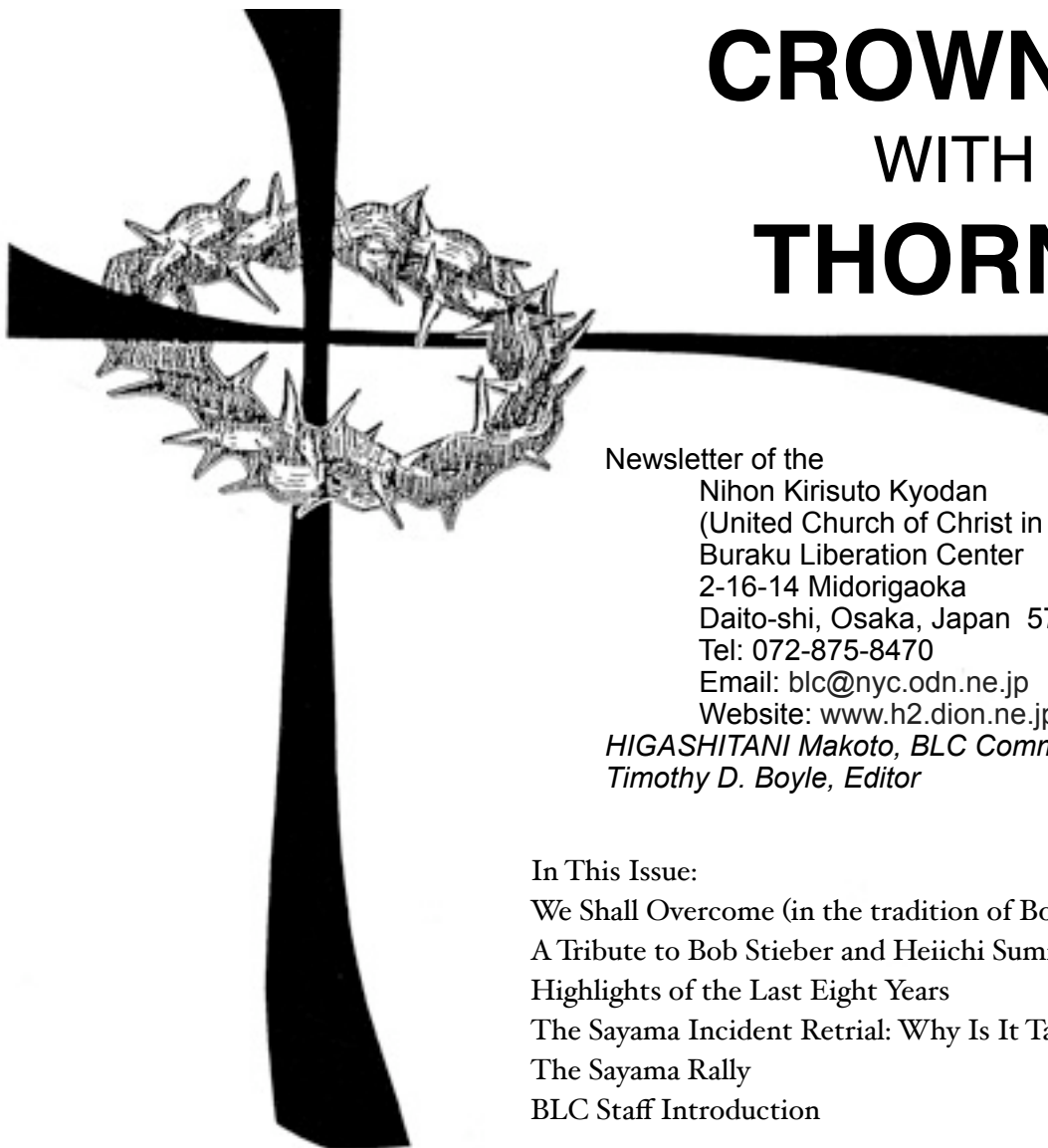




CROWNED WITH THORNS



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We Shall Overcome



At the recent Sayama Rally in Tokyo, one supporter, during his greetings, referred to another recent court case where a falsely accused defendant was released from prison when the trumped up nature of the charges became evident. He was complaining that the judge simply said the man was now free to go, with little in the way of apology or compensation. In describing the scene, he added a little aside that the judge was a woman. This tidbit of information, however, was totally irrelevant to the situation at hand. Whether the judge was male or female was clearly irrelevant to whether his or her actions as a judge were fair and appropriate, and so the judge's gender should not have even been stated. All of us, however, have slipped up similarly at one time or another, where a prejudice of some sort comes to the surface unintentionally. If someone's gender, ethnicity, social status, etc. is integral to the discussion, then mentioning it in an appropriate way is fine. But in most cases such information is irrelevant and should be avoided. As we work to end unjust discrimination of all types, we each need to reflect on how we refer to other persons, remembering that before God we are all equally valued and unique individuals, created in the image of God.

