. Rome asked that all churches around the world celebrate special liturgies to mark the topic of the year on a designated Sunday. However since the Vatican has to authorize all official liturgical texts, either they weren't ready last year or the word didn't reach the parish priest of the community I regularly join for the celebration

of the Sunday Eucharist. Actually the designated Sunday this year, the Feast Of Pentecost, also passed without any marked difference in the liturgy of the day. Maybe sometime before the year 2000....

Before the year 2000 two milestones beckoned the Roman Catholic Church, though one would like to hope that they aren't considered our private preserve. February 5, 1997 marked the 400th anniversary of the 26 Martyrs of Japan, who were crucified at Nishizaka, Nagasaki. The other anniversary is the 450th anniversary of the arrival of the Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier at Kagoshima on August 15, 1549. With the celebration of the first of those anniversaries now past I find myself wondering if there are any lessons to be learnt both for the celebrations in 1999 and for the future.

Perhaps because in our minds the 26 martyrs are inextricably linked with Nagasaki we forget that they are the Martyrs of Japan. Located as it is between the Peace Park and the main JR station in Nagasaki, many visitors are naturally drawn to the 26 Martyrs Memorial Church and Museum. For the martyrs themselves, though, Nishizaka was the end of a journey, one that had begun in Kyoto, and it was there that the first celebrations were held on November 23, 1996 in the auditorium of Notre Dame Women's University. The main group of martyrs were arrested on November 8, 1596 in Kyoto, and though the Jesuits are responsible for the Memorial Church and Museum in Nagasaki only two were from there. Moreover only three martyrs were Jesuits and six more were not even Japanese. Tradition was to rule, however, and the rest of the celebrations took place in Nagasaki, beginning with a Thanksgiving Eucharist held in the park at Nishizaka on December 8, 1996. The main celebrations on February 5 were held in the Nagasaki Prefectural Gymnasium with some 3,000 in attendance. On previous days there had been ordinations, commemorative lectures and a concert at Urakami Cathedral to mark the installation of a new pipe organ. On November 29 and 30 an opera based on the story of the 26 martyrs received its premiere: a libretto by Toshie Tanaka and score by Tsugutoshi Aragaki. And the year was rounded out with a closing Mass on December 8 at Urakami Cathedral.

The banality of the symbol for the year, a simple shield on which there was a cross, the figures 400 and 26, the two dates 1597-1997 and the statement Twenty Six Martyrs of Japan summed up the lack of imagination that seemed to mark the celebrations. No attempt was made to explore the ecumenical possibilities of the anniversary, and what the installation of a pipe organ has to do with commemorating the martyrs is a riddle for future generations to unravel. Certainly it offers no pointers for the future inculturation of the Gospel in Japan. Was it an ironic question from nature that the memorial to the martyrs is showing wear and tear? An additional point worthy of only a simple statement is that the Vatican delegate to the celebrations was the head of the Vatican Finance Office.

Turning to some faces and personalities who made the news in the past two years, first we recall those Roman Catholics honored for distinguished services to ecumenism. In 1996 among those honored were some who previously had been involved in the ecumenical translation of the bible and more recently the completion of a full ecumenical commentary on the scriptures. The commentary is the first such venture of its kind in the history of the Christian churches in Japan. Among the Roman Catholic contributors honored were Rev. Mikio Wada (Osaka), Rev. Bernard Schneiders O.F.M. and Rev. Kōsuke Ishikawa S.D.B. In 1997 the Roman Catholic honoree was Saburo Takada, honored for his contribution to the *Tenrei seika* (*Liturgical Hymns*), which contains musical settings for all the major liturgical texts, a significant number of the psalms and some other choral pieces. While this newer collection breaks the mold of the old *Katorikku seika* (*Catholic Hymns*) and enhances the liturgy, it lacks

genuine newness with its close modeling of many of its melodies on Gregorian Chant and the unquestioned presumption that the pipe organ is the only appropriate instrument for use in the liturgy. Hence in terms of a truly inculturated liturgy, one of the most significant expressions of our faith available to us, the *Tenrei seika* cannot be considered the only or the final model.

