

The Christian Year in Review

Significant Events of 1993

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JANUARY

- 4 The Tokyo district of the Salvation Army announced the results of their Community Chest collection which was conducted over the festive season. A total of some \$290,000 was collected, down almost \$35,000 from the previous year.
- 7/19 Following the unofficial announcement of the Crown Prince's engagement, on January 7, the Information Center on the Imperial System/Yasukuni Jinja Problem of the United Church of Christ in Japan questioned the constitutionality of using public funds for any Shinto ceremonies related to the wedding. On the day of the formal announcement of the engagement, January 19, other Christian denominations issued statements expressing doubts about the constitutionality of public funding for the wedding ceremonies.
- 15 Following some changes in the Alien Registration Law, which came into force on January 8, Permanent Residents and members of the Korean community born in Japan will no longer be fingerprinted prior to the issuance of an Alien Registration Card. The Seventh Annual "January 15th" Christian Conference called for the complete abolition of the requirement for fingerprinting and the system of family registration.
- 18 Mrs. Moriyama Mayumi, the first woman to serve as Minister of Education, was present at a informal gathering of women's movements at which the Japan Christian Women's Temperance Union, one of the oldest Christian women's groups in Japan, lobbied her to work to assure greater attention is paid to the women's perspective in the formation of government policies. Specifically they asked that the teaching of history reflect the realities of the last war, and that time be given to taking up the problem of those victims of the war who are euphemistically referred to as "comfort women." Further they proposed the establishment of a Documentation Center and a Memorial Hall dedicated to them.
- 26-29 At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Catholic Bishops of Japan, held at the Japan Catholic Center, Shiomi, Tokyo, approval was given to a document on the pastoral care of the divorced and remarried. The Bishops also established a special commission to look into the possibility of introducing the Permanent, or "Married" Diaconate in Japan. If the commission so recommends, and Vatican approval is given, the Catholic Church in Japan will be the first in East Asia to introduce the Permanent Diaconate.

- 27–28 A meeting of the Executive of the United Church of Christ in Japan issued a statement calling for the abolition of the so-called PKO Law, which permits the participation of the Japanese Self Defense Forces in United Nations' peacekeeping operations.
- 30 At ceremonies which were held in Tokyo to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Niiijima Jō, founder of Dōshisha University, a commemorative lecture was given by Professor Ezaki Reona, President of Tsukuba University. Similar ceremonies were also held in Osaka where a commemorative lecture was given by Mr. Nagai Michio, a former Minister of Education.

FEBRUARY

- 5 Looking to the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Kike: Wadatsumi no Koe* (a collection of the wills and final messages left by students who died in the Second World War), eleven members of the Society to Commemorate Students who Died in the War, popularly called the Wadatsumi Kai, issued a statement asking what these voices from the dead have to say to us today. The statement said that these student voices are calling on all the people of Japan, particularly the young who have never known war, not to ever go to war again.
- 26 In the ongoing legal battle of the American missionary William Reith and his wife to obtain Japanese citizenship for Andrew—an infant of mixed Asian heritage whom they took in when his mother abandoned him—the District Court in Tokyo decreed that Andrew had a right to Japanese citizenship. The ruling was appealed by the Bureau of Immigration.

MARCH

- 1–4 Last year saw the unification of the Liebenzeller Church-Christian Church Federation, the Japanese New Testament Church, the Federation of Independent Christian Churches, and the Association of Evangelical Churches in Hokkaido. This new association is called the Japan Evangelical Church Federation. At their first National General Assembly they affirmed the centrality of a Biblical faith, and the primary role of the Bible in Christian life and witness.
- 6 One problem that faces the families of children who travel to Tokyo for long-term cancer treatment is finding affordable accommodation. Taking their inspiration from the Ronald McDonald Houses in the U.S. which seek to offer such a service, Mr. and Mrs. Yoshino Hisashi, who lost their own son to cancer exactly a year ago, opened a House of Love in Tokyo on their own property. Families from outside the metropolitan area can stay here while their children are receiving treatment.
- 9 Known familiarly as TCC, Tokyo Christian Junior College held its last graduation ceremonies, and so marked an end to twenty-seven years in the service of education. The final graduation of TCC students completed the transition phase that began with the establishment of Tokyo Christian University as a four-year school in 1990.
- 18 The High Court in Osaka upheld a lower court decision and declined to offer a judgment on whether the visit by then Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro to Yasukuni

Shrine on August 15, 1985, went against the provisions of the constitution regarding the separation of state and religion. The judge declared that since there were no legal grounds for claiming damages caused by the visit, there was no need to rule on its constitutionality.