A Tribute To Bob Stieber and Heiichi Sumihi



As we reinstitute this English-language newsletter of the Buraku Liberation Center, we wish to begin by paying tribute to two individuals who contributed greatly to the cause for which we labor and who tragically left this world while still in their prime. The unexpected loss of these two staff members in recent years se-

verely affected the work of the BLC, but we are happy to report that we are getting back up to speed.

Missionary Bob Stieber's untimely death in 1999 resulted in the interruption of this newsletter, and so those of you who were regular readers up until then may very well have not gotten any news of what happened. Bob injured his knee in a household accident and needed an operation and a period of hospitalization. Normal medical protocol in such situations would call for the administration of blood-thinning drugs to prevent blood clots from forming, but for whatever reason, this was not done in Bob's case. Unfortunately, that very thing happened and a blood clot formed in his lung, requiring emergency surgery to correct. While that was a serious situation in itself, it was an operation that normally one would be expected to recover from. But a second medical error occurred at this point in the sad saga, as a virulent strain of bacteria (a dreaded "super-bug") somehow got into the wound and went to his heart. No treatment was available that could stem the growth of this bacteria, and in just a short time, Bob was gone.

Just a few years later, in 2004, the director of the BLC, Heiichi Sumihi, also passed away suddenly. A regular health exam just a couple of months prior to his passing had revealed no significant health problems, and he seemed fine until just a month or so before his death. In late August, he suddenly began to experience severe weakness and a battery of tests revealed that he had advanced lymphatic cancer. Just a few days later, shortly after beginning radiation treatment, he passed away —



much sooner than would normally be the case from the simple progression of the cancer itself. What the actual cause of death was, we're not sure, but it likely was heart failure brought on by the weakness caused by the cancer. Needless to say, the shock of losing both of

these men while still in their prime of life (both were in their early 50's) was indeed a bitter pill to swallow. All who knew them gave thanks to God for their lives and the good they accomplished, while at the same time wondering why God allowed them to be snatched away from us with so much more they could still accomplish for God's kingdom. We aren't given knowledge in this life of why specific situations such as this happen or exactly how they fit into God's overall plan, but we can trust that God is in ultimate control and that from God's perspective even these tragedies will serve God's purposes.

After Rev. Sumihi's death, the BLC was without a full-time director until this year, when Rev. Akira Kobayashi took the reigns of leadership. The interim director, businessman Makoto Higashitani, still heads up the management committee, and so with the addition of Rev. Kobayashi and now myself as missionary, the BLC is finally back to "full strength."

One other person who has been especially important to the Japanese church's response to the issue of buraku discrimination, the Rev. Kazuhiro Tanimoto, also experienced a severe health problem not long after Rev. Sumihi died, as he suffered a major stroke in June 2005. The initial prognosis did not look good at all, but he has amazed us with his steady recovery. We give thanks to God that he has fully regained his speech. Though his right side is still quite weak, he is able to walk on his own with the use of a cane and has limited motion in his right hand. He is back at work pastoring his church and heading up the Kyodan committee on buraku discrimination. We appreciate your prayers for his continued health, along with that of the rest of us.

Highlights of the Last Eight Years

It seems appropriate to list some highlights of the last 8 years, since the last issue of CWT was produced. Among the significant events of the year 2000, was the establishment of the BLC website. This is still only in Japanese, and so one major project I have in mind other than getting CWT on its feet again is to develop an English web page for the BLC website.