The Episcopal Ordination of the Rev. Jun Ikenaga S.J. as Coadjutor Archbishop of Osaka on March 20, 1996 gave the Bishops Conference some new blood. Just over a year later, with the appointment and consecration (on May 25, 1997) of Rev. Toshio Oshikawa O.F.M. Conv. as Bishop of Naha and the elevation to the episcopacy (consecrated on June 15) of the Rev. Yoshinao Ōtsuka, the new Bishop of Kyoto, a further injection of youth was achieved. Archbishop Ikenaga became Ordinary of the Osaka Archdiocese on May 10, 1997 following the resignation of Archbishop Yasuda. Bishop Oshikawa will always be easy to recognize with his rather distinguished grey beard, while Bishop Ōtsuka (age 42) becomes the first member of the hierarchy to be born after World War II. And though actually outside the scope of this review, the Diocese of Yokohama will need a new bishop following the appointment of Bishop Fumio Hamao as head of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People effective June 15, 1998. Bishop Hamao is the first bishop from Japan, as well as from the Far East, to be appointed to head a department in the Vatican.

The past two years have seen the passing of some well-known and not so well-known figures in the Roman Catholic community. On April 16, 1996 the systematic theologian Maurus Heinrich O.F.M. passed away at age 91. His course notes, dutifully edited in six volumes by his pupil Tsutomu Fukuda O.F.M. and published in the 1980s, show an openness to Japanese religiosity (and to the Kyoto School of Philosophy) in both its formal and informal expressions. One can still be challenged by much of what he had to say even if not totally comfortable with the final result. One year later, on April 29, 1997 the death of the Rev. Akira Mizoguchi of the Yokohama diocese marked the passing away of another pioneering figure. Father Mizoguchi was also the actual father of a family, having served formerly as a Protestant pastor who after long delays was finally ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1993. To date his is the only case of a married man with a family being ordained in Japan. Cardinal Shirayanagi and later Bishop Hamao should be commended for the support they offered in helping him fulfil his vocation. Now in part as a tribute to him and so many other married men who are called to ministry we look forward to the speedy introduction after many years of delay of the permanent diaconate.

Outside of his native Japan Shusaku Endō will probably be best remembered for such novels as *Sea and Poison*, *Wonderful Fool*, and *Silence*, along with his other works. However with his death from pneumonia on September 29, 1996 the Catholic Church probably lost one of its most widely read apologists, someone whose writings on both scriptural themes and other aspects of his faith became a first point of contact with Christianity for many who were later baptized. That said, he never felt able to retract his belief that Christianity, as he received it, always felt like a suit of hand-me-down clothes. Furthermore his writings on scriptural themes tended to reflect the scholarship of a previous generation with its negative assessment of the possibilities of a quest for the historical Jesus. Little of a significant body of work from Europe and America that was then in circulation was available to him, due to the inordinate amount of time it takes for translations of contemporary mainstream scholarship to reach the ordinary faithful. Once more we are drawn to reflect on the ongoing need for the Christian Church to find a theological grammar and vocabulary that will allow the Gospel to echo in the heart of the ordinary Japanese. We can only hope that at least the major Catholic

centers of theology in Sophia University (Tokyo) and Nanzan University (Nagoya), along with the Major Seminaries in Tokyo and Fukuoka might approach the fulfilling of their vocation in the twenty-first century by making a more concerted effort to respond to the challenge of Endō's literary legacy.

Though all of them had already retired and passed on the baton, three bishops' deaths were mourned by the Catholic community in 1996–1997. On August 8, 1996 Cardinal Asajiro Satowaki, former Archbishop of Nagasaki, died at the age of 91. October 6, 1997 saw the passing of the former Bishop of Nagoya, Nobuo Soma (age 81), and just over one month later, on November 9, the Church of Hiroshima mourned the death of Bishop Yoshimatsu Noguchi (age 88), retired bishop of the diocese. All will be remembered both in the dioceses they served and in the Catholic community at large in Japan. Cardinal Satowaki, the oldest as well as Roman-trained in the prewar era, was raised to the Cardinalate by Pope John Paul II at an age when most bishops retire. He encouraged St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe to travel to Japan when they met in Rome in the 1930s and was one of the main movers behind the Papal Visit in February 1981. After 1983, when he finished his term of office as President of the Bishops' Conference, he played no significant active role in the life of the Church at large in Japan. In many ways he was one of the last of the old generation, with the result that the church in Nagasaki is still very orthodox and traditional: the hand of the Fathers of the Mission Etranger de Paris, who laid the foundations of the diocese in the nineteenth century, and indeed the Church in much of Japan, still lies heavy in Kyushu. That the diocese of Nagasaki has produced no scripture scholar or theologian of note in either the postwar or post-Vatican II era probably says more than any words I could write, while standing as an anti-memorial to his episcopate.

