

The Yaegashi Annual Report for 2016

“Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying ‘Arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

Jonah 1:1-3a

As was with Jonah, sometimes Christians and especially ministers of the Word acutely feel like murmuring to themselves, “What good is it to tell these people about Christ? They won’t listen to us.” But the Lord had a different plan for that notorious city of Nineveh. God’s plan was so merciful that despite Jonah’s disobedience God told Jonah that He pities the people of Nineveh who do not know their right from their left. So be it with our present-day work of the gospel, even when people with whom we share the gospel and even when those whom we love dearly do not readily turn their hearts to Christ. The Lord may very well have a different plan for them, making it known to us as we stay faithful in God’s calling and focus on one thing, that is, sharing Christ with those who are otherwise lost to eternity.

From the beginning of the year, Yamagata Chapel, small but His own, valiantly strove to follow the Lord whatever the cost. When the Reformed Church of Japan voted to ordain women as officers in the church, the OPC Mission understood that as forsaking the Biblical teaching we had agreed upon 70 years ago. Yamagata Chapel, in the words of one member, "We are Christians. We must do what the Bible says." decided also to leave the RCJ.

For us the most painful part of our withdrawal was the loss of one member and her Covenant child to another denomination. This member's mother helped start this church almost 50 years ago.

The chapel called Kaz to be its pastor (a different call than missionary-evangelist, which he has been all these years but basically the same job). An installation ceremony was held in April, attended not only by the chapel's members and the OPC Mission, but by several men from the Tohoku Presbytery of the RCJ. It was a warm and welcome demonstration and declaration of their continuing love and desire to fellowship with us.



At the installation service: Katie, myself, missionary Uomoto (to my right), missionary Cal Cummings (to Mr. Uomoto's right) and missionary Woody Lauer at the pulpit

Throughout the year, the Women's Circle, led by Michiko Ito, a life-long Christian, holds cooking classes. Katie decides the menu and Mrs. Itoh brings a devotional. This year the newer Christians began taking turns sharing the Gospel message at each class. It is encouraging and effective to hear these women share their experiences of walking with the Lord. Most of the other women are non-Christian who, frankly, are not interested. They just want to eat and talk. However, it is an important step in the Christian life and the believers are eager to do it.

Mr. Tada and Mrs. Nakamura continued coming regularly to worship and their respective Bible studies. From time to time they expressed wonderful insight into Scripture and the Christian life, but neither is ready to commit to Christ. Mr. Yarimizu has returned to worship with us this year. He and his wife studied "Confessing Christ" with Kaz a few years ago. She finally received baptism last year, but he has not yet.

The Easter children's party in March and worship the next day were blessed occasions for remembering what God has done for us in Christ and for rejoicing in our resurrection in Him. During the service our son, Morris, and his wife, Yuki, presented their Covenant Child, James Yoshihiko, for baptism filling our hearts with praise to our Heavenly Father for His goodness to us.



Yuki & Morris with baby James Yoshihiko being baptized

Spring saw the nominating of two elder candidates and one deacon candidate. Two women were also chosen to assist in diaconal ministry. The men have begun preparation for ordination.

Once again, after several years, we have an active Young Adults group. Shio Akiho (now Mrs. Masato Yashima) and Nao Muto, a university midwifery student, whose mother Kaz baptized 25 years ago, have begun meeting together to study the Bible. They have had special activities, such as candle making at Christmas, inviting other young people Christian and non-Christian. Summer Vacation Bible School featured "Joshua, Courageous Leader". Shio and her mother, both artists, constructed a stage that was beautiful as well as "user friendly". Shio prepared a memory/workbook to accompany the story and scripture. A game of Bible verse hopscotch was played by both children and adults!



Shio & Masato's Wedding

The annual Fall Retreat was blessed by Elder Kazuo Sasaki from the Sendai RCJ telling about his convictions and experience as an elder in the Japanese workplace. He told us that he never hid his Christian identity from his co-workers nor behaved evasively in front of others about his own faith. Because of

his candidness about his faith in Christ, he has had no trouble in securing his privilege to participate in Sunday worship, even when the company needed his service on the Lord's day. He told us that he just worked harder and did some overtime during the company's busy season. Because of his attitude toward work and the church life, his co-workers readily accepted his absence from work on Sundays! This attitude is a rarity among the Japanese Christians. He was a great encouragement to our elder candidates as well as to the other members.



From left Dr. Yamamoto, his wife Mieko, myself, and Elder Sasaki
Like the Jews, the Japanese often sit and have talk sessions!

We have begun having a Bazaar in every fall since the Tsunami on the east coast in 2011. A lot of effort is put into this event which we always hope will reach out to the neighborhood. This year neighbors on both sides of the church came for the first time! Christmas brings so many activities we can invite everyone we know and their families and friends! Our speaker for Women's Christmas Luncheon was Laurie Lauer from our mission. She presented the only solution to our longings for a happy home, a heart at peace, a Savior to trust: The Lord Jesus Christ!

Please pray for and with us for:

The church's future affiliation with a Reformed denomination

The elder and deacon candidates

Reaching out to young people

The women's ministry in Sunday School, Bible Studies, Cooking Classes, Bazaar, Christmas Luncheon

The Wedding Chapel counseling and marriage ceremonies

A plan for a new church building

The next generation and the next, including a godly man who will succeed Kaz in a few years

The Yaegashi Family's two new additions in 2016: Morris and Yuki's James Yoshihiko, born in January, and Megumi and Jason's Milan Zoe born in April!

Submitted to:

The Presbytery of Mississippi Valley of the PCA

The OPC Japan Mission

The Foreign Missions' Committee of the Presbytery of Ohio of the OPC

The Committee for the Support of the OPC Japan Mission

The Foreign Missions Committee of the OPCGA

January 22, 2017

Kazuhiko (Kaz) Yaegashi

Ministerial member of the Presbytery of Mississippi Valley of the PCA

Member of the OPC Japan Mission