In 2001, we celebrated the repayment of the loans that had been taken out to purchase and renovate the facilities we are in. Likewise, to show our solidarity with our American supporters, the BLC contributed some \$10,000 to the United Church of Christ's program for dealing with the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

In 2002, Rev. Dr. Suneel Bhanu Busi, who studied at the International Christian University in Tokyo, finished his doctoral dissertation on a comparison between discrimination against the Dalit in India and those of buraku descent in Japan. This was part of the deepening ties between the BLC and church-related ministries working on Dalit discrimination in India.

In 2003 (and again in 2005), the BLC sent a delegation to both the United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries in New York and the United Church/Disciples of Christ headquarters in Cleveland to submit a request for a missionary to help with the work as Bob Steiber had done prior to his death. While it took a bit of time to come together, my appointment to the BLC is the result of that request. Also, in 2003, the BLC sent delegates to both the Dalit Liberation Conference in India and the Japanese-German Church Consultation held in Germany.

In 2004, we were able to begin a series of study retreats for the members of the district committees on the buraku discrimination problem. The first such seminar was a joint effort with the Tokyo and Nishi Tokyo districts, with a total of 26 participants. Our goal is to have such

study retreats in all of the districts to educate the district leaders and encourage them to work on practical solutions.

In 2005, in addition to the delegation (Rev. Higashioka and Rev. Tanimoto) going to the US to request a missionary (as mentioned above), the BLC also spearheaded a fundraising drive to assist the Dalit community in India that was so devastated by the tsunami caused by the great earthquake off of Sumatra. That effort is ongoing, with approximately \$50,000 raised so far.



Randy Day speaking to the BLC Workers Conference

In 2006, we welcomed Victor Luther Paul Nakka from India for a period of study here in the Kansai region. In June, Randy Day, head of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, was guest keynote speaker at the "BLC Workers Conference," held in Tenri. It was there that he formally promised that the UMC would send a missionary to work with the BLC.

During this year of 2007, in addition to the arrival of the new director and the new missionary, one new project was the sponsoring of a 4-session study group on the issue of homosexuality and how the BLC should relate to acts of discrimination against such people.

The Sayama Incident Retrial: Why Is It Taking So Long?

Those of you who were regular readers of *Crowned With Thorns* prior to its 8-year hiatus will no doubt recall the frequent articles describing the numerous voices of support Kazuo Ishikawa was receiving in his bid to clear his name of the patently false charges of murder he had been saddled with for most of his life. As I re-read those articles, the impression I got was that there was an expectation that the upwelling of support that was evident at the time would surely convince the court to reopen the case soon. That would have been a foregone conclusion in practically any other democratic country. In fact, it is hard to imagine anyone in such a country being convicted and imprisoned for a lengthy time on such obviously trumped up charges. Nevertheless, 9 years later, the Japanese High Court is still ignoring the outcry to reopen the case. Has the support for Mr. Ishikawa and the cause he represents waned? No, the reasons for this travesty lie elsewhere — in Japanese culture and society.

What, then, makes things so different in Japan? Another related question is the seemingly incongruent fact that there have been several other cases in which falsely charged individuals in Japan have been exonerated and set free. So why has this not been the case with the Sayama Incident retrial? Why have the Japanese courts been willing to reopen those other trials and clear the names of those individuals when the exonerating evidence was presented and yet still refuse to reopen the Sayama case in spite of the overwhelming evidence of Mr. Ishikawa's innocence?

The basic reason for this difference involves the issue of buraku discrimination, which was not part of the dynamics of these other cases. It is difficult for people from other cultures where this kind of class discrimination is far less pronounced to understand the dynamics behind buraku discrimination. Perhaps the only other major country that experiences something similar is India, with its caste system. In both countries, the social structures that were the basis for such discrimination have officially been done away with, but the ingrained nature of this discrimination is so pervasive that discrimination against descendents of these "defiled" people continues to this day. In the case of Japan, this is over 135



years after the hierarchical class structure of society that was instituted in the feudal era was officially repealed.

What does that have to do with the actions (or lack thereof) of the present Japanese court concerning the Sayama case? The only reason that Mr. Ishikawa was fingered in the first place is that the local police were under severe pressure to come up with a suspect, after having bungled the case (along with a similar murder case shortly before that). They had tried to set a trap for the kidnapper according to the demands of his ransom note, but had ineptly let him slip through their fingers. When the victim's body was later discovered, the pressure the police were under to solve the case quickly resulted in them searching for someone in the despised buraku community whom they could pin it on. Twenty-four year-old Kazuo Ishikawa, unemployed and with only a rudimentary education, was chosen as the scapegoat, since he had no verifiable alibi.

