

Annual Report of

The Orthodox Presbyterian Japan Mission 2007

“They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable.....Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.”

Ps. 82;5,8

“Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all people.....Say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns;’...He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.” Ps. 96:1-3, 10, 13

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” Is. 52:7

It is our privilege as a part of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to be partnered in the glorious work of bringing the Gospel to the nation of Japan that the Lord might be glorified. Japan is truly a nation that walks in darkness. Social, political, and economic unrest have marked the past year in Japan. The Chinese character chosen to sum up the year 2007 in Japan was “Gi” meaning “False”. Scandals, fabrications, pirated goods, sudden resignations by top officials, deceptions, bribery, and the like have brought great distrust and insecurity as the people feel deceived. But there is no greater problem than those created by the self-deception that all is well with the gods as long we keep trying to do good. Suicide claimed more than 30,000 lives again. Depression is overwhelming with thousands of school children staying home and adults absent from work. Toyota company in Nagoya has a by-word among its employees, ‘Who’s next?’, which is a way of asking who is the next to commit suicide. Such pressure and inner fears collide in the hearts of many who take this tragic way out of what appears to be an endless tunnel. Toyota was voted the number one company in the country for its success and worldwide influence in the global economy. At what price? There is much paranoia in this great land of the rising sun.

At the church planting institute conference the Cummings attended in November the statistics for Japan as a nation were quite grim-- 0.44% Christian at present and declining. There were several ‘success’ stories among some ‘house church’ and charismatic groups, but on the whole the membership has declined as the older generation brought to Christ in the 1950's and ‘60's is dying with little influx among the younger people. Both the RCJ and PCJ denominations showed a decline in membership despite several churches showing a marked increase. So the challenge is set before us and our Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ to reach Japan for Christ, that “ALL nations shall serve Him”.

Personnel:

The year 2007 began with three Mission families, Lauers, Yaegashis, and Cummings, two co-operating families, Ogatas from the Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ) and the Murray Uomoto family from the Dakotas Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and one missionary

associate, Miss Melissa Withington, from Pilgrim OPC in Raleigh, NC. The Yaegashis went on a two month home assignment from Feb-April. Messrs. Cummings and Uomoto filled in for Mr. Yaegashi. The Lauers began a 10 month furlough in April. God has blessed us with unity of purpose in seeking to establish His glory in the land through planting Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

Lauers on the move:

In March of 2007 Mr. Lauer completed 9 years of teaching at Kobe Reformed Theological Seminar and his 4th term (5 years) in Japan—prior to his 10 month furlough. As a result of a new president being installed at the seminary, the mission was not asked to renew his contract as a full-time faculty member for a 5th time. The Mission was presented with a variety of options for Mr. Lauer's 'new' assignment, as many requests were made for his ministry. Anticipating his return in Feb. 2008 the Mission determined that Mr. Lauer would serve primarily as co-operating missionary evangelist at the Kita [North] Numazu RCJ Chapel, and do some part-time teaching at three seminaries: RCJ Eastern Presbytery's Tokyo Reformed Theological Institute, the Kobe Theological Hall (RPC Japan Presbytery), and KRTS. God greatly blessed his faithful, rigorous teaching at the KRTS and his extended ministry in the Western Presbytery. Many students attested to his thoroughness of preparation and faithfulness to the inerrant and infallible Word of God. A goodly number of these students are now pastors in the RCJ. We ask the Lord's blessing upon this new endeavor in Numazu where they have been without a pastor for 1 1/2 years. Pray that a strong, presbyterian and reformed congregation will be established for the glory of God in this city some 70 miles southwest of Tokyo and just south of Mt. Fuji.

Before returning to the U.S. in April, Mr. Lauer was busy lecturing not only at KRTS but also did a series of lectures at the Covenanters' Kobe Theological Hall, a one day seminar on Biblical Hermeneutics for the Tohoku Presbytery pastors, and—along with the former president—gave a farewell lecture at the KRTS. That lecture has since been published in the Japanese journal Reformed Theology under the title "Biblical Hermeneutics in the Church Fathers and the Westminster Confession: Their Development and Two Examples." The lecture had been publicized widely and was well attended. Pray that God will continue to use the Lauers in bringing the light of the Gospel into this dark land.

