

NSKK NEWSLETTER

日本聖公会管区事務所だより

NIPPON SEI KO KAI Provincial Office

65 Yarai-cho, Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 162-0805 JAPAN

Editor : E. Hajime Suzuki

Tel. +81-3-5228-3171
Fax +81-3-5228-3175

Report of the Council of Churches of East Asia Bishop's Meeting in 2008

Rt. Rev. Andrew Yutaka Nakamura
Bishop of Kobe

The Council of Churches of East Asia Bishop's Meeting was held from 1st to 6th October 2008 in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, a country where there is a total of no more than 300 Anglicans. Twenty bishops were present, from Japan and Korea in the Eastern Region, Myanmar in the Western, and Australia in the Southern Region.

The following is a report of the current status of the Asian Anglican churches, as I heard it at the meeting.

Current Status of the Anglican Churches in Thailand

The Anglican Mission for Thailand was initiated in 1828, when the London Mission Society first sent missionaries to Thailand. At present, there is one church in Chaing Mai and 3 or 4 mission bases in the mountain villages in the north-western region of Thailand. Mission work is carried out mainly by the Christ Church Bangkok (Anglican Church), under the supervision of the Rev. Yee Ching Wah, who was sent from the Anglican Church in Malaysia seven years ago.

Every Sunday morning, Holy Communion in English is held at Christ Church Bangkok for English speaking people. The Rev. Peter Cook, who was invited from England two years ago, is engaged as the chaplain and provides pastoral care to the English-speaking laity. Holy Communion in the Thai language takes place in the afternoon for the local Thai laity. The Rev. Yee Ching Wah is responsible for the pastoral care of the Thais. On 5th of October, all the bishops attended Holy Communion in the Thai language. About 30 people were confirmed during the service.

The Anglican Mission for Thailand is placed under the control of The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), an organization of the Protestant Church, which is authorized by the Thai Government. The CCT which was established in 1934 has been actively working on an ecumenical basis, respecting the history, tradition, teaching, and organization of each denomination. The CCT plays an intermediary role in arranging inter-faith dialogue, and also manages education, medical activities and welfare services. Most missionaries from overseas study the Thai language at the language school attached to CCT before being dispatched to various regions in Thailand.

In addition to the CCT, there is a government authorized protestant church organization, called the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT), which was established in 1976. The major roles of the EFT is the management of the assets of each church and the handling of legal issues. Visas required for Christian mission activity cannot be issued without the approval of the EFT. On the first day of the Bishop's Meeting, the bishops visited two institutions. The visits were from 9:00

a.m. to 6:00 p.m., but the Bishops spent seven hours in the car because of the huge traffic jams, caused by the unpaved roads and the recent increase in private cars owned by wealthy people.

Present Status of the Dioceses in the Churches of East Asia

During the Bishop's Meeting, reports on the present status of the Council of Churches in East Asia were presented. It was revealed that the members of the Anglican church in Malaysia, in particular, have increased remarkably. About 1000 people per annum have newly joined in the church. According to last year's statistics, there are at present 74,000 lay people in the Diocese of Sabah and 29,000 in the West Malaysia.

As from January 2008, the financial support from the Episcopal Church in the USA to the Province of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines was terminated. The Episcopal Church in the Philippines intends to be completely independent of financial support from the USA by 2018.

The Church of the Province of Myanmar, Where the Cyclone Caused Extensive Damage.

Myanmar is currently under a military regime, where continuous armed conflicts between the Buddhist Armed Groups and the Government Army have caused political instability in the country, resulting in a number of refugees. Some Anglican groups have been sent to give aid to refugees in the Thai border area. In addition to this, church buildings in the southern coast area of Myanmar were completely destroyed by the cyclone. In the city of Yangon, the roofs of many church buildings were blown down. Donations for the renovation of the damaged buildings are currently being sought.

Council of Churches of East Asia Bishop's Meeting in 2009

It has been decided that in 2009 the Council of Churches of East Asia Bishop's Meeting will take place in Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam are countries where the Anglican Church has little presence. Missionary work for these countries is about to start. Human as well as material resources are imperative for developing this work and the Nippon Sei Ko Kai is intending to cooperate with these new mission projects as much as possible.

