

## Reflections on the Spoken Word of God

### *Hokkaido District*

The current issue of our Newsletter features the Word of the Lord that stays in our members' memory.

### Biblical Words that Remain in my Heart



Eiko Noguchi  
(Sapporo Chapel, Sapporo)

Thirty-some years ago, as a freshman at a university, I was busy preparing for a nationwide Christian youth meeting. Many Christian students from different denominations across the country were supposed to come to the meeting. The program included a small group discussion and I was to be a sub-leader of one of those groups.

I was both nervous and excited. Then one day I received a postcard. It was from the leader of my group. Since we had not met before, first there was a short greeting. And it was followed by the Biblical passage as follows:

“But what am I, and what is my people, that we

should be able to give willingly like this? For everything comes from thee, and it is only of thy gifts that we give to thee.” (1 Ch 29:14)

The quotation from the Japanese Bible, “But what am I”, caught my eyes. I looked hard at the postcard, read the words again and again and questioned how I was going to posture myself for the service. I realized that I had misunderstood that spending a lot of time in church work or Christian students circle activities came from my effort. To the contrary, the power was not mine but a gift from God.

Since then, whenever I engage in church work or do offerings, I recall this Biblical verse and say to myself, “it is only of thy gifts that we give to thee.”

I no longer remember the entire message of the postcard but this Biblical word and the sender's handwriting still remain firmly in my heart.



## Reflections on the Spoken Word of God

### East District

#### Biblical Words that have Supported me

“Everything is appropriate in its own time.”

(Ecc. 3:11)



Ayako Nakamura (Matsumoto)

Do you know there is a district named Ko-shin in the East District? I was born and raised in this district, at the foot of Northern Japan Alps.

I first encountered the verse when I first began to go to church as a high school student. At that time I read the Bible as if it were a story. Accordingly, I was simply impressed by the beauty of the verse

and I remembered it. But I neither thought of its meaning nor was impacted profoundly. When I was young, I prayed just when I was in trouble.

Later, a lot of things happened to me; going to college, getting a job, getting married and having a child. I have lived in different places, and had some hard times. Each time, the verse came back to me. Looking back, I cannot help but think that those pains and troubles had meaning and that God stood by to lead me, whether I remembered him or not. This feeling is real but I cannot explain it logically. I don't know if I can leave everything entirely to God today, but I do feel secure.

### Churches in Transition

#### —Tonan Church—

Tonan Church had its seventieth anniversary in October last year. It is a small church located in a residential area of Tokyo. Every week, people of different ages, from a new-born baby to a seniors close to 100, gather and worship together like a family. There used to be many at the church school when we had a pre-school group. Now the graduates of the pre-school group serve as the teachers of the church school. This is a treasure and pride of Tonan church.

Out joy is to see the members attend church as families of multi-generations linked like a chain. I have been a member of Tonan Church for 60 years and I look at the commemorative photos taken over the years, I recognize the faces of current members as young children. Now they attend church with their own family.

We are to write a new history now. We will need to respect what we should not change, and ask

God what we should change according to the times. As management of church school is increasingly difficult these days, we want to be shown what to do by Jesus. With the whole congregation, we will prioritize observing Sunday service and make efforts for mission. (Yasuko Miyauchi)



## Reflections on the Spoken Word of God

### *Tokai District*

#### **Biblical Words that have Supported me**

“Always be joyful, always keep on praying.

No matter what happens, always be thankful.”

(I Thess. 5:16-18)



Yasuko Magai (Numazu)

Praise be the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My favorite Biblical word? — every word in the Bible supports and helps me at any time! But the one above, which was given at the time of my baptism by my pastor, encourages me daily and shows me the way to live. I nearly lost my life, but was saved. Life was again given by God. When I

was saved, I felt as if God had told me that I had much left to do. Because my life is given, I wish to live till the last day for the sake of people, family and myself, always joyful, continuously praying and giving thanks in any circumstances. Thinking I may contribute best in international friendship via Japanese culture, I participate in as many volunteer activities as I can. Sometimes I am too busy to go to church but my heart is always by the side of Lord Jesus.

I am grateful from the bottom of my heart that Jesus watches over me, encourages me and helps me. I pray that I can walk with God today and tomorrow. Amen.

#### **Churches in Transition**

##### **—Hamana Church—**

Our Hamana Church was established in 1953 when Rev. Lars Ingulstrup started missions. We celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Its path to date has, however, never been easy. Since 1979, we have not had our own pastor. Therefore we have worshiped in the evening for almost 20 years. In 2002, the property of the church was sold and the chapel was torn down. The future was not foreseeable, to say nothing of a church building, and less than ten of us rent a room on the third floor of a nearby shop to continue Sunday service. God works wonderfully. Two years later, in 2004, we had overcome difficulties and received about 1000 square meters of land and a brand new chapel. It was nothing but miracle.

Now, the church is full of teenagers and children. We still observe Sunday worship with ten or so people, but we feel blessed. All we can say is “Thank you”. (Setsu Maki)



## Reflections on the Spoken Word of God

### *West District*

#### **Biblical Words that Remain in my Heart**

In everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose. (Ro 8:28)



Yuki Suga (Toyonaka)

I am shy and retiring by nature and “being ordinary” had been my best option. Though, when I look back at my 56 years of life, it has been full of ups and downs.

While I was in college, I fell ill and needed to withdraw from school for one year. In spite of the recess my health did not recover fully, so I was thrown into despair. Then, my mother died and my big sister got married, leaving my father and myself at home. Partly because of loneliness, I started to go to church.

When I was about twenty years old, I decided to live for myself. I did my utmost to finish college, got a job and achieved my long-held goal to support myself. But, right after that, I lost my goal and energy.

Attracted by a reputation that everybody is full of life, I began to attend a church that emphasized, “power and healing.” While I read the Bible and associated with the brothers and sisters there, my emptiness and pain disappeared. Fortunately I met my husband and was blessed with children, too. But the church gradually changed and after a

scandal was revealed, it broke up. My family was impacted by the trouble but kept praying, and finally, by mercy, we were guided to Toyonaka Church. At first, I was afraid that the scandal troubling us might cause difficulties to Toyonaka Church if we changed churches, but Rev. and Mrs. Akiyama encouraged me so much that we were able to change churches smoothly. I am always thankful to them for this.

Looking back, I was almost dying when I was twenty. Now I am close to sixty but feel more energetic. Without the past hardships, however, I would probably not have come to know to God. I have been to different churches, and along the way, the words “faith, hope, and love: and the greatest of these is love” were inscribed deeply in my heart. I have witnessed that God lives and works all the time, just like the sun shines in whatever the sky is. Now I can believe that God operates for good through these ups and downs.

I am anticipating to be shown my assignment by God who has led me to Toyonaka Church. Last year, we rejoiced that Rev. Kokatsu was appointed to our church. She works very hard to do the will of God. I want to work hard together with Rev. Kokatsu, as well as brothers and sisters in faith.

Various things still happen at home, at work, and in church even after I was guided to the Lutheran church. Yet I believe that God will work for the good no matter what, just as he has changed everything that has happened in my past for the better.

With gratitude