Yaegashis in Yamagata:

2007 marked the Yaegashis' first 30 years of ministry in Yamagata. Mr. Yaegashi has continued his multi-faceted ministry in this prefectural capital city of 240,000 people. As the only presbyterian and reformed congregation in the whole prefecture it is very strategically located, poised to serve a much larger region than the city itself. Kaz (as we know him) has continued his part-time tent-making ministry, of teaching Bible at the 'mission' school, pre-marital and marital counseling as part of a wedding ministry among the evangelical pastors in the area, and his full-time ministry as the missionary-evangelist at the Yamagata chapel. He writes:

Yamagata Chapel's weekly average worship attendance of 16 people in 2006 has been raised to that of 21 people in 2007. We are very thankful for the faithful prayers of both the PCA Mississippi Valley Presbytery and the OPC churches for this little chapel that has seen so much of God's rich blessing.

As of early summer 2007 five seeking families have come to Yamagata Chapel: Mr. and Mrs. Tokairin with their 3 children, Mr. and Mrs. Yarimizu with their 2 children, Mrs. Murakata and her daughter, Mr. Nagasawa with his 2 children, and Mrs. Tamaki with her younger brother. The Nagasawas did not continue due to feeling the need to work on Sundays, but the other families are continuing.

Out of the seekers, there are a few who seem to be ready to profess their faith before long. Mrs. Murakata is already a believer, but her hospital duties which keep her from attending church most Sundays cause her to doubt her fitness and delay her public confession and baptism. Mrs. Tamaki, whom Mr. Yaegashi led away from the Jehovah's Witnesses to true faith in Christ in 2006, began coming to church in January, 2007, and is continuing faithfully since. Through many recent trials surrounding her family, she realizes that Jesus is the only One who can adequately deal with her problems and now wants to prepare for baptism. Each of these is a cause of rejoicing and a great encouragement to the Yamagata Chapel in being God's light.

Another great encouragement is that Dr. Yamamoto (one of the few men in the congregation) has expressed a strong desire to get ready for becoming an elder of Yamagata Chapel. This is a positive step toward making this chapel a strong, established local church. We praise the Lord that Dr. Yamamoto is rededicating his life for Christian service in this way. The number of children in the Sunday School at Yamagata Chapel has increased from 3 in 2006 to 7 in 2007. While it is a wonderful blessing to have this many children in the church (ages 4-13), Mrs. Yaegashi now needs an assistant and eventually a successor to help her with teaching them.

Katie Yaegashi was invited in the fall of 2007 by Sendai Megumi Church to speak again on rearing children. The talk encouraged many in the audience. As a result one of the Christian mothers (as well as a former evangelistic English class mother at Megumi Chapel, a believer away from church for decades) have begun studying the Bible and Westminster Shorter Catechism in earnest with Tsuruko Uomoto.

God continues to bless this ministry in many unforeseen ways in the midst of the realities of this dark land.

Cummings in and around Sendai:

Mr. Cummings continued his diverse ministry as he worked co-operatively with various churches, chapels and pastors in the presbytery while seeking to reach out among the unreached in Japan. Community centers, shopping malls, coffee shops, libraries and train rides have all provided opportunities to engage people in conversation, introduce Christ, and establish relationships with people who as yet walk in darkness. Participating in the annual Messiah Chorus has resulted in a Bible study with the senior journalist of the largest regional newspaper (500,000 subscribers). A class at a community center has opened up doors with four 'senior' men who share the loneliness of growing old and the fears of death. 'I do not have any family, so I do not have anyone to love.'; 'We just had three funerals in our neighborhood, and I do not know how to prepare for death.' We are among people of all ages who walk in darkness.

The work among the youth in the presbytery as been very encouraging. With the

leadership of Pastors Yoshioka and Tateishi three all day rallies and two nights three days mini camps were held again this year. Over the past year four young men and one young woman made professions of faith. One of the men Mr. Cummings had baptized as an infant and two others had been youth in his ministry at the Kita Nakayama Chapel. Praise God for a new generation of believers growing up in the churches.