- 20 Augustino Mizoguchi Akira, formerly a Protestant pastor, was ordained in 1992 as a married deacon in the Roman Catholic Church, following a special papal dispensation. After a further dispensation from the Pope, he was ordained to the priesthood in Yokohama. He now becomes the first married priest in the Catholic Church in Japan.
- 27 It was revealed that Mr. Gotoda, the Minister of Justice, had signed decrees authorizing the implementation of the death sentence in three cases, and that the sentences had been carried out. It had been over three years since the last capital punishment was carried out.

APRIL

- 1 Takeuchi Kentaro, Chairman of the NCCJ and Bishop Sōma Nobuo (Nagoya), Chairman of the Catholic Council for Justice and Peace, issued a joint statement condemning the implementation of the death penalty. They stated that the right to life was an inalienable right obtaining to God and we had no right of intervention.
- 2 The Japanese government is sued for damages by a group of Filipina women who were forced to work as “comfort women” during World War II. The sexual abuse they suffered was described as a crime against humanity. The NCCJ, the Justice and Peace Council of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tokyo and numerous other church groups announced their willingness to support them in their struggle.
On the same day the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan held a liturgy of thanksgiving at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saga City to mark one hundred years of mission work in Japan. The first public liturgical service held by the Evangelical Lutherans in Saga City was held on Easter Sunday in 1893.
- 9 Nakada Koji, a civilian volunteer working with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), was shot and killed by guerrillas of the Pol Pot faction. The NCCJ called for the withdrawal from Cambodia of the members of the Self Defense Forces currently involved in PKO activities.

MAY

- 2 Nanzan University, Nagoya, established a Catholic library as one of its commemorative projects marking the 1999 Golden Jubilee of the university’s foundation. The focus will be on material related to the propagation of the Christian faith in Japan with no distinctions made regarding the denominational affiliation of those involved.
- 3 The Presbyterian Christian Church of Japan and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Japan united to form the Presbyterian Church of Japan at a gathering held at Tokyo Christian Gakuen. The assembly also adopted a prospectus for the newly established Church.

- 15–16 The Women and the Church committee of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tokyo sponsored two days of lectures on the theme, “Man-Woman, and then God: Seeking a Fruitful Partnership,” which was held at the Daughters of St. Paul Convent, Akasaka, Tokyo.
- 23 It was formally announced that Pope John Paul II had accepted the resignation of Bishop Sōma Nobuo as Ordinary of the Nagoya diocese. As his successor he appointed Fr. Nomura Junichi, parish priest of the Cathedral parish of Nunoike, Nagoya.

JUNE

- 1 The fifth anniversary of the Supreme Court’s refusal to uphold the request of Nakaya Yasuko that her husband not be enshrined at the local *gokoku jinja* was marked with the publication of a book recording her struggle by those who have supported her over the years. A reception to launch the book, *Enshrinement—It’s Loathsome: The Battle of Conscience of Nakaya Yasuko*, was held at the Japan Christian Center in Nishi Waseda, Tokyo.
- 4 This year marks the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the first Franciscan friary in Japan. Celebrations to mark the anniversary were held in Kyoto and other parts of Japan associated with the early Franciscan missions.
- 6 Fr. Sean Ryle, a Columban missionary working at the Catholic Family Center in Fukuoka, wrote to NHK, the national public broadcasting network, to protest the unbalanced presentation of sex and sexuality in a drama series, *Chugakusei Nikki* (Junior High Schoolers Diary). His letter was supported by the local branch of the Catholic Doctors Association and other concerned groups working with young people in the Fukuoka area.
- 7 Two days before the wedding of the Crown Prince to Miss Owada Masako, representatives of six Protestant groups gathered for a joint press conference at the Japan Christian Center in Nishi Waseda, Tokyo to express their opposition to the use of public money to finance certain aspects of the celebrations.
- 22–25 A meeting was held of the Joint Commission of the United Church of Christ in Japan and the United Church of Christ in Okinawa on the proposed merger of the two churches. The meeting was held at the Okinawa Christian Junior College, Nishihara with some 130 representatives of the dioceses involved in attendance.