Japanese police at that time (and to a somewhat lesser extent even today) could hold a suspect in isolation for up to 23 days and interrogate him without allowing him access to legal advice through a lawyer, and so they were able to cajole Ishikawa into signing a "confession" describing his actions that led up to the murder. Ishikawa maintains that his interrogators pressured him in many ways, including implying that his older brother would be arrested and charged with the crime if he didn't confess, and since his older brother was the main breadwinner for the

family, he figured he'd have to "take the fall" to protect them.

I have personally followed the supposed route he took and the actions he supposedly did in abducting a 16 year-old girl and finally killing her. The ad hoc nature of the confession is so apparent that it is laughable. If someone intended to cook up a plausible scenario and thought through it beforehand so that the storyline would hold together, it would be easy to come up with something that made far better sense than the actual "confession," which is filled with glaring inconsistencies. For example, the girl supposedly walked her bicycle docilely along with Ishikawa for several hundred meters, when it would have been easy for her to escape. (Numerous people should have witnessed that if it was true, but no such witnesses were ever found.) Then he supposedly tied her up to a tree in a small thicket of trees located next to an orchard, but when she put up a struggle and screamed, the "confession" claims that he accidentally strangled her with his hands trying to keep her quiet. He then supposedly carried her limp body some 200 meters before hiding it — something that in reenactment, young men much stronger than Ishikawa were unable to do.

The fact that a farmer, who worked in that adjacent orchard for 3 hours during that very time frame, testified that he had heard no screams and saw no one among the trees (either of which would have been hard to miss), and the fact that the girl had been strangled with a cloth wrapped tightly around her neck and not with bare hands — along with several other similar inconsistencies — would have been more than enough to have the case thrown out in most countries. But Ishikawa had signed the "confession" that one of the interrogators had written "in his behalf." In the end, that was all that mattered in the judge's eyes. Thus, this is not a case of simply "reasonable doubt" concerning his guilt, but of clear and compelling evidence of his innocence! Even in this situation of "guilty until proven innocent," that would be very easy to do if only given the chance.

It should be noted that Japan does not have a jury system such as is the standard in many countries. It is the judge alone who weighs the evidence and renders the verdict. Fortunately, this outdated system is about to change, as a modified jury system is to be introduced from 2009, and likewise, a bill to require police interrogation sessions to be recorded is being debated

and appears to have a good chance of being enacted. It's inconceivable that Mr. Ishikawa would have spent 32 years of his life in prison if these provisions had existed then. (For more information about the case itself, please go to the following website: <http://www.imadr.org/sayama/> Your signatures on their petition and other forms of support are critical to bringing about positive change.)

Let's return to the question of why the Japanese courts have steadfastly refused to reopen the Sayama case. We cannot, of course, know exactly what is in the minds of those in authority, but it is clear that expediency rules the day. If the courts were to reopen the case, actually take into account the real evidence and then exonerate Mr. Ishikawa, it would be tantamount to officially admitting to blatant discrimination against buraku people at the highest levels of Japanese government. It is clear that the vested interests of the Japanese court system is much more interested in "saving face" than in pursuing real justice.

While it was the local police who began the process of exploiting the widespread prejudice against the buraku to relieve the extreme pressure they were under to "solve" the case, it was officials higher up that allowed and even encouraged it. I have trouble really understanding the rationale the court has for avoiding this issue, but I suspect that fears of individuals being sued for damages and even being indicted on charges such as "defamation of character" (for knowingly making false statements that defamed Mr. Ishikawa) and lying under oath, etc. may also be part of the mix.

The prevailing attitude seems to be summed up in a Japanese proverb, "If it stinks, put the lid on." Will adding continued heat under the pot finally blow the lid off of this stinking stew? I am hopeful that it eventually will, but perhaps there is a better way than just relying on this one approach. Perhaps it might be possible to allay the fears of retribution for past wrongs that appear to be a factor in trying to keep the lid on. When it comes to Kazuo Ishikawa, he simply wants his name cleared and his freedoms restored. He is not trying to extract millions of dollars worth of compensation through lawsuits or pursue those still living who were directly responsible for this injustice until they too are behind bars. He, along with the rest of us, want to concentrate on attaining a future in which Japanese society is free of the curse of discriminatory acts based on preju-

dice against buraku and other minorities. We want to focus on the future and not dwell on the past and its injustices.