Nippon Sei Ko Kai (The Anglican Church in Japan) 150th Anniversary Celebratory Service

Rt. Rev. Peter Jintaro Ueda
Bishop of Tokyo

It has been 150 years since the Rev. Channing M. Williams, sent from the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A., arrived in Nagasaki Japan on June 29, 1859, and commenced his work as a missionary. In commemoration of this 150th anniversary of the Anglican Church in Japan (Nippon Sei Ko Kai), we will celebrate with a Commemorative Service on September 23, 2009.

When the Rev. C. M. Williams came to Nagasaki, Christianity was prohibited by the Shogunate authority and the Rev. Williams was unable to freely engage in his missionary work. It took seven years before he was able to conduct his first baptismal service of a Japanese man.

In addition, we understand that in order not to attract the attention of the Shogunate this service was conducted in secret. Under these social circumstances, he must have undergone much tension

and daily sacrifice, as a missionary.

When we think of our Christian pioneers and churches during the first stage of Japan's modernization, we cannot help thinking that it is truly a miracle we have the mature church of Nippon Sei Ko Kai today. The commemoration of our 150th Anniversary should provide us with the impetus to confront the difficulties we encounter in our missionary work in Japan today.

It is through the Grace of God that we have had the opportunity of 150 years of service in Japan and to which we dedicate this service. This commemorative service will have three elements.

The first is deep gratitude to God and the early pioneers, and especially the many foreign missionaries who have supported the Nippon Sei Ko Kai up until now.

The second is to celebrate together in joy the connection we share through the body of Jesus Christ.

The third is to renew our decision to continue our faith forward for another 150 years and more, if possible. As well as these three elements, this service, which will be celebrated with Holy Communion, will include confession to reflect our insufficiencies, the mistakes we have made and that which we should have done, but did not do, and ask forgiveness. In addition, there will be prayers where we will express our gratitude that our church exists not only for us but for others as well.

With this in mind the committee for the 150th Anniversary Service of Nippon Sei Ko Kai are gathering ideas as to how best we can conduct this commemorative Service.

We are pleased to announce that the Archbishop of Canterbury will attend this service. I pray that this upcoming commemorative service will be an opportunity to unite the 11 dioceses of Japan, and all clergy and laity in the body of Jesus Christ. This commemorative service will be held at St. Mary's Catholic Cathedral on September 23, 2009 at 1:30p.m.

A THOUGHT ON THE WRETCHED CONDITION OF PALESTINE

Rev. John Makito Aizawa
General Secretary of NSKK

In January, early in the New Year of 2009, news articles of the war between Israel and Palestine were reported daily. Amongst these, there were two words that pierced my heart and they were 'collateral damage'. The civilians who were dragged into the war were called by this special term. The words sounded too spiritless to describe living people with warm bodies. They were just statistics of people who got caught up in the war devastation and were killed. Nothing about any individual's life and death was considered or described.

Also what an absurd story about there being a temporary cease-fire on humanitarian grounds to receive relief handouts.

Why do they need relief handouts? Who made these difficult circumstances which required relief handouts? No one explained or reflected on this issue.

The NSKK Provincial Office contributed by helping the medical support in Palestine through the Japan International Volunteer Center. It was emergency fund raising.

We provided support thanks to a quick decision from the NSKK Emergency & Disaster Aid Fund committee. This is a fund used for the regions or organizations that help and support during natural calamities and disasters caused by human neglect, wars and the extreme destruction of

nature. The fund is for both domestic or foreign countries and it is provided whenever we judge the circumstances to warrant support.

‘The Peace of the Lord’ is strongly desired and is a truly important matter for us. But, sometimes it sounds in vain to me. However, our faith instructs that each individual life is given by God, so we should stand up and face life with dignity.

If God said to us, ‘I can grant you one wish.’, we should say unanimously ‘The Peace of the Lord’. Even without God asking us, we will keep walking and living with God to build up ‘The Peace of the Lord’ in our own lives.

In Japan, we have a written Constitution which we are able to put into practice. And this Constitution is in common with the Communiqué at the 1930 Lambeth Conference, which resolves that international conflict is inconsistent with the doctrine and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely Resolution 25 “The Conference affirms that war as a method of settling international disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ”. We Anglican members should be constantly aware of the common spirit between ‘The Peace of the Lord’ and our Constitution.

Members of the English Version of NSKK Newsletter, May 2009 are: as follows:
Ms. Kazuko Takeda, Ms Toshiko Yoshimura, Ms. Yasuko Date, Ms. Claire L. Gelder
Editor-in-Chief: Hajime Suzuki