JULY

- 4 On July 4, at a Concelebrated Eucharist held before a packed congregation in the Catholic Cathedral Church, Nunoike, Nagoya, Bishop-elect Nomura Junichi was ordained as bishop and installed as Ordinary of the Nagoya Diocese. Bishop Nomura becomes the third bishop of the Nagoya since its establishment as a diocese in 1962.
- 6 At a gathering organized by the National Conference of Bereaved for Peace, which was held at Zensuido Hall in Suidōbashi, Tokyo, Professor Yamauchi, Professor of Constitutional Law at Dokkyō University, gave a lecture entitled, “United Nations

and PKO: Examining the Case for Constitutional Change One Year after the Passing of the PKO Law.” The main theme of the conference was “Fidelity to the Constitution, Building Peace; NO to a Japan that Walks the Way of Beautifying War, NO to the Evil of Constitutional Change, NO to Dispatching Troops.”

- 11 A meeting was held at the Catholic Cathedral in Tamatsukuri, Osaka to mark the publication of “Catholics and Buraku Discrimination,” a document prepared by the Japanese Catholic Committee on the Burakumin problem under the chair of Bishop Okada Takeo of Urawa. The document seeks to outline the basic Catholic attitude of opposition to discrimination against the Burakumin and offer suggestions of how Christians should fight the problem.
- 18 Three Christians were among those elected to serve as Diet members following the fortieth general election for the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Japanese Diet. Among them, Miss Doi Takako of the Socialist Party was elected for the 2nd Electoral District, Hyogo Prefecture. She was later elected Speaker of the Lower House, becoming the first woman to hold the position.
- 23 Bishop Okada Takeo of Urawa, newly appointed head of the Japanese Catholic Justice and Peace Council, marked the beginning of the annual Catholic Peace Season on August 6, the day of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The season concludes on August 15, the day of Japan’s surrender to the Allies and the end of the War in the Pacific. Bishop Okada recalled the words of Pope John Paul II spoken during his Hiroshima Appeal on February 25, 1981, in his message for this year saying, “To recall the past is to take on responsibility for the future.”

AUGUST

- 5 The Japan Bible Society published an electronic book edition of *The New Interconfessional Translation of the Bible* (NIT). Apart from the full text of the NIT, the electronic version contains the Colloquial Translation, the TEV translation, a concordance to the NIT, a glossary of significant terms used in Scripture, and a synopsis of the Four Gospels.
- 7–9 Various events were held to mark the centenary of the arrival of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan, but the main celebrations were held at Kumamoto Municipal Hall. Following greetings from Utsumi Nozomu, leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan, the visitors were presented with specially bound Centennial Commemorative Bibles.
- 15 At the national memorial ceremonies for the war dead, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro extended condolences to the relatives of those across the world who died during the War in the Pacific. He made particular mention of the victims of the war from Asian countries. It was the first time such sentiments had been expressed by a prime minister of Japan at the national ceremonies. At the same ceremony, Miss Doi Takako, Speaker of the Lower House of the Diet, declared that Japan had not yet achieved full reconciliation with the other countries of Asia, and also mentioned that the question of war reparations was still not fully resolved. For more than a few, a shadow was cast over these days by the visits paid to Yasukuni Jinja by six members of the Hosokawa Cabinet. All are members of Shinseito which broke away from the Liberal Democratic Party.

- 18–20 A convention was held at the Hiroshima Garden Palace, Hiroshima to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of mission work in Japan of what is now the Japan Alliance Church. The Alliance Church began its life as the Christian and Missionary Alliance founded by Dr. A. B. Simpson in 1887. The theme of the convention was “From Thanks to Hope.”

SEPTEMBER

- 3 While visiting Italy, as part of a tour of Europe, the Emperor and Empress had an audience with Pope John Paul II, at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo just south of Rome. The Emperor presented His Holiness with a bronze dove and offered words of thanks for the work done by the Catholic Church in Japan.
- 10 In conjunction with *The Times of London*, United Kingdom, Shinkyō Shuppan, a leading Christian publishing company in Japan produced an all color *Atlas of the Bible*.
- 17 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala arrived in Japan. She was scheduled to give a series of lectures in Hokkaido and Tokyo. While in Hokkaido she also met with leaders of the Ainu peoples.
- 27 Mr. Aoyagi Yukinobu, a junior high school teacher in Fukuoka city and a member of the Justice and Peace Council of the Catholic Diocese of Fukuoka, was arrested by officials of the Department of Immigration for aiding and abetting foreign workers.

