

First Quarter Report  
April, 2016

“...for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught a great number of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

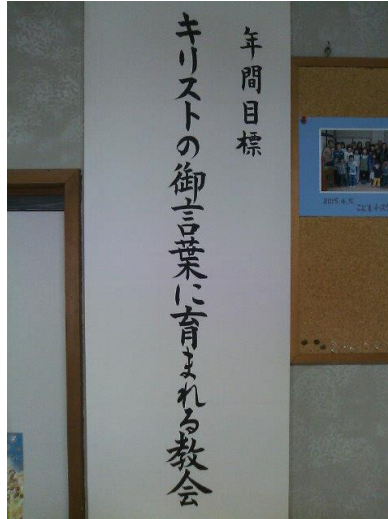
Acts 11:26

The Great Commission to the world outside the Jewish circle came to its first fruition at Antioch. The disciples were called “Christians” for the first time by the people in that city who saw what kind of people those disciples of Jesus were. People realized the disciples were truly serious about following Him. How did they know the disciples really followed Christ? Two reasons seem to be apparent from this section in chapter 11. First, the church kept on witnessing Christ. Secondly, “the Christians” demonstrated the love of Christ in their diaconal activities offering help to those suffering the famine in Judea. Proclaiming Christ both in word and deed is certainly what I would dearly desire for a little, but His own, Yamagata Reformed Church.

Yamagata Reformed Church has been in a difficult, yet challenging and blessed process of transition in its ecclesiastical status. In the congregational meeting held in January, the church set up a pulpit committee to seek for “a new pastor” after April 12, 2016, when my cooperative status with the RCJ (Reformed Church in Japan) expires as its chapel’s resident pastor. This happened, partly because our congregation decided in November last year to leave the denomination, and partly because the OPC also decided to terminate its working relationship with the RCJ due to the RCJ’s acceptance of women in the office. To make a long story short, Yamagata Reformed Church decided to extend a call to me to continue to be their pastor. Accordingly, the OPC Japan Mission has approved the call given to its missionary as mission work. An installation service is scheduled to be held on April 24<sup>th</sup>, which I shall touch on in my next quarterly report.

Mr. Tada, our record-holder seeker (some 30 years with us) has been very faithful since January of 2015. He comes not only for Sunday worship almost every week, but also to Katie’s Wednesday English Bible Class. He was moved by the simple remark I made during the service that our church is the only one in town that offers an English Bible class. Last week I overheard him saying in the class that Japan has a very long and deep history of its own and the Japanese carry that heritage making it difficult for people to break away from it. It sounded as if his Japanese heritage is something that still makes it hard for him to decide for Christ. What is important, however, is that he has not quit coming to worship. Pray that the Lord will break through his misunderstanding and that he will know his

country's history is in no way an obstacle for his faith, for God is sovereign over all histories of mankind. BTW, he is an excellent calligrapher and has written Yamagata Church's slogan of the year. Here is the picture of his beautiful calligraphy which says "The Church Nutured by the Word of Christ."



Another noticeable figure in the first few months of this year is the presence of Mr. Yarimizu, Miki Yarimizu's husband. He often comes to attend Sunday worship, sometimes together with his wife, and other times, to Mrs. Yarimizu's surprise, without telling her that he would be coming to church. He comes to hear the Word of God much more often than one member of the church who comes only once a month due to her shift at an old-folk's health care service center. The whole church is praying for Mr. Yarimizu with acute interest in finding how the Lord is going to open his heart to Christ. They are a couple in their middle forties. Their becoming a Christian couple will strengthen our small flock. They have a son and a daughter in their early twenties. Please remember this family.

We had a greatly blessed Easter both at our annual children's Easter Party held March 26 and at the Easter worship the next day. There were more adults than children; yet having been able to invite 7 children is a fairly successful outreach knowing that in many churches it has been harder to have children come. Below is a picture of the Children's Easter Party. Four non-Christian mothers were also reached by this program and we are very thankful that they were able to hear the story of Christ's resurrection!



Far left is Shie Sasaki, our member, and the next four ladies in the back row are the non-Christian ladies.

At the Easter worship there was much joy in the church as we gathered to rejoice in the resurrection of Christ, a true assurance of both forgiveness of our sins and reality of physical eternal life. The blessing in the Easter worship was doubled by the baptism of a covenant child, James Yoshihiko, our son Morris and his wife Yuki's first baby.



From left in the front: Dr. Yamamoto (Elder Candidate), Yuki, Morris & baby James. Furthest to the right is Mr. Tada, Calligrapher

In a pre-marital counseling session, I met a couple in March. The man sounded very interested in some sayings of the Bible. He quoted “the Golden Rule,” “Love your enemy,” and “Knock and it shall be opened,” and a few more passages from the Scriptures. I don’t meet many people talking to me willingly and expectantly about the Bible. He and his fiancé told me that they are like best friends. Then he asked me if there is anything in the Bible about “a friend.” So I gave him Jesus teaching about the greatest love which is to give one’s life for the friend. They were so amazed and moved as they heard such love being possible. I told them I will use that passage for their wedding ceremony! We will wait and see how it will come out for them.

Lastly I would like to share with you the Guidelines expressed by the new-born Yamagata Reformed Church as she has just begun her new life in the Lord:

### Guidelines for Church Formation and Administration

April 3, 2016

#### Preparatory Remarks

Our Reformed Church in Japan Yamagata Chapel, in a called meeting of the congregation held on November 15, 2015, determined to leave the Reformed Church in Japan denomination. The reason for our leaving is the fact that the Reformed Church performed a change in interpretation of Scripture which forbids the ordination of women pastors and ruling elders, revising the Book of Church Order and recognizing women officers.

In our Biblical understanding here at Yamagata Chapel, the Scriptural doctrine which prohibits women officers is a fundamental matter which is connected with the relationship of men and women in church and home, and we have come to the

conclusion that it is of the true nature of the church to duly maintain the sexual distinction of functions between male and female which God has established. And that has brought us to the place of withdrawing from the Reformed Church in Japan (hereinafter RCJ).

Our whole congregation at Yamagata Chapel, following our official withdrawal from the RCJ on April 12, 2016, has decided to set out anew on the path of a self-supporting church, standing on the Reformed Faith and Presbyterianism based on Scripture. Placing our whole reliance on the Word of God and on the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, here we set forth our direction connected with church formation and church administration.

We pray that in everything God's glory may be revealed and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be praised.

If anyone is interested in reading the whole document of the Guidelines by the Yamagata Reformed Church, please contact me.

Your servant for Christ's sake in Yamagata Japan,

Kazuhiko (Kaz) Yaegashi

OPC Missionary & Ministerial Member of the PCA

Presenting this report to:

The Presbytery of MS Valley of PCA

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

The Ad-Hock Committee for the Support of Japan Mission

The Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC General Assembly