

The 2017 Yaegashi Annual (Year-End) Report

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” Matt.9:36-38”

We had lots of blessings throughout year 2017:

In **February** there was an inter-denominational conference on Evangelism in Yamagata where some of our members participated. The main speaker gave a surprisingly Reformed orientated talk where God's grace and sovereignty always precedes and thus all we do is go and share the Gospel. The Lord will give us His harvest in his own time. We were very encouraged and comforted by the message.

In **April**, our Women in the Church invited an OPC minister's wife, Eileen Scipione, who is a counselor at RPCNA's seminary in Pittsburg, where her husband Dr. George Scipione also teaches counseling. We had more than twenty people come to this special event. Eileen spoke on the theme “What A Gentle Heart and Quiet Spirit Is, and What It Is Not,” presenting that only Christ can give us through the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who are united with Him and are being made like unto Himself each day. One exciting thing at the event was that Mitsuko Tada, our long-time seeker, Yuichi Tada's wife, came to hear Eileen. Mr. Tada, being a traditional Japanese, has been caught between his desire to seek the Lord and the pressures which push him to follow the Japanese ways of living harmoniously in the local community with all its religious and cultural demands upon people in the region. He has stopped coming to church since January 2016, except for a few special occasions. But his wife came to the Christian counseling event! We have not yet abandoned hope of bringing Mr. Tada back to the trail of faith in Christ along with his wife!

In **May** looking with hope for a denomination which our Yamagata congregation might join, I met with the Rev. Daisuke Kimura, evangelist-pastor at Grace Center Church Sendai (c.40 miles east of Yamagata) of the Presbyterian Church in Japan (PCJ) and had an open conversation concerning our situation and his work in Sendai and the PCJ in general. Then in **June** we invited Mr. Kimura to preach for us, becoming the first PCJ pastor to be introduced to our congregation. Rev. Kimura

brought with him two members from his church, which was a good opportunity for both sides to begin getting to know each other.

In **July** we held our VBS and had two new children whose mother is a Nepalese married to a Japanese man. It was encouraging to us all as we were praying hard that the Lord would send us children. Shio Yashima and Michiko Ito prepared games and props to tell the story from the life of Joseph.

In **August** Milan Zoe Jones, our no.6 grandchild, child of the covenant, was baptized by her grandfather. That occasion as well as to celebrate my 70th birthday brought together all our children and grandchildren, except our oldest son James who was filming in CA, in Yamagata.



In **September** my former student, Misato Aita, from Yamagata Gakuin High School some 20 years ago, but now living in Tokyo, became Christian and was baptized after several years of struggle with domestic problems including motherhood and abuse by her husband. In high school she was interested in Christianity and in the person of Christ in the Bible I taught. In June she called me on the phone for help. She took my advice and began going to church in her neighborhood. The Lord led her to a good evangelical church where she was given a warm welcome and encouragement from the pastor and from other Christians. As she was preparing for baptism, her pastor told her that the Lord had been nurturing the seed which He had sown long ago to come to fruition. So, there was a knock on God's door and 20

years later He finally answered the question Misato had posed for a long time, “What was that all about?” It was all about His love toward Misato and her baby girl.

In **October** our organist, Dr. Yamamoto, held a special pipe-organ concert with a choir and several musicians from the Yamagata Symphony Orchestra to celebrate the occasion of 500th anniversary of Reformation. It was his evangelistic outreach for music lovers. Dr. Yamamoto gave a short message concerning Luther's contribution for restoring the great doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone as he introduced the theme of the concert, which was “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

On the program was printed the name of our Yamagata Reformed Church along with his pastor's name and worship information. We all pray through God's people's talent such as Dr. Yamamoto's the Lord will mightily cause people to become thirsty for their soul's food and begin knocking on the door of heaven through the Word of God.