OCTOBER

- 10 Bishop Okada Takeo, head of the National Catholic Justice and Peace Council, and Bishop Hamao Fumio of Yokohama, chairman of the Catholic Commission for International Cooperation, issued a joint letter clarifying the attitude of the Catholic Church to undocumented foreign workers. The bishops expressed concern over the arrest of Mr. Aoyagi Yukinobu and appealed to Catholics to work for a new social order where no one is considered an alien and where life goes beyond nationalities.
- 11 The Kansai group promoting solidarity with foreign residents in Japan held a meeting at the Catholic Cathedral, Tamatsukuri, Osaka. Among the speakers was Ms. Doi Takako, Speaker of the Lower House of the Diet. Those present talked of the need for the Church to offer a model of international, cross-cultural living.
- 16–18 An unusual study session was held at the Japan Catholic Study Center, Nagoya. The gathering was entitled “Towards an Understanding of Catholicism.” Apart from the lecturers and center staff, the participants were all young Buddhist monks of Nichirenshū, and interested in propagating Buddhism. At the end of the day, the chapel at the study center echoed to the chanting of sutras as the young monks performed their *yoru no tsutome*, or Evening Prayers.
- 19–21 The Korean Christian Church in Japan held its forty-second General Assembly at its main Tokyo Church. The theme of the assembly was “Life and Peace in Accord With the Justice of God.” In 1995 the Church will mark fifty years since it regained its autonomy as an independent Church. A committee was set up to prepare a history

of the Church in the postwar period. The Rev. Kim Kun Shik of Tokyo was elected as President of the Church.

- 21–24 The Second National Incentive Convention for Evangelization (NICE II) of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan was held at the Nagasaki Catholic Center next to Urakami Cathedral, Nagasaki. There were some 229 delegates present from all sixteen dioceses in Japan. The theme of the Convention, which is intended as a follow-up to NICE I, held in Kyoto in November 1987, was “In Search of a Way of Evangelization Starting from the Reality of the Family.” After two days of reports and discussions a consensus document entitled “Overview: For the Renewal of a Church to Evangelize Japan” was approved by the assembled delegates.
- 25–27 The Center for the Study of Religion of the NCCJ held an interfaith study session at the Buddhist Jōdoshū Honzan Chionin temple. Lectures were given on the work of the reformers in the transition from Heian to Kamakura Buddhism. From the Buddhist side it was acknowledged that there was a need for a shift in focus in their attitude to Christianity.

Endō Shūsaku, the well-known Japanese Catholic novelist, received an invitation from Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, President of the Royal Society of Literature (U.K.) to become a corresponding member of the society. Endō’s latest novel *Fukai Kawa* (Deep River) is already a bestseller in Japan and an English translation is due for publication in 1994.

NOVEMBER

- 3–5 The Third International Symposium on Alien Registration was held at the Japan Catholic Center, Shiomi, Tokyo. The main theme of the symposium was “Working Towards a Society Where All Live Together.” Particular attention was paid to the role of minorities in Japanese society. The participants called for further and more radical changes in the Alien Registration Law.
- 5 An interfaith group dedicated to rethinking Japan’s nuclear policy called on Eda Satsuki, Director of the Agency for Scientific and Technological Development. They pressed the Director to promote more access to and freer exchange of information concerning Japan’s nuclear policy since it is a matter of concern to one and all.
- 5–7 After some five years of preparation the All Japan Koshien Revival Mission was held at Hanshin Koshien Stadium, Nishinomiya, Hyogo. According to the organizers, over the three days of the Revival some 110,000 attended.
- 10–15 Along with Bishop Ishigami Tadamaro of Naha, Okinawa, who heads the Biblical Commission of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, a group of delegates attended a workshop organized by the Asian region of the Catholic Biblical Federation in Pataya, Thailand. There were delegates present from some seventeen Asian countries, and the theme of the workshop was “Responding to the Word of God in Asia.” The next regional meeting of the General Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation will be held in Nagoya, Japan in autumn of 1995.
- 19 Charles Overby, a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and founder of the Article 9 Society, while on a visit to Japan, issued a joint statement with members

of the Society to Promote Japan's Peace Constitution in the World calling on the Secretary General of the U.N., the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and the Japanese government to recognize Japan's Peace Constitution as the one sure foundation for promoting world peace.