Twelve years separate Cardinal Satowaki (born 1904) and Bishop Soma (born 1916), and the younger Soma also manifested a totally different vision of the ministry of the episcopate. A graduate of the Astronomy Department of Tokyo University, Bishop Soma saw service in the Japanese army during World War II almost at the same time as Mgr. Satowaki was Apostolic Administrator of Taiwan, which was then occupied by Japan. Following a battle with illness on his return to Japan, Bp. Soma became the oldest member of his class on entry into Tokyo Major Seminary. He was affectionately known as *Otōsan* (Dad) by his fellow students and was 44 years old when ordained a priest in 1960. Ordained Bishop in 1969, he became the first chairman of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission in 1973. And so began a ministry that saw him become increasingly involved in social justice issues both at home and right across Asia and beyond. Even following his retirement as Bishop of Nagoya in 1993 he traveled widely and campaigned for innumerable causes, resulting for example in his being forcibly expelled from Malaysia a year before he died.

That the Roman Catholic Church in Japan is involved in a wide range of justice and peace issues, and is seen as the Church that stands on the side of the poor, is a fitting memorial to Bishop Soma. The down and outs will miss his presence on the soup kitchen runs, many alcoholics will thank him for promoting the establishment of centers and programs that have enabled them to begin the journey on the road to rehabilitation and the Philippine government who had him listed as *persona non grata* can take him off their black list. His name is now written in the book of life as a true "Son of the Gospel" and a figure of prophetic inspiration to those left behind.

While admitting that this review sketch may not be a totally accurate reflection of the face of the Catholic Church in Japan, in preparing I reviewed over two years' copies of the *Catholic Weekly*, a weekly newspaper produced by the Bishops' Conference. Among the most

regular faces on the front page were Bishop Nomura of Nagoya, head also of Caritas Japan, the Catholic overseas aid agency, Bishop Takeo Okada of Urawa who succeeded Bishop Soma as head of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and Archbishop Jun Ikenaga of Osaka, head of the Commission for International Cooperation. Each in his own way is a witness to a Church that has become increasingly outward looking and socially involved. It seems invidious to even attempt to list the causes to which they and the rest of the bishops have shown a concern and commitment, but among them we can mention the "comfort women"; migrant laborers in Japan and abroad; those suffering the effects of famine and/or war in Rwanda and Burundi, in Papua New Guinea and in North Korea; attempts to breach the division of church and state here in Japan; promoting a proper understanding of the heritage of World War II, including the Japanese military occupation of numerous Asian countries and historical memory of the same; and the whole question of nuclear and military disarmament in general. With respect to the topic of "historical memory," following discussions between Bishop Hamao and Archbishop Mun-Hi Lee of Tegu, Korea held during the Sixth General Assembly of the FABC held in Manila in January 1995, a project has been launched that seeks to promote a common understanding of the history of the painful and misunderstood relations between the two countries.

With the approach of a new millennium, almost against my personal inclinations I find myself looking backward and forward. The Catholic Church in Japan has an aging membership and seems to be neither reaching out nor keeping its younger members as it did in the 1970s. The average age of its priests is creeping nearer to 60 and that of nuns and sisters, the backbone of its involvement in education and welfare work, nearer to 70. Over half the priests are from overseas and neither the local dioceses nor the religious congregations and missionary societies have a regular pattern of ordination of new priests. Dioceses like Hiroshima, Osaka and Kyoto are moving ahead with creating team ministries or with promoting various lay ministries in preparation for the day when there won't be enough ordained ministers to preside over Sunday Eucharists in their jurisdictions. Since the Hanshin Earthquake in January 1995, the Osaka Diocese has been reducing and amalgamating parishes in the Osaka and Kobe areas. Other dioceses will probably have to follow in the same or a similar direction. For those of us who are called to carry our mission and ministry into the new millennium there are challenging and difficult days ahead.