Of course, this case has gone far beyond simply this one human being, as the Sayama Incident has become a central symbol for the rights of all discriminated-against buraku people and beyond that to other forms of injustice. Kazuo Ishikawa is a figure caught up in a larger struggle far beyond his personal struggle for individual justice. It is part of the great power struggle between good and evil, the dynamics of which hark back to that greatest struggle of all. When Jesus was arrested and brought before the authorities on trumped up charges, those in power took the path of expediency. Pilate simply wanted this big headache to go away. The Jewish authorities were afraid that if they couldn't somehow get rid of Jesus, his rising popularity would result in a revolt that Rome would be forced to crush — something that would bring utter ruin to the country, not to mention their place of privilege and power.

While there are, of course, vast differences between these two events, the common theme is that of the willingness to sacrifice the rights and

even life of an individual to protect the power structure. It is significant that “Leveler’s Association” (the forerunner of the Buraku Liberation League) chose as its symbol the crown of thorns. Even though few of those involved had formally adopted the Christian faith, they felt a natural affinity with Jesus and the crown of thorns forced onto his head. Unfortunately, the Christian Church in Japan was slow to get involved in this struggle, but it is an integral part of the gospel message we are to proclaim. While identifying with the suffering of the oppressed, we also offer the hope of a bright future. That is what our symbol mark of a crown of thorns together with the cross points to. The goal is not retribution or revenge against those who directly perpetrated this injustice. It is to set all of us free from the fear and misinformation that is at the root of the problem in the first place.

As I begin my work with the Buraku Liberation Center, I hope to be able to contribute to the realization of this dream for a society that recognizes the inherent worth of each individual as a person equally created in the image of God. May God grant me the wisdom and grace to fulfill this great calling.

Wish I'd Thought of That Sooner!

At the recent Sayama rally in Tokyo on October 31, I was asked to represent the voice of religious organizations (the association of various religions in Japan, including Christianity, dealing with the buraku discrimination problem) in support of Kazuo Ishikawa. It was a last minute request by the people in charge, and so I had little time to think of what to say. Considering that, things went very well, and I was able to make a credible, if short (4 or 5 minute), speech.

As is often the case, I think of things that would have been great to say if I'd only thought of them beforehand. (I suspect that is an experience common to us all!) So, I will write out the essence of my imagined speech to the 1000 or so supporters in the amphitheater. My actual speech (in Japanese, of course) did include most of these points, but not the quotation from the US Declaration of Independence or the reference to Martin Luther King and his famous speech.



Good afternoon. My name is Tim Boyle, and I have just begun my service at the Buraku Liberation Center of the United Church of Christ in Japan from the beginning of this month. My role at the



BLC is to concentrate on being an advocate for the elimination of discriminatory acts against people of buraku descent in Japan through communicating their plight to the international community and joining together in solidarity with other groups dealing with similar issues in other countries.

I first became aware of Mr. Ishikawa's situation a number of years ago, and twice I have been to the site to walk along the route of his supposed confession to consider the plausibility of its main points and to look at the other gross inconsistencies of the evidence used to convict him. I am convinced that any reasonable person would reach the same conclusion I did that he couldn't possibly have carried out the actions described in this ad hoc "confession." He clearly is an innocent man convicted on trumped-up charges simply because he was a convenient scapegoat from the local buraku community.

I have lived in Japan for many years now and have grown to love much about this country. There are many wonderful aspects of Japanese culture that I admire and enjoy, and you have much to be proud about in terms of your culture. But things are very different when it comes to the issues of discrimination against persons of buraku descent in particular and human rights in general, as the situation here in Japan is indeed shameful. While there is much in my own American culture that I wouldn't want you to copy and import into your culture, when it comes to this aspect, there is much that at least in principle I wish Japan would emulate. The principles of freedom and respect for the individual that are part of the American constitution are based in the biblical notion that all persons are created in the image of God and are therefore of great worth. As the famous words in the Declaration of Independence state, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator

with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." (See note at end of article)