Conductor is our Dr. Yamamoto

The Women in the Church held its Autumn church bazaar at the church, and we had thirty customers, which is the largest number of people ever visiting the bazaar since the first one held in 2012. This was a great opportunity to have people come to church, who otherwise may not have a chance to meet us, and see who we are and what we do. We gave the visitors tracts and church fliers, hoping they would read them. The proceeds from the bazaar for 2017 was given to the International Food

for the Hungry. Please pray that those who visited us may be encouraged to know the message we have for them in the Bible.

In **November** we had a few activities worthy of mention. In the first week we held our annual church retreat. In the fall the New Japanese Bible, published in the early 1970's which our church has been using in the corporate worship, having been completely revised, made its debut. I took this opportunity to introduce the New Translation at the retreat and shared with our congregation some features and important changes made in this freshly published Japanese Bible. The New Translation brings out the accurate sense of the original Hebrew and Greek in much more readable Japanese than its first two versions.



Study session at the Retreat



Lunch Together at the Retreat

In the fourth week of November I attended the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Japan, with whom our OPC Japan Mission as a fraternal relationship through its own GA, and with whom the PCA's MTW team has been closely working since the middle of the 1980's. During the G.A I had talked with some representatives of the PCJ's Committee on Pioneer Evangelism in the Tohoku District (the Northeastern District of Japan which includes Yamagata where we work.) and we decided to meet officially to discuss the possibility of "Joining and Receiving" by the end of spring or early summer, 2018. This is in accordance with Yamagata congregation's prayerful direction and desire since we left the RCJ (Reformed Church in Japan) due to the Women in the Office issue in 2016. We covet your prayers that Yamagata Church may know what the Lord's will is on this very crucial matter.

In **December** the Women in the Church held its Christmas Luncheon, which has been its annual evangelistic program since around 1985. This year we invited a

missionary pastor's wife from a local Korean Church. She told the ladies that her church really wants to exercise God's love for the neighbors, even those who are against the Christians. She specifically mentioned that the church has been collecting living goods for the "neighbors" in North Korea, the country which daily threatens the life of the South Korean people with weapons of mass destruction. The Lord blessed us at the end of this year with another child of the covenant. Our third son Morris and his wife Yuki reaffirmed their faith in God's covenant of grace as they gave their second son Alun Tadayoshi, born on Nov. 7, to the loving care of their Savior in infant baptism. It was administered by the baby's grandfather during the worship on Dec. 31 where many gathered to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. I must mention the encouraging presence of Mrs. Kimie Yokota at the Christmas worship. She is the lady I referred in my earlier report whom Miki Yarimizu began speaking to on the street at the little shrine toward which Mrs. Yokota was offering a prayer. Miki Yarimizu shared her testimony that if Mrs. Yokota would come to our church she would surely find the true God when she has been looking for.



Christmas Worship



Family picture at Alun's baptism

I look to the gracious leading of God's hand through the Holy Spirit for this new year 2018 as there are so many areas in which our church, my family and myself must depend upon God's wisdom and guidance, including our main task to meet "so many people who are harassed and helpless without a shepherd," to whom we must bring Christ's gospel of grace.

Prayer Requests:

- 1) That the Lord would help Mr. Sasaki and Dr. Yamamoto prepare for ordination as elders this year and Mr. Inoue as a deacon.
- 2) That the Lord would encourage our members to engage themselves in sharing the

gospel with their family members and friends and that they would invite people to come to worship and weekly meetings.

3) That the Lord will continue encouraging us with a vision of re-modeling our old house-church and that people who are aware of this desire would join us in prayers. The present building can hold only about 35 people.

4) That the table talk with the PCJ scheduled this spring will open a door for Yamagata Church to see what the will of the Lord is and enable us to consider joining this denomination for the near future.

4) Related to the above is that the Lord will provide a successor to take my place as time is now ticking steadily toward my retirement.

5) That our seekers, Mr. Tada, Mrs. Nakamura, Mrs. Kanaya, Mrs. Yokota may soon come to profession of faith.

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 Ohio Presbytery of the OPC

The Committee for the Support of Japan Mission

The Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC General Assembly