May I close then by offering a beacon of hope. Though the Synod of Asian Bishops was held in the spring of 1998, and therefore outside the scope of this review, the quality of the preparations made by the Bishops Conference was both challenging and encouraging. Called under the direction of Pope John Paul II, and initially under the strong directing hand of the Vatican Curia, the bishops felt they had enough on their agenda and initially did not respond with much enthusiasm. With the publishing on September 3, 1996 of the *Lineamenta* (a rough draft of the working paper designed to focus and shape the actual discussions and deliberations) they offered a hint of unease that was to develop in a way full of challenge and promise. The *Lineamenta* was published only in English and German, and the bishops expressed their regret at the short time-frame given in which they were expected to translate it and then offer their responses. Once they had digested it they questioned whether it was truly open and responsive to Asian realities. Finally, in what amounted to a rejection of the document per se, rather than respond to it in the terms proposed by the Vatican they produced their own alternative set of themes and proposals. The full text of the response was published over four weeks in the *Catholic Weekly* in September and October, 1997 after approval and submission by the bishops in July. Among the topics they raised were the methodology

of the Lineamenta and the Synod process as it currently stands, the ecclesiology, soteriology and theology of mission of the document and its excessively European flavor. The bishops raised specifically Asian topics to which the Synod should attend, including a more inculturated Asian liturgy, a spirituality that respects Asian traditions and a review of the way the Vatican Curia relates to the Church in Asia, which is still marked by colonialism and paternalism, thus failing to respect the integrity and competence of the local hierarchies. The bishops continued to offer the same kind of challenging leadership right on to the floor of the Synod when it met this past spring.

With no further such news summaries or sketches to come in the JCR, our readers might like to follow up the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan on its home page: <<http://www.02.so-net.or.jp/~catholic>>.

**Protestant Review**  
**Significant Events of 1997–1998**

**JANUARY 1997**

- 19 A Day of Prayer for Christian Unity was cosponsored by the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.
- 27–30 The NCCJ's Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto hosted an Inter-Religio Conference on "Contemporary Millennial Movements in East and Southeast Asia: Possibilities and Limits of Inter-religious Dialogue."

**FEBRUARY**

- 1 The Japan Evangelical Missionary Association (JEMA) released the Japanese version of *Operation Japan*, an ecumenical daily prayer handbook that gives geographical, cultural and religious information by prefecture and names the specific Christian institutions and projects of all denominations. (see May 1, 1997).
- 7 The NCCJ's Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues (CCRAI) and the Group for Feminism, Religion and Peace organized a meeting in Tokyo on "Questioning Japan's Nationalistic View of History."
- 11 Designated by the government in 1966 as "National Founding Day," the date has been observed by the UCCJ since 1967 as "Freedom of Religion Day," when rallies are held nationwide on religious, political and human rights issues, with the increasing participation of students' and citizens' groups.
- 20 The Board of Publications of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ, hereafter Kyōdan) released *Sanbika 21*, the church's new hymnal for the twenty-first century.

**MARCH**

- 10–11 The 33rd NCCJ General Assembly met at Shin Koiwa Baptist Church in Tokyo on the theme "Seeking New Horizons for the Ecumenical Movement."

- 24–26 “Where are the souls of Japanese youth?” was the subject addressed at the Kyōdan-related Missionary Conference by guest speaker Martin Repp of the NCCJ’s Center for the Study of Japanese Religions.

#### APRIL

- 2 The seven-member Japanese Supreme Court ruled that use of public funds as offerings to Shinto shrines violates Japan’s Constitution, ending a 15-year suit against Ehime Prefecture’s officials by a prefectural citizens’ group that includes Kyōdan church members.
- 4–9 The ninth Youth Consultation between NCCJ and National Council of Churches assembled in Korea.
- 7 A meeting to “Stop Child Prostitution” was held in Tokyo to draft new legislation.
- 9–14 NCCJ representatives participated in the CCA consultation on “Peace and Security in Indochina” held in Hong Kong.
- 14–17 The sixth consultation of the Kyōdan and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan was held in Ginowan, Okinawa.
- 17 Formation of the group “Christian Diet Members from Japan and Korea” was celebrated.
- 27–28 The National Meeting of the Christian Coalition on Refugees and Foreign Migrant Workers was held in Nagoya.
- 29–  
May 3 NCCJ representatives participated in the CCA consultation on “Peace and Security in Northeast Asia.”

