

The Yaegashi Report for April, 2021

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“I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD! Psalm 122:1)”

I don't remember when it was in the past that the true sense of joy and craving desire to come before the Lord and to be with His people has been brought home to me so realistically both in mind and body, which this Psalm 122:1 describes. Have you felt such a strong joy and desire lately of being able to go to church for public worship with your family and your brothers and sisters in Christ? I am sure you all have experienced what I have, whose churches were closed due to the covid-19 since last spring in 2020, even now into the spring of 2021. Some churches are still closed, missing out on the joy of gathering for worship both in Japan and America and in other countries.

Ministry under the Virus

Though the number of infections and the deaths may still be lower than in many countries, Japan continues in struggling with Covid-19. This week, the week of April 25, the death total broke 10,000 people with several prefectures as well as the Tokyo Metropolis under the Declaration of Emergency State. But the Lord have us live for His glory every day!

Since we reopened the public worship last June after five weeks of not holding services, Yamagata Reformed Church under God's gracious and caring protection has been able to hold our Sunday worship every week, along with other regular weekly fellowships such as Women in the Church, various Bible studies and Sunday Schools classes! The Ladies' Cooking Class, however, has been discontinued to this day as we are advised not to eat in crowds in a small room such as our kitchen!

With regard to the weekly Bible classes, our seeker, Mrs. Nakamura, who has attended faithfully both the class and Sunday worship 2011, recently stopped coming to our meetings. She has been struggling to deal with various religious rites and traditions her family wants her to take charge of for her deceased husband's grave. She was strongly advised recently by her relatives to keep the religious duties over her husband's grave as the housewife of the family according to the Buddhist tradition. Please remember to pray for her that the Lord will release her from that bondage and that she would feel free to come to worship the One true God. Mrs. Nakamura wrote in her letter to me, explaining why she wouldn't be able to come to church for a while, she still believes in Jesus and that will not change!

Mrs. Y., a seeker in Katie's English Bible Class, has been faithfully attending and attentive to the Bible message. Recently she told Katie that she wants to read the whole Bible, but she doesn't know where to start. We suggested she should start with Genesis and Exodus, to begin with in the Old Testament, and then go on to reading Matthew and John

in the four Gospels. I gave her “Introduction to the New Testament” by a renowned Japanese Christian author, Ayako Miura. The book is not a theological introduction book, but it focuses on important issues of God and man and our salvation through Christ, providing interpretive explanations about those who met Jesus in the Book of Matthew. Mrs. Y. was so happy to receive the book. She has been coming to the Bible class almost three years now. She is one who said, “I don’t think about God,” when Katie asked what she thinks about God. Please pray, after the Covid-19 problem goes away, that she would be willing to hear the Word of God preached at His Yamagata Reformed Church.

Ayumi Sasaki, our 14-year-old junior high student, a covenant child, is the only student in the children’s S.S. class. We almost lost her from S.S. once again due to school activities as well as her spiritual idleness. However, when Katie suggested to study Bible in English, Ayumi showed a great deal of interest in staying in the class. That began last fall, and we are very thankfully it is still continuing to this day. We are all praying that before too long Ayumi decide to come forward to profess faith and became a communicant member in Christ’s church!

A Light at the End of the Tunnel

My 2020 Annual Report(written January, 2021) began with the quotation from Job26:14, which says, “Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?” Then I continued saying, “The power and wisdom of God sustain the entire universe, having perfect control over everything that takes place including the life of men. Yet we have not seen everything the Lord has done and is doing, but only a glimpse, a whisper, only the outskirts of His wondrous work.”

Let me report to you, my friends in Christ, that the sovereign Lord has indeed miraculously and mightily worked out the truth of Job 26:14 in the few months of year 2021. In March 2020, we were looking forward very eagerly to meeting with the representatives of the Musashi Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Japan. Musashi Presbytery, one of six presbyteries of the PCJ, is composed of 15 churches geographically located in the western half of the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area. Our church had been corresponding with this presbytery to see if we would be able to join this denomination. But our hope to meet with them directly was abruptly cut off because of the pandemic! With my retirement due next year, 2022, I felt frankly at a loss, feeling the door to the possibility of joining was halfway closed, having momentarily forgotten to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit Who is able to lead us where the Lord wants us to go!

Then, one day suddenly this January, Rev. Watanabe, Moderator of the Musashi Presbytery and the Chairman of the Evangelism Committee wrote me, inviting us to have a joint Zoom meeting with the Evangelism Committee to further discuss our desire to join the PCJ. This was suggested in order that the E.C. can give a progress report to their stated

presbytery meeting in March. Thus, we met the E.C. on line in February. We prepared some questions concerning their theological and ruling principals, which we had done to some extent when we had invited Rev. Watanabe to our pulpit in 2019. At this time, however, our questions were put directly to all members of the E.C. of the Musashi Presbytery. We were satisfied with their answers and we were also encouraged with their warm spirit of acceptance of our flock.

Then in later March, the Musashi Presbytery invited us, our church officers, to join its stated meeting as observers. After all these events we held a congregational brainstorming meeting and reported to all the members what had transpired during these couple of months, explaining to them that the ball is now in our hands to decide what to do. I asked at this brainstorming meeting what their vote would be, though yet unofficially, concerning the joining the PCJ. All the members voted “Yes” for joining. We are now therefore on the road to making a final decision at our next official stated congregational meeting, most likely next January, 2022. Please pray that the Lord will lead us to smooth and successful joining and receiving in the near future!

Our family News in Brief

Our two grandchildren, who were born last spring, are healthy and happy. Thank you for praying. We felt God answering, “You want Me to take care of them? Watch this!”

Prayer Requests:

- 1 Pray that all of us be continually able to witness to our neighbors even in the midst of the “stay home” atmosphere.
- 2 Pray that we may not spread infection in and from the church even as the Lord graciously enables us to gather in public worship and weekly meetings.
- 3 Pray that Yamagata Reformed Church be well prepared for my retirement next year, especially, in case we are not able to call a new pastor soon after I leave the official duty, and that the congregation may remain faithful to the Lord with everyone sharing his or her part keeping the torch of the Gospel up and high.
- 4 Pray for both Katie and me for our health. I have been troubled with acid reflux more often than before, causing me high fever. In fact, I had to stay home from church one Sunday this April. We realize we are no longer in our active 50's!

Your servant for Christ's sake in Yamagata Japan,
Kazuhiko (Kaz) Yaegashi
OPC Japan Mission Missionary & Ministerial Member of the PCA

Presenting the report to:

The Presbytery of MS Valley of the PCA

The Committee on Foreign Missions of the Dakota Presbytery of the OPC

The Committee for the Support of Japan Mission

Forwarding the report to:

The Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC General Assembly