- 21 The Japan Federation of the YMCA marked the ninetieth anniversary of its foundation with commemorative ceremonies at Azuma Sanso, Gotenba in Shizuoka.
- 21-23 The nineteenth General Assembly of the National Catholic Justice and Peace Council was held at Kami Yamada Hot Springs in Nagano. There were some 273 delegates present from all across Japan. Among topics discussed were, the environmental impact of the forthcoming Winter Olympics and problems facing rural communities as we approach the turn of the century. In the discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples, a representative of the Ainu minority, Kusanagi Minoru, said that the loss of the Ainu culture would also mark a significant loss to the culture of Japan. The General Assembly was also addressed by a fraternal delegate from West Timor. Finally, also present at the Assembly was Aoyagi Sai, wife of Aoyagi Yukinobu who is on trial for aiding and abetting illegal foreign workers. Mrs Aoyagi reported on how her husband is holding up in prison and the progress of the trial.
- 23 Just over a year after the founding of the Mukyōkai (No-Church) movement's study center in Tokyo, some fifty members of the Mukyōkai movement gathered for a symposium in the auditorium of the Imai Center in Meguro, Tokyo. The symposium focused on the specific identity of the movement and affirmed its ongoing validity.
- 26 Following the public announcement that the death sentence had been carried out on four more prisoners at Tokyo, Osaka and Sapporo Prisons, Christian groups opposed to capital punishment met with the Minister for Justice. The executions were the first to take place under the coalition government of Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro.

DECEMBER

- 5 To mark World Bible Day the Japan Bible Society announced an appeal for approximately \$150,000 to help finance the biblical apostolate in Cambodia, to provide paper for the publication of Chinese language versions of the Bible, and for work on translations into some 256 local languages across Asia.
- 5 With a month left before the start of the Rev. Billy Graham's Tokyo International Congress, to be held at Tokyo Dome from January 13-16, 1994, the organizers held a gathering of some 5,000 supporters and volunteers at the Kokugikan, Ryogoku, Tokyo, at which Kishida Hajime, General Secretary of the Congress Secretariat gave a report on preparations for the gathering. He noted that some 1,070 churches across the country have pledged support for the Congress.
- 7 At the annual meeting of the Society for the Separation of Religion and the State, held at the Japan Education Center, Hitotsubashi, Tokyo, Tanaka Nobutaka gave a lecture entitled, "The Gods and Wars of Aggression" in which he related how along with Japan's occupation of Korea, Taiwan, China and Karafuto went a concerted effort to promote nationalist Shinto. From 1931 when the Keijo Shrine (as Seoul was then

renamed) was founded, and in which the Emperor Meiji was enshrined, there was a rush to establish similar shrines in occupied territory.

- 10-12 The Thirteenth International Symposium, on the theme of "Women and Social Justice," under the joint sponsorship of the Center for Social Justice of Sophia University and Center for Social Studies of the International Christian University was held at Sophia University. It was stated that the promotion of true equal opportunity for women and men would prove to be a force capable of changing the present social system.
- 22 Representatives of the Salvation Army, the Tokyo YMCA, and the Women's Committee of the NCCJ among others presented a written request to the leaders of the main political parties in the Japanese Diet calling for appropriate action on the comfort women problem. They requested that the Diet pass a resolution apologizing to the victims and that a special committee be set up in the Diet to investigate the question thoroughly. Mr. Murayama Tomokichi, leader of the Japanese Socialist Party met the delegates personally and expressed his concern over the problem. At the second hearing of the case of Aoyagi Yukinobu, the Fukuoka junior high school teacher who was arrested on charges of assisting illegal aliens in obtaining work, the Fukuoka District Court refused his request for release on bail. He spent Christmas in the Fukuoka Detention Center. His wife commented that now she understood why the newborn Christ wasn't welcomed by society in his day and so was born in a stable.