In 1963, on the 100th anniversary of "Emancipation Proclamation" that declared freedom from the oppression of slavery — and the very year that Kazuo Ishikawa was arrested on these trumped up charges, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a famous speech in which he referred to these words. It was entitled, "I have a dream!" Rev. King was speaking about his dream of a day when racial discrimination in America would simply be a distant memory, but that dream also applies to the issue before us here today. I too have a dream! First of all, I have a

dream that one day soon, this man, Kazuo Ishikawa, will get his day in court and be cleared of these false charges that stole 32 years of his life by putting him in prison — and that still to this day shackle him in "invisible handcuffs," as he describes it. I have a dream that he will soon regain the rights we all take for granted — for instance, the right to get a passport and travel abroad. Yes! I even dream that I will be able to take Mr. Ishikawa on a trip to see the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta and other such places in my home country! That is, of course, assuming that he would like to go. (And in my imagination, I picture him standing up on the stage behind me and yelling out, "Yes, I want to go!")

I have a dream that one day soon this nation can shake off the curse of buraku discrimination, and beyond that, other forms of injustice originating in similar prejudices based on a person's gender, race, religion, economic status, and other such factors that define an individual's existence in society.

I have a dream that every child in this land will be judged not by the place of their birth but by the strength of their character — that they will be evaluated by their talents and abilities and not by their family tree.

I have a dream of a society in which the police will always be seen as our protectors and never our persecutors, a society where the judicial system will no longer sacrifice justice to political expediency, a society where "politics as usual" will give way to politics as it should be — political leaders who truly serve the people and work for their best interests.

Yes, I have a dream! Won't you join with me in making this dream of a just society here in Japan a reality? We can, if we work together. I have a dream!

I end my speech with an upraised clenched fist, and I imagine everyone rising to their feet in unison and shouting out with upraised fist, "I have a dream!"

And then we repeat it back and forth several times in an ever-increasing crescendo.

Well, that speech was definitely a “dream”, and not something I could have pulled off on the spur of the moment — at least not under my own power, anyway! But I set it as my goal here at the Buraku Liberation Center. I ask for your support and your prayers that this dream will become a reality.

Note: The traditional term “men,” as is used in this phrase, is problematic to be sure. Not only do the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek have different words for “men” in the separate senses of human beings and males, but so also does Japanese. The type of “linguistic insensitiveness” that is entailed in this traditional language in English is not even an issue in many (perhaps most) languages around the world.

BLC Staff Introduction

As we begin a new chapter in the life of the Buraku Liberation Center, we want to introduce to our readers our four regular staff members.

Terumi Igarashi is the lone “old-timer” of the group, as she has been with the center almost from its inception, having joined the staff in 1982. From this year, she is now working only part-time, coming in 3 days a week, but her continued presence is a great blessing. She has been my chief source of knowledge as I endeavor to learn about the history and programs of the BLC.



Miki Tanimoto began serving on the BLC staff from April 2005. If the last name sounds familiar, that is because she is the daughter of Rev. Tanimoto, who has been an integral part of the BLC team for many years, who is introduced below. She handles the finances and shares other secretarial functions with Terumi.



Rev. Akira Kobayashi, the new director of the center, joined the



staff from June of this year. He became a Christian at age 16 and after working in the film industry for several years, entered seminary and was ordained three years ago at age 36. He is also serving as the assistant pastor at the Ikuno Church in Osaka.

And now, a brief introduction of myself. I first came to Japan in 1968 as part of a Japanese language study program at the East-West Center in Hawaii. I first served as a missionary in Japan from 1971 to 1974, in Hokkaido. It was this experience through which God led me into the ministry, and at the end of my term, I entered seminary, graduating from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1977. My wife, Yuko (nicknamed “Juji”) and I were later appointed to the Hokkaido District in 1982, in a joint appointment by both the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA). After a term there, we were transferred to the Kanto District, where we served at the Tsukuba Christian Center until just a few weeks ago. I began my work at the BLC in October, and Juji is serving in Kobe at the Shin’ai Home as a counselor.



I have a number of other involvements, including serving as the field representative for the “Southern Presbyterian Mission in Japan”, the legal body under which the Yodogawa Christian Hospital operates, and thus I serve on their board

of directors. I also serve on the board of directors of the Make-A-Wish Foundation in Japan, and I am continuing on the side my interest in “faith-science” issues, which were an integral part of my work in Tsukuba. (For those interested in the subject, see my website at www.konkyo.org). You can find additional information at the UMC and PCUSA websites: (<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/work/missionaries/>) and (<http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/profiles/boylet.htm>).

