

KYOGSKAS NEWS LETTER #11

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL JAPANESE
UNITED CHURCH ASSOCIATION

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Rev. Teikichi Kawabe
- Masutaro Okamoto
- Manzo Nagano
- Recovery after the earthquake and tsunami in Japan
- Goro Kaburagi

120TH ANNIVERSARY

This edition of the newsletter introduces the 120th anniversary of Christian mission among the Japanese in Canada. From the perspective of the United Church of Canada, the first organized Christian worship service among us in Canada was on December 11, 1892 in Vancouver.

You can read about the evangelism of Reverend Teikichi Kawabe who led that first worship service on behalf of the Methodist Church.

In addition you can hear about two other men who were very active in the Methodist tradition among the Japanese in early Vancouver. There was a Christian Endeavour Group

among the Nikkei and it was within this group that the need for a church building was identified. They were very important in the building of the Vancouver Japanese Methodist Church which became a United Church in 1925 with church union.

Reverend SS Osterhout was the superintendant of mission work among the Japanese for many of these early years. Much of our history is to be learned from his written words.

In later newsletters I hope to bring you more of our history.



Vancouver Japanese United Church c 1896 (courtesy of BC Archives)

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JAPAN ECUMENICAL RELIEF WORK UPDATE BY REV. MAKI FUSHII

Almost 9 months have passed since the earthquake and tsunami in Northern Japan. Although there isn't much news about this disaster on TV anymore, we still keep Japan in our prayers and ministry. My colleague, Patricia Elson at Partners in Mission Unit of the

United Church of Canada visited Japan recently and forwarded me this report: "Church World Service have established personnel in Japan now, in the Christian Centre! They have been working extensively with Japan Platform and have been very sup-

portive and helpful in the establishment of JEDRO. I had a chance to visit them and OXFAM Japan, one of the partners they support, who are running a hot line for women at risk. Violence and abuse of women and other vulnerable people is actually ...Cont pg 5

KAWABE'S HOPE

This article was written by Koji Mori of the Mainichi Shinbun of May 13, 1962

"The Rev. Teikichi Kawabe was one of Japan's great evangelist preachers. But his goal as a young man was to become a businessman in America. He crossed the Pacific in 1882. In America, he worked hard as a dealer in Japanese tea exported by his uncle.

In due course, he began to enjoy a high reputation as a promising businessman. At the age of little over 30, Rev. Kawabe, then a "traveling salesman" who was getting good profits, encountered an epoch-making incident.

It happened in San Francisco when he attended an open-air evangelistic meeting conducted by the world-famous American evangelist **Dwight Moody**.

Listening to the sermon delivered by him, Rev. Kawabe realized how ephemeral was human life. Man seems to be engrossed in becoming rich but his wealth vanishes with his death, he realized.

"Instead of being engrossed in amassing trifling wealth, I must do something good to enhance my spiritual value—pure and unselfish," he said to himself.

Thus Rev. Kawabe who went to the States to get the "almighty dollar" as a busi-

nessman abandoned his original hope and instead grasped "Almighty God".

Soon he entered the San Francisco Seminary. After graduating from the seminary he went into dynamic evangelistic work on the West Coast, making door-to-door calls in many communities for Japanese Issei and Nisei.

Many Japanese who went to the States with the hope of making a fortune at a stroke taking advantage of the "Gold Rush" scoffed at him at first, but finally many of them responded to him to become Christians.

And with their cooperation Rev. Kawabe built a number of churches on the West Coast, working day and night."

More of his story is from "A History of the Japanese Congregations in The United Church of Canada" printed in 1998 by The Japanese Canadian Christian Churches Historical Project. Pg 1-2..

"From 1889-1892 he became the successor to **Rev. Miyama** at the San Francisco Japanese Methodist church. Under Rev. Kawabe's influence, many people were saved. On one occasion some thirty were baptized and in another, fifty. Within three years, over four hundred people were baptized. His spiritual fire reached out and expanded to areas out-

side of San Francisco, and many were saved. In 1892, he prayed regarding visiting Oregon, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, and even up north in British Columbia to spread the Gospel to the Japanese.

While he was praying about this burden, **Mr. Sutemi Chinda**, the Japanese Consul in San Francisco, who later became the foreign minister, was so moved by Rev. Kawabe that he showed goodwill towards him. From six major railway companies, he was able to receive a special travelling pass for Mr. Kawabe. On October 10, 1892, he left San Francisco, following the worship service of the previous day." After visiting several States, on the second of December, he arrived in Seattle. Rev. Kawabe visited the recently established YMCA and met **M. Okamoto, O. Okazaki and Y. Akiyama**. On the 8th of December he entered British Columbia at South Westminster. He hired a little boat to cross the Fraser River and he landed in New Westminster. There was English language being taught at the Mutual Encouragement Group by **Mr. T. Okamura** who belonged to a Catholic school. Rev. Kawabe visited him and on the next day they went to the jail and met Japanese prisoners and explained the way of God to them. That evening he arrived in Vancouver, and visited every Japanese home there. On December 11th at 3:00 p.m., some ten or more people attended the evangelistic service.

He visited Lulu Island, Beaver Cannery and Saturna Island. Rev. Kawabe visited **Mr. Teijiro Kito** who was the Japanese Consul in Vancouver. On December 18th he rented a house near the beach and held a meeting. On the evening that he spoke at the home of **Mr. Tamura**, a young man by the name of **Koichi Inaka** was filled with the Spirit and dedicated himself to be an evangelist. Mr. Inaka then ministered in Steveston and Victoria, and eventually returned to Japan. He went to a seminary and became a good evangelist.

Rev. Kawabe also visited Victoria and Comox on Vancouver Island. He ministered among the colliers in the Union Coal Mine and he later visited Nanaimo. In this fashion, the seeds of the Gospel were sown among the Japanese in British Columbia. Rev. Kawabe returned to Japan in 1897 where he continued his ministry. He died in January 1953 in Osaka at the age of ninety."



MASUTARO OKAMOTO, THE APOSTLE OF THE JAPANESE IN BC



Japanese Hospital, Steveston 1897
Photo Courtesy of The Bob Stewart Archives

Vancouver, having been visited by some of the Japanese converts recommended that a permanent minister be assigned to them as it was time that a church was planted.”

From “A History of the Japanese Congregations in the United Church of Canada”

During the time that Mr. Okamoto came, there were many salmon fishing settlements which employed Japanese, especially around Steveston and Skeena. In those days Japanese employment was mainly fishing or working as shingle cutters up in the mountains. Because of the language barriers, they had to live in their own community.

Mr. Okamoto deserved to be called “the Apostle by the Japanese in British Columbia”. For three years he served the fishing settlement in Skeena and even did laundry work in order to support himself. He visited every settlement up north to evangelize. Eventually he suffered from failing health and became a tuberculosis patient. He then returned to Vancouver and continued his ministry in Vancouver and Steveston.

In 1896, the **Reverend Goro Kaburagi** came to Vancouver to start a Methodist church. In the same year, Mr. Okamoto’s health began to fail and he became more and more sickly. He took the advice of a friend who advised him to take the next ship back to Japan. He returned with the words of Galations, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” He only had one set of clothes, and yet he was missed by so many people.

In 1896 there were about one thousand Japanese in B.C., mostly single men. The majority of immigrants came between 1896 and 1926 until the quota system was established to hold down future immigrants from Japan. The early immigrants were brought here as cheap labor for the railroads, coal mines, sawmills, fishing industry and strawberry farms. With the language difficulty and segregation, they did not plan to remain, but wanted to return to Japan when they had saved up enough money.

From “Japanese Work in Vancouver Presbytery” by Rev. SS Osterhout.

“As is usual among the Japanese the first efforts at missionary work among them originated among the people themselves. Little groups were organized for Bible Study and Prayer Meetings, before the advent of any mission-

ary.

The first missionary to Vancouver as a permanent worker was in 1892, when **Mr. Masutaro Okamoto** came from the Western States to preach the Gospel among the Japanese of British Columbia, with Vancouver as his headquarters. He travelled as far north as the Skeena River and it is recorded that on one return trip from the Skeena River to Vancouver, in company with five other Japanese, who prior to that journey were practically strangers to Christianity, before they reached their destination had become converts to the Christian faith. He was a most zealous worker, considering no sacrifice of comfort or even of health too great in his zeal and ardent devotion to Jesus Christ. Under his leadership. The work developed at various points until in 1896 the Japanese Consul at

GORO KABURAGI (1854-1926)

BY MIDGE AYUKAWA

Goro Kaburagi's background was quite different from that of most Japanese immigrants to Canada, who were mainly farmers, fishermen, and day laborers. He was likely of the samurai class and had attended the Imperial College of Forestry in Tokyo and Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His excellent command of English enabled him to be of considerable assistance to Japanese immigrants in North America.

Admitted to the Methodist ministry in 1879, Kaburagi was leading a congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio in 1896 when he was invited by the Japanese Christian Endeavour mission at the corner of Pender and Abbott streets in Vancouver. It soon realized the necessity of having a Japanese-speaking minister and approached Kaburagi, who probably returned briefly to Japan before proceeding to Canada in August 1896. Soon after he started his work in 1897, he found the management of an independent mission "difficult", so he appealed successfully to the Methodist Church of Canada for support. In 1903 three city lots were purchased at the corner of Jackson and Powell Streets in Vancouver and in 1906 the Japanese Methodist Church was dedicated.

He led his community in its struggle for civil rights. In 1895 the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia had amended the Provincial Voters' Act and denied the franchise to the Japanese, the Chinese, and East Indians. They were also denied the right to vote in municipal and federal elections since voters' lists for these elections were based on

the provincial list. In addition, certain sectors of the provincial civil service and numerous professions required that their members be on the voters' lists, so the amendment effectively barred the Japanese and others from many fields of employment. Kaburagi was a leader of the group that sent **Tomekichi Homma** to the courts in 1900 to challenge the legislation. Although the Supreme Court of British Columbia and the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the amendment was *ultra vires* of the provincial legislature, those decisions were overturned by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in 1902.

With the help of the Japanese consul, in 1902 Kaburagi started an elementary school for children of Japanese ancestry. Taught by two trained teachers from Japan, it became the Vancouver Japanese School in 1906 and followed the same curricu-

lum as the schools in Japan, with the addition of courses on the English language.

In order to spread his religious and social beliefs to a greater number of Japanese immigrants, Kaburagi had started the *Bankuba Shuho* (Vancouver Weekly) on July 1897. It was renamed the *Kanada Shimpo* (Canada News) in November 1903. In March 1904 it became the first Japanese daily in Canada and Kaburagi was its full-time editor. The paper preached temperance and opposed gambling and prostitution—vices to which many Japanese immigrants had succumbed. It also encouraged assimilation with the mainstream of society. These goals were to be attained by learning English, moving away from the Powell Street community, eating western food, attending church, and competing as equals with white labourers.

Kaburagi entered into conflict with a competing newspaper which encouraged Japanese to enlist in the Armed Forces to "bring glory and honor to the Japanese community and lead to full citizenship rights".

When Kaburagi dared to question the efficacy of the program, the volunteers vandalized his newspaper office in March 1916 and forced him to seek the protection of the police. Although the details are not clear, Kaburagi apparently passed this newspaper to a colleague and returned to Japan where he died in 1926

Although his strong religious, moral and social opinions were contrary to those held by many of his fellow countrymen, Goro Kaburagi is still remembered as an influential community leader who contributed substantially to the lives of the early Japanese immigrants to Canada *****



Powell St. Children's baptism class (1920's)
Photo courtesy of Bob Stewart Archives

ANGLICAN CHURCHES RELINQUISHED
 BY TIMOTHY NAKAYAMA

What happened to the Japanese Anglican Churches after relocation? A theological student, **Gregory Tatchell**, in Vancouver, sought out Canon Timothy Nakayama, inquiring about these two churches. He investigated this issue very diligently and wrote a thesis of 208 pages, revealing in minute detail what had remained secret for over six decades. Nakayama writes that "**Bishop Michael Ingham**, stated that if the story be true, it should be fearlessly told! At a recent Diocesan

Synod, the matter was explained by a video presentation prepared by the diocese, and the Bishop made an official apology." This story had been kept secret for 60 years!

There is a different story at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Seattle. During the mass evacuation and relocation of Japanese Americans, **Bishop Simeon Arthur Huston** took upon himself the responsibility of keeping a personal eye on St. Peter's, the Japanese church. The parishioners had left their

personal belongings in neatly marked squares on the Parish Hall floor. Bishop Huston would come down regularly to the Parish Hall to keep an eye on the facilities and belongings. Japanese people would write to him, asking him to send them something from their particular pile and he would find it, and send it by parcel post to their particular Relocation Camp. Such was the truly kind act performed by Bishop Huston for the Japanese Episcopalians of Seattle. *****



TRANSFORMED BY LOVE
 BY KATHY YAMASHITA

Manzo Nagano is celebrated as the first Japanese settler in Canada who arrived in 1877 to work in the salmon fishery. I noted that Teikichi Kawabe had travelled to Victoria in 1892 and met a Mr. Nagano, among other Japanese people there. I wondered if this visit had anything to do with Manzo's conversion to Christianity. I received an email from **Paul Nagano**, Manzo's grandson, who is the director for

the Council for Pacific Asian Theology. Paul lives in California. In answer to my question, Paul quoted from his spiritual autobiography "Transformed by Love": "Manzo was not an especially religious man and did not feel comfortable talking about religion. A special evangelist campaign was held in Victoria by **Rev. Paul Kanamori**, a Salvation Army preacher from Japan. Paul Kanamori is noted for his

three-hour sermons. After a very lengthy sermon the invitation was given to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord Manzo rose to his feet and made his decision to become a Christian. We might question his insistence that all his workers also be required to accept Christ."

I hope to tell more of Manzo's story in following newsletters.



JAPAN ECUMENICAL RELIEF WORK CONT.

.... becoming a more serious problem as people move into temporary housing. Once again the displaced lose a community they have forged over time, and they are behind closed doors. Some really excellent work is happening with Church World Service and partners." David McIntosh who

was appointed by the United Church of Canada to serve JEDRO (NCC Japan) as the communication officer for **Japan Ecumenical Disaster Response Office**, has started his work this month in Toronto, and soon will be in Tokyo. It took time to get the work permit but finally we'll send him

to Tokyo. We are looking forward to hearing more about the ecumenical work in Japan through JEDRO before or after Christmas. To know more about the ecumenical response please contact Patricia Elson (pelson@united-church.ca) or David McIntosh (mcdebitto@hotmail.com)



A baby undergoes a check for radiation in Fukushima City, Japan, in natural disaster.
 REUTERS/Kyodo, courtesy of Trust.org-Alertnet

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**Miss Agnes deWolfe (2nd from left) of the Women's
Missionary Society, with women at the missionary
residence, 652 Keefer St., Vancouver.**

Photo courtesy of The Bob Stewart Archives

Articles welcome.

THE BACK PAGE

I received a short email from Shuzo Oshimo: "We received your Kyogikai newsletter. We miss all of Kyogikai members. Now we are preparing for Christmas and have already started celebration of advent season with the earthquake victims. We pray for peace for all of the world, especially people in pain." Their email is: syo-shimo@iris.ocn.ne.jp

I learned from Pastor George Takashima that Shuzo Oshimo and his wife, Yukie, came to Canada to pastor to the Fraser Valley Japanese United Church. He was a retired KYODAN minister when we invited him to come and serve he FVJUC. He was here for five years and then returned to Japan. Yukie had been a very strong social

activist in Japan in her younger days. She fought for women's rights, "ban nuclear weapons" campaigns which included trying to get the US military out of Okinawa, working with Korean folks in Japan and especially with Korean women who were used as "slave-prostitutes" during WWII.

Finally, at this time of year, we Japanese traditionally take time to welcome the New Year, usually surrounded by friends and family, consuming sushi, manju, sashimi, yokan and other delicacies. My Dad already has his eye on some nice Octopus at the Japanese food store. Most of my Japanese language consists of the

names of food I like to eat.

So, in English I say HAPPY NEW YEAR!
and God Bless Every One of you with
love and comfort all year long.



Kathy Yamashita, editor