

On Faith:

From one generation to another and bringing generations together

“My life is always with God”

Keiko Ishii, Tokyo Church

My name is Keiko Ishii and I'm a member of JELC Tokyo Church. My parents, Chuitsuro and Tsukiko Ichimura, were members of Tokyo Church since the time of Pastor Nobuki Honda. Currently, my husband and I live with my son and his family, my daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, aged 11 and 6. So, my household is Christian family of four generations.

Before WWII, my father was a naval officer. When he was a 19-year-old student of the Naval Academy, he became a Christian under the guidance of Miss Estella Finch (later naturalized and called Mitsuyo Hoshida), who was at *Kaigun Dendo Gikai* (Naval Christian Missions) in Yokosuka. Miss Finch was loved by the students of the Naval Academy and called “Mother.” On Sundays many students came to see her.

Mother Finch was close to Admiral Uryu and his wife, who were both renowned Christians (Mrs. Uryu was one of the five girls sent to study in the US by the Meiji government) and Kanzo Uchimura, who called her “Aunt Hoshida.”

My mother Tsukiko was from Kyushu. When she was a girl, her sister died from an

illness and left her mother a Bible and a hymnal. My mother became a Christian after that. My father went to a local church when his ship was staying at Sasebo Port. There he met my mother and they got married.

It is difficult for working adults and children to go to church on Sunday. But for my family, it is a great joy that all six of us can go to church and attend the services together on Christmas, Easter and other church events.

My parents wanted their four daughters to serve the church by playing the organ, so we started to take piano lessons when we were very young. Their wish came true; I am one of the organists serving at Tokyo Church and my son Makoto Ishii plays the trumpet at the services. My husband also has been working for the church office since his retirement.

I am now 76 years old and have been blessed with the grace of God. When in troubles, sorrows and hardships, God has helped me and kept me in His peace. I don't know when my days come to an end, but until the day I go to His kingdom in heaven, I'd like to live praying. I wish the members of my family also lived a happy life, just like me.

“We are closed but in business!”

Tomoaki Kai, Shion Church Houfu Chapel

Shion Church Houfu Chapel is a small church with about eight people attending the service. However, each member does a lot of work, especially the women do. Every Sunday, at least an hour before the service, they open the church door, arrange the altar flowers, prepare tea for the fellowship and clean the floor. There is a member who plays the organ every week, never missing one. I cannot thank enough for their devotion. Last year about 100

people including the 20 high school students came to the Christmas concert. Without these women's help, it could not have been possible.

The women's group in Houfu Chapel is currently in recess, but the women of the church are still doing a lot of volunteer work making the most of their talents. There is a saying: “open but not doing business.” I would now like to say “Houfu Chapel Women's Group is closed but in business!”

“The sprouting faith”

Yoko Yoshida, Asa Church

It may be unusual nowadays, but four-generations of my family live in the same house. My 93-year-old mother-in-law, my husband and I, my son and his wife, and one of their children live together.

Our family’s Christian history began with my mother-in-law attending a Christian gathering held at the upstairs of a spa. The group became Asa Church in 1964, which celebrated its 50th anniversary 3 years ago.

My husband was led by his mother and became a Christian. I met him when he was in college and I was baptized in Kurume Church. We were married there, officiated by Pastor Nozomu Utsumi. My husband and I lived in many places due to his transfers, but now we are settled in Asa with our grandchildren. My grandchildren came to church with us when they were in elementary school, but once they started junior and senior high schooling, they ceased doing so. They went to church only when camps were held. They would bring 4 or 5 friends to the camp and had fun. My older

grandchild left home for a job and no longer attends Asa Church, but one of the friends he brought to the camps still comes to the church sometimes.

God has planted the seeds of faith in these children. The members of my church and I rejoiced to see that the young man mentioned above came to the service even without my grandchild. My younger grandchild participated in the Teens Camp two years in a row with the support of the church, the West District and the women’s group. She learned about the Holy Spirit on these occasions. First, she told me she could not understand anything at all, but in an essay, she wrote that she came to realize that going to the church with her family, participating in the camps and making many friends were all made by the Holy Spirit. I was very happy to read it.

I realized that God stays in the hearts of the children and guides us to His way. I continue to pray that He grows the children’s sprouting seeds of faith into stout trees.