#### MAY

- 1 The English version of JEMA’s *Operation Japan* was published (see earlier February 1 entry).
- 11 Asia Ecumenical Sunday, an annual event originally initiated by the CCA, was celebrated throughout Asia as a day of mutual remembrance and prayer.
- 21 The Forum on Climate Changes convened in Kyoto, with guest speaker David Hallman of the World Council of Churches.

#### JUNE

- 5 The NCCJ Dialogue Meeting with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan was sponsored by the NCCJ Committee on Faith and Order.
- 10–11 The annual General Assembly of the Japan Christian Social Work League (JCSWL) took place in Matsuyama, Shikoku.
- 10–13 The second NCCJ-NCCK Women’s Committee Exchange Program was conducted in Korea.
- 16–17 The national organization of people working to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities met in Tokyo for its third nationwide gathering.

## **JULY**

- 22–24 The Kyōdan hosted, in Kyoto, the fifth biennial mission consultation with its three partner churches in Korea: the Korean Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

## **AUGUST**

- 7–9 The Seminar on Human Rights Education for Christian Schools was conducted at Rikkyo High School in Tokyo, sponsored by the NCCJ Division of Christian Education.
- 22–23 The Kyōdan's ninth Nationwide Liaison Consultation on Gender Discrimination met in Kyoto.

## **SEPTEMBER**

- 11–13 The 20th Seminar on Japanese Religions was conducted in Kyoto on "Indigenous Christian Movements in Japan," sponsored by the NCCJ's Center for the Study of Japanese Religions.
- 22 The Japan Baptist Convention celebrated its 50th Anniversary.
- 25–27 The second mission consultation between the Kyōdan and the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches was held in Uster, Switzerland.

## **OCTOBER**

- 11 A memorial service was observed in Tokyo a year after the death of John Masaaki Nakajima, former NCCJ moderator and Kyōdan general secretary.
- 18–30 The sixth Japan-Korea Consultation on Alien Registration Issues was held in Pusan, Korea.
- 21–23 The 44th General Assembly of the Korean Christian Church in Japan gathered in Fukuoka.
- 21–24 The JEMA Church Planting Institute was conducted at Karuizawa.
- 30–  
Nov 4 The CCA Youth Consultation on Peace in Northeast Asia gathered in Kyoto.

## **NOVEMBER**

- 3–5 The International Conference on Violence Against Women in War and Armed Conflict Situations was held in Tokyo.
- 9–15 The Week for Disabled Persons was sponsored by the NCCJ Disabled Persons and the Church Committee.
- 17 Representatives of Japan's Campaign to Ban Land Mines met with the foreign minister of the Japanese government.

- 19 The Kyōdan Executive Council issued a public apology to Hansen's Disease patients and their families for the church's failure to work against the discrimination they have suffered in Japanese society.
- 22–25 A delegation of NCCJ representatives visited the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea to determine routes for relief supplies to alleviate shortages caused by the natural disasters.

## DECEMBER

- 1–10 The third Conference of the Parties (COP3) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Kyoto.
- 7 The Inter-religious Gathering on the Prevention of Climate Change met in Kyoto.
- 11 A Roundup Meeting was held in Tokyo for the Ottawa Conference on a Global Ban on Land Mines.

## JANUARY 1998

- 19 The Inter-religious Prayer Meeting on a Global Ban on Land Mines was held in Tokyo.
- 27 The Inter-religious Meeting on Migrant Workers was held in Tokyo.
- 31 A meeting on "Reexamining Japan's Nationalist View of History" marked the 15th Anniversary of the NCCJ Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues (CCRAI).

## FEBRUARY

- 11 "Freedom of Religion Day" was observed by nationwide rallies, many of which focused on militarism, human rights and Japan's understanding of its own prewar and wartime history (see February 11, 1997).
- 17 NCCJ representatives met with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo about the U.S. threat to attack Iraq.
- 19–21 NCCJ conducted a seminar in Tokyo on exchange among organizations for persons with disabilities.

## MARCH

- 6 A World Day of Prayer meeting took place in Tokyo.
- 12 An emergency meeting held in Tokyo was organized by the NCCJ, the Catholic Council on Peace and Justice and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to protest the Panpanga Delta Development Project in the Philippines.

## APRIL

- 8 Tokuzen Yoshikazu, the present NCCJ moderator, was inaugurated as president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tokyo.
- 15–17 The Asia Solidarity Conference met in Tokyo to consider Japanese Military "Comfort Women" Issues.

- 25 The World Day of Fasting for North Korea was observed in Tokyo, organized by the NCCJ, Caritas Japan, various Buddhist organizations and some NGOs.
- 29 A Gathering to Seek Peace issued a declaration on the New (Military) Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (1997), calling it “a war manual.”

## MAY

- 23 The National Christian Schools Human Rights Education Study Council conducted a seminar for the Kanto area.
- 24 Asia Ecumenical Sunday highlighted the situation in North Korea (see May 11, 1997).
- 29 The first in a series of meetings on “NCCJ’s 50 Years of History” took place in Tokyo, with others on June 26, July 24 and July 31.

## JUNE

- 1–3 The 13th Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) General Assembly met in Shizuoka.
- 3–10 Three- and four-day consultations were conducted in Kyoto and Shiobara by the Japan Congress on Evangelism.
- 8-9 The Kyōdan Buraku Liberation Center held its sixth national assembly in Hiroshima on “Getting the Church Involved in Buraku Liberation IV: My Liberation, the Church’s Liberation.”
- 26 A study meeting was held on “NCCJ’s 50 Years of History,” with others on May 29, July 24 and July 31.

## JULY

- 10 The Japan Missionary Language Institute celebrated its 30th anniversary.
- 13–15 The theme of the second JEA Japan Missions Congress was “Japanese Churches Facing the 21st Century.”
- 15–16 The First World Missions Congress to be held in Japan was sponsored in Tokyo by the JEA.
- 18 A Kikokusha (Japanese Returnee) Rally ‘98 took place in Higashi Kurume, Tokyo, by the Returnee Christian Network in Japan, which is sponsored by JEA and JEMA.
- 24 A study meeting was held on “NCCJ’s 50 Years of History,” with others on May 29, June 26 and July 31.
- 25 A Kikokusha (Japanese Returnee) Rally ‘98 was conducted at the Osaka Christian Center.
- 31 An anniversary Worship Service marked NCCJ’s 50 years following meetings on May 29, June 26 and July 24.
- 30–  
Aug 2 JEMA Summer Conference held in Karuizawa, featuring Reuven Doron of Embrace Israel Ministries.

## SEPTEMBER

- 10-12 The 21st seminar sponsored by NCCJ's Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto was held on the theme "Japanese Tendai Buddhism: Genshin between Lotus Sutra and Pure Land Belief."
- 18-27 Over 10,000 Christians around the country committed to pray daily for Tokyo during the Tokyo Revival Mission, and a 24-hour prayer program is scheduled throughout the coming year.
- 27 The International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Churches was observed in Japan, sponsored by the World Evangelical Association and the JEA.
- 28-  
Oct. 3 The Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission (JNAC) celebrated its 25th anniversary during its biennial meeting in Osaka. Member organizations are the Kyōdan, the KCCJ, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the United Church of Canada, the Christian Church, and in the USA: the Christian Church, Presbyterian Church USA, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ USA and the United Methodist Church.

## OCTOBER

- 5-6 The NCCJ will host a consultation with NCCC-USA.
- 20-23 The JEMA Church Planting Institute will be held in Karuizawa.
- 26-28 The NCCJ will convene a Mission Conference.

## NOVEMBER

- 5-12 A delegation from the China Christian Church will visit Japan.
- 17-19 The Kyōdan 31st General Assembly will gather in Tokyo.
- 30-  
Dec 3 The fourth Northeast Asia Church Leaders Conference, sponsored by the Korea Evangelical Fellowship and the JEA, will be conducted in Korea.