

Editor's Notes

“Changing Paradigms in Mission” is the theme of this year’s *Japan Christian Review*. Some readers may groan a bit, feeling that in many circles “paradigm” has become an overworked catch phrase. As the articles in the current issue demonstrate, however, there are indeed new and changing patterns that have developed in late twentieth-century Christian mission, especially as it relates to Japan. We also need new frameworks for understanding how Christian life and ministry can be relevant to our ever-changing world that is on the threshold of the twenty-first century. “Changing paradigms” encapsulates very well these genuinely new patterns and frameworks addressed in the pages that follow.

One ongoing and sometimes volatile issue with which Christians in Japan have been faced for decades concerns the controversial presence of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. In our first article Carolyn Francis informs us of the historical background of the current thicket of problems, including how various churches and individuals have responded in their own particular ways. Yasuo Furuya’s “Retrospective Account and Theological Appraisal” of expatriate missionary work in Japan covers much of the same historical period addressed by Francis’ article. In reviewing the roles Protestant missionaries have played in Japan over the past half-century, Furuya’s perceptive analysis highlights particular themes that undoubtedly will ring true with many readers’ personal experiences.

A somewhat different tack is taken by Martin Repp in his prophetic critique of

alleged “partnerships” between overseas missions and Japanese churches. Repp’s challenge is to stop fooling ourselves into thinking that labeling relationships by this popular term necessarily makes them what we would idealize them to be. In a related way, Tom Hastings and Mark Mullins take a detailed look at certain reform movements within the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyōdan). The careful research undergirding their essay helps to pin down what actually is happening with specific groups and the Kyōdan as a whole. The authors’ tentative conclusions give a thought provoking forecast of things to come.

Yoshiko Isshiki is the second of four women contributors of articles to this year’s JCR. Her reflections on the eighth chapter of John’s gospel cast new light on contemporary concerns of women throughout Asia and Japan in particular. Yet another much discussed subject is addressed by Eunsoo Kim. His Korean heritage well equips him to analyze *minjung theology*, which in recent years has become highly visible throughout the worldwide Christian community. Kim’s approach goes against the grain of the prevalent views one encounters in most analyses, again reflecting the varied and changing situation in which we find ourselves at the end of the twentieth century.

The important place of lay Christians—especially women—is taken up by Akira Minato. Writing in a very personal way, Minato draws on her own family history to illustrate and emphasize her plea for more attention to the critical roles that lay Christians play in the life of the Church.

Yoshiko Okazaki does this in a different way by her stimulating description of how Christians in North Sumatra have helped to shape liturgical forms through the use of traditional music. While Okazaki's article does not relate directly to Christianity in Japan, the manner in which it illustrates indigenous culture's challenges to imported religious patterns obviously is relevant to Japan, as it is to any other context in which the gospel is working to make a home for itself.

The final article, by Akiie Ninomiya, introduces us to postwar developments in the Japanese welfare system. Ninomiya's involvement and expertise backs up the invaluable insights he offers regarding how Christianity has contributed both positively and negatively to this vital social issue. Our section of book reviews, summary of periodical literature and biennial synopsis of significant events in the Japanese Christian world round out this 1998 issue.

As this year's guest editor I must say that, as I have seen this year's JCR come together, it has been a great pleasure to learn more about the wide range of subjects our contributors address in their articles. I have been freshly reminded of the valuable service this journal renders to its readership and those they influence. Nevertheless it is my sad duty to announce that this will be the last issue of the *Japan Christian Review*. Since the JCR began six years ago, taking over from the longstanding *Japan Christian Quarterly*, Cheryl Allam has ably led the volunteer editorial team in working to see the JCR come to reality each year. Starting with Sr. Allam, many individuals have worked long and hard in what little spare time they have had alongside increasingly demanding responsibilities in other full-time positions. After agonizing over how

to continue an impossible task, the team together with Kyo Bun Kwan finally reached the painful decision to cease publication.

Thus ends a journal that began its history as the *Japan Evangelist* way back in 1894. After the *Japan Evangelist* ceased in 1925 and then resumed the following year as the JCR, publication was interrupted only between 1940 and 1951 during the war years and their aftermath. While Protestant missionaries carried the task of editorial responsibilities earlier on, both Roman Catholic and Japanese cooperation have significantly increased in recent years to enable the JCR and JCP to become an independent, ecumenical and international journal in the best senses of all those terms.

On behalf of all readers and people associated with this journal, I want to express deep appreciation to Cheryl Allam and her predecessors, to all the associate editors, editorial assistants, business managers, editorial advisors, subscription staff, production managers and advisory board members, to Kyo Bun Kwan and finally to our many contributors for the invaluable service they all have rendered over the years. I now know more personally how much work goes into putting out only a single issue. Believe me, readers, much time and effort has been put forth by many people. What makes it all the more special is knowing that those who have labored have done so out of deep commitment to the journal's purposes of serving our Savior, the gospel and people. To God be glory and thanks for the many able servants who have worked passionately and carefully on behalf of a great journal!

J. Nelson Jennings
Guest Editor