Other outreach among youth and children is carried out at the Sendai Church and the Watari and Megumi chapels. Children come for songs, Bible stories, catechism, crafts, games and refreshments as the children of darkness are brought into the light of the Gospel. Over the year the numbers have increased at each place and new contacts have been made among unchurched families. At the Sendai Church, where Mrs. Cummings teaches cooking as well, the numbers have grown from four to eighteen participants outside of the participating and helping church members. God is breaking down barriers and stirring up the hearts of those who walk in darkness. Mr. Cummings also speaks twice a month at the chapel service of the 1700 member all boys Tohoku Gakuin jr.-sr. high school.

Mrs. Cummings has a very fruitful ministry among many international women (Japanese included), and students throughout the Sendai area. Her international women's Bible class has ladies from Mexico(Catholic), Sri Lanka(Buddhist), Zimbabwe, Korea, China, and four Japanese. After six years of study and resisting becoming a Christian, Mrs. Oh, the Chinese woman, professed her faith in Jesus and hopes to be baptized. Chie (Japanese) was in our children's club some 25 years ago and now is earnestly seeking to know God. Each lady is a story of God's work in process. Seven to 10 students from Edie's class at the Catholic university have come to our youth night at Megumi Chapel for Bible study and fellowship. God is at work as we sow the seed widely through our many contacts.

There are now 5 chapels in the presbytery that are without pastors so there is a great need to be shepherding these weak flocks as well. Sendai Church has the oversight of two of these chapels and is moving to call a co-operating Korean missionary now serving a Korean flock in Osaka. However, the OPC Mission is committed to developing strong presbyterian and reformed congregations and is eager to assist in the shepherding of these flocks. Messrs. Yaegashi, Cummings, and Uomoto work together with the presbytery in feeding and caring for these flocks.

Dakota Presbytery's Missionaries, the Uomotos, in Sendai

The year 2007 marked the 10th anniversary of Megumi Chapel. In 1997 Murray and Tsuruko Uomoto along with Katsunori Endo and his wife began meeting in the Uomoto residence. Mr. Endo and his wife left for Kobe and eventually he has become a pastor in the "Covenanter" RPCNA Japan Presbytery. Missionary associate Scott Johnson came and left and now is an OPC pastor in Wasilla, Alaska. Many people have come and gone but Megumi Chapel still remains as a testimony of light in the northern part of Sendai, a city of some 1,100,000 with barely 3,000 believers in Christ. In the past two years the average attendance has increased 20%. 2007 saw two new members added--one by letter of transfer and the other by re-affirmation of faith.

The chapel is blessed with the part-time ministry of Rev. Ogata as a co-operating evangelist. He works part-time at secular work as he and his wife give care to their aged parents. Rev. Uomoto was duly called and installed by the Presbytery of the Dakotas in January and is

laboring among the spiritually and physically oppressed people the Lord has placed in their paths. Monthly neighborhood flyer and tract distribution and outreach among children and young adults give an outward face to the chapel. Keep praying that God will bless the children's ministry and that the many visitors will join with us in professing Christ to the world. Mr. Uomoto writes:

Two decades of missionaries and MA's teaching English conversation at the nearby "mission high school" is bearing fruit. Our chapel/home is a 3 minute drive up the hill from Tohoku Gakuin University and Tsutsujigaoka High School's Izumi Campus with around 6000 students. Almost fifty high school students (including repeaters) attended services in 2008 as part of their religion class homework. The high school allowed Pastors Cummings, Ogata and myself (aided at times by Tsuruko) to pass out Teen Time and evangelistic service flyers--inside the main gate—but only to those headed toward the high school. They place our posters on the bulletin board. The college does not allow any religious groups to pass out flyers on campus. But in 2007, it did allow Messrs. Cummings, Ogata and me to bring the 10 a.m. chapel message 6 times to one to four hundred students. A coed attended our service once, as a result.

The Teen Time outreach meets on odd numbered months; the Fun Time outreach to children and "parents," on even numbered months. Thus each month, about 1000 flyers with Scripture verses are distributed in the neighborhood, though mostly in mailboxes, as well as in front of the neighborhood Koyodai Elementary School on even numbered months.

Last June, Mr. Ogata and I