In addition to the 4 staff members of the BLC, several other persons are intimately involved in this ministry. Businessman Makoto Higashitani heads up the BLC management committee. He works for a very understanding and supportive company that allows him to take off work several days a month to devote himself to the goals of the BLC. This is a tremendous investment on his part for this ministry of Christ.

Rev. Kazuhiro Tanimoto heads up the activities committee, which meets regularly to plan out the activities of the BLC. Recovering from a



major stroke 2 years ago, he gave an inspiring message at the recent 25th anniversary celebration of the BLC, in which he de-

scribed some of his own experiences of discrimination as a child. He is the pastor of the Omi Heian Church in Shiga Prefecture, just north of Kyoto.

The committee itself includes 17 members in addition to the staff. The picture below is of the most recent meeting in November. Composed of both lay and clergy members of the Kyodan, the committee meets in various churches about 7 or 8 times per year.



2008 National Buraku Liberation Conference to be held in Okayama

The BLC holds a national conference every two years, with the next conference now in the planning stages. From June 9-11, representatives from around Japan will gather at the Kyodan Okayama Church to discuss Buraku Liberation as a mission issue under the theme “Recognizing Buraku Discrimination Within Myself: Its Connection to Liberation.”

The 2006 conference had to be cancelled for a variety of reasons (including difficulties resulting from director Sumihi’s untimely death), and as one aspect of that process, part of the discussion dealt with the posture the BLC should take in the future. It is with great seriousness that we address this issue as well prepare for the 2008 conference. Please remember this important conference in your prayers. The conference is open to anyone who would like to attend and so please consider joining with us if you can.

The Cross and Crown of Thorns Symbol

The Buraku Liberation Center has traditionally used two versions of the symbol of the cross together with the crown of thorns, both of which appear on the cover of CwT. The small version with the crown seen edge on placed at the bottom of the cross is, perhaps, a bit difficult to figure out for someone viewing it for the first time. Imagining myself looking at it for the first time, without knowing what it represented and out of its context as a symbol for the Buraku Liberation Center, the first image that

popped into my mind was that of a barbed wire barricade in front of the cross to prevent people from going to the cross! Ouch! I hope no one ever actually interpreted it that way. That is the exact opposite of what the Church, as the Body of Christ, is called to do. But how often, I wonder, do marginalized people perceive our churches in that fashion — as unwelcoming places? We are simply called to bring fellow sinners to Jesus, who wore that crown of thorns and gave his life for all on that cross.

He is the one who does the transforming renewal in each of us. It is not we trying to remake others into our own preferred image, but God working in each of us to transform us into the image of Christ.



“Kyudan” Denunciation

糾弾

The Japanese term, “kyudan”, written with the characters shown above, is a term that refers to an important tool in the struggle against buraku discrimination. It has typically been translated into English as “denunciation,” but that unfortunately gives non-Japanese unfamiliar with the process the impression that “kyudan” is an angry confrontation where someone accused of discriminatory actions is shouted down and severely criticized — where they are “denounced.” Something like that may indeed happen on occasion, but in principle, a “kyudan” session is not intended to be like that at all.

The initial purpose of “kyudan” is to first determine the facts of what actually transpired — who said what or did what to whom when and for what reason. Once that is determined, the purpose then shifts to getting the accused to realize the harm and pain that his or her actions caused. Ideally, this leads to a change in behavior, so that similar discriminatory actions are not repeated. Likewise, depending on the nature of the

case, some sort of compensation may also be in order.

This understanding of “kyudan” can be seen in the meanings of the two Chinese characters that make up the word. The first character, has the meaning of “investigate, verify, ascertain” — in other words, to determine the facts of the case. The second character has a wide range of meanings depending on context, including “bullet” and “plucking a stringed instrument.” But it also means “bounce” and “encourage, animate,” and so if we understand it in this rather positive sense, “kyudan” can be understood to mean, “getting to the truth of the matter and encouraging changed behavior.”

So what term should we use in English to translate this Japanese term? I would suggest that the term “conscientization” would be closer to the intent of the Japanese term, at least within the context of its use in combating buraku discrimination. Its purpose is to raise awareness and encourage non-discriminatory attitudes and behavior.