

Year-End Report for 2015

Submitted to:

The Presbytery of Mississippi Valley of the PCA

The Foreign Missions Committee of the OPC

The OPC Japan Mission

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

The Ad-Hock Committee for the Support of the Work of OPC Japan Mission

January 1, 2016

The Year 2015 featured epoch-making events surrounding both the OPC Japan Mission and Yamagata Church. In October 2014 the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ), with whom the OPC Japan Mission has been intimately working in helping establish their churches for the last 60 years, amended its constitution to allow women into the office of elders and pastors. The amended article concerning church officers was put into practice as of October, 2015. In June this year the OPC General Assembly wrote a final plea and admonition letter to the RCJ, but the RCJ GA did not revoke the decision made last year, which then meant that the mutual co-operative relationship between the two churches will be terminated as of June 2016.

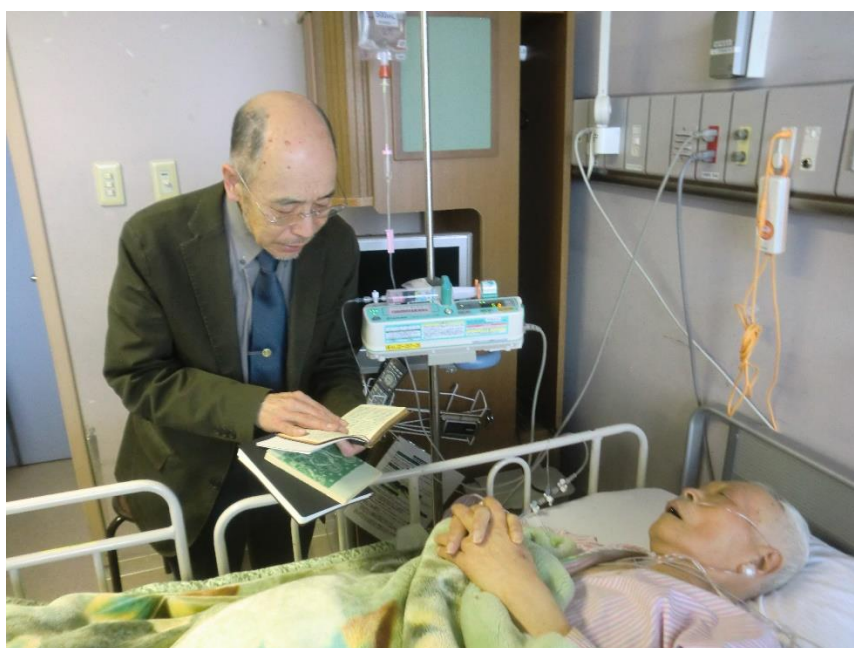
Based on this both historical and grievous event, Yamagata Church, belonging to the Tohoku (Northeastern) Presbytery of the RCJ, after having studied the issue for some years, held a called congregational meeting on November 15th, and voted on the proposal for leaving the RCJ. The overwhelming majority voted to leave the RCJ.

The Tohoku Presbytery met at its called meeting on Dec. 8th and heard our case, though it did not vote on that day to accept the request from Yamagata Church. Instead, it set up a special committee to have a hearing session with our congregation, which was carried out on Dec. 18th as the members of that committee came to Yamagata and met our people. The Committee then, having been satisfied with Yamagata's conviction, will report to the next stated meeting on April 12th, wherein the Presbytery will vote to accept our request to leave the RCJ. There were some voices in the presbytery sounding as if to decline the request. But I don't know how that would be possible when the congregation has already voted almost unanimously to leave the denomination.

I covet your prayers that the Lord will iron out the path of our new

start. Yamagata Church, prayerfully considering and wishing to unite with another Reformed & Presbyterian body in the near future, the Lord willing, will become “an independent church” for a while. Yamagata will, however, seek a co-operative relationship with the OPC Japan Mission, so that she will be able to form a temporary session by “borrowing an elder,” from the OPC Mission, enabling her thus to start walking as a Presbyterian Reformed church with as close a biblical form of government as possible. However, Yamagata Church will soon elect elders, so it will be ready to become an established church with its own session. Please pray for three men in the church. I must add that the Yamagata Church will continue to ask me to serve its pastor via the OCP Mission.

The Lord gave us **three baptisms** for 2015. The first was Mr. Seisuke Suzuki in January, the husband of one of our dear members, Setsuko Suzuki. It was truly a spiritually thrilling experience, not just for me as a pastor but for the saints at Yamagata Church. His baptism was a replay of the thief who repented in his last few hours of life on earth. Having been prepared in his heart with the gospel message of salvation in Christ, he professed his clear faith on his dying bed just several hours before he was called to be with his Savior. When I asked him “As the Lord so invites you to believe in Him and be saved, do you want to accept this salvation?” He very clearly answered, “Yes, I do.”



Confirming Mr. Suzuki’s profession of faith on his death bed

The second was Mrs. Miki Yarimizu. Bashful as she was, as you might remember from my previous reports, she had asked me if it would be OK for her to be baptized in the kitchen without being watched by the rest of the church! That Miki Yarimizu decided for Christ! She has been an eager Christian being kind and helpful to others. Most gladly from the pastor's perspective, she really is humble about wanting to know what the Lord wants for her life as she reads the Bible. One day this fall she called me on the telephone asking me what she should do at a Buddhist memorial service for her uncle. She specially wanted to know what to do about burning incense sticks for the deceased. She didn't want to shame her family by not doing the traditional custom. The uncle was her mother's brother. I advised her: "Just tell your mother simply and humbly that being a Christian you can no longer do this custom for the dead because of your Christian faith. But just be there and let your presence be the comforting fragrance for the family. Mother and the rest will accept, though they may not fully understand why." The next day Miki emailed me and told that everything went nicely. No one gave her a bad look. Her mother understood her feelings about the Christian faith.



Miki Yarimizu sharing her testimony after baptism

The third was our fourth grandchild, Alisa, the first born of our son David and his wife Amy. In July when she delivered Alisa, due to certain medical complications Amy underwent a very dangerous life-threatening

experience. But with excellent medical treatment along with prayers by family and friends she overcame that trouble and has been quite healthy since. We are very thankful for the arrival of this new child of the Covenant. We pray that both David and Amy as Alisa's parents place their trust in God Who promises that He will be God to us and to our children. May they exercise the means of grace, teaching her, praying for and with her and relying upon the work of the Holy Spirit that the Lord will bring her to saving knowledge of Christ.



Alisa's Infant Baptism Dec. 27, 2015

BTW, the Yaegashis are having a baby rush from this year into 2016. In January Morris (our 3rd son) and his wife Yuki are expecting their first baby. And in April Megumi and Jason will have their second child. (This will be a dream-come true, not just for the parents but for their daughter Kaila(8) who has been wanting to have a brother or sister for a long time.)

In November I attended, with other OPC missionaries, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Japan (PCJ) held in Tokyo. I met a few MTW missionaries then, including Dan Iverson and Craig Coulburn both of whom have been working in Chiba prefecture outside the Tokyo metropolitan area. I also had a chance to talk with some PCJ men from its executive committees concerning our Yamagata Church future situation. Nothing is definite at all, but the PCJ is one of the churches that Yamagata

has in mind as a possible denomination for merger. We need to pray and we need to learn more about each other.

We had our annual Ladies' Christmas luncheon at a hotel restaurant where thirty-five women gathered to hear a Christmas message brought by Shio Akiho, a young lady from our congregation, who is a professional photographer. She shared her wonderful testimony of how God has used her photography to show the precious existence of human beings made in the image of God. She shared how Christmas is a miracle event by which the Lord God intervened in history in order to recover that image of man which has been lost because of our sins. More than twenty women in the group were non-Christians.



Ladies' Christmas Luncheon 2015

Then we had a very blessed Christmas worship on Dec. 20th attended by thirty-six people. Our Sunday School children presented "Lessons and Carols" during the service. Some new people also came as well as several who have not come for years!

As I look into the year 2016, it will most likely be the most challenging time of my ministry as I lead God's people of Yamagata Church into a brand new start, totally relying upon the power, wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit without Whom I can't imagine how I could possibly go forward. Please pray for (1) re-establishing Yamagata's identity as a local Reformed and

Presbyterian church, (2) working out a close relationship with the OPC Japan Mission with the hope of making a co-operative agreement with it, (3) training and electing men to be elders, and (4) looking toward uniting with a trustworthy Reformed and Presbyterian national denomination in a reasonable time frame as God leads. Regarding the training for elder candidates, we have been studying with other members as well “Concise Introduction to Christian Doctrines” by J.I. Packer this year. It’s an excellent book on Reformed doctrine based on the theological premise of the Westminster Standard.

As both Katie and I are soon reaching retirement age, our bodies seem to need fixing here and there. Please pray for my wife’s health and for mine. Pray for our physical strength for our daily work and ministry.

We appreciate your continuous prayers for the work of His Kingdom in Yamagata. May the Lord bless each one of you where you work and serve Him both as individuals and as His churches.

Yours for the sake of Christ in Yamagata, Japan

Kazuhiko (Kaz) and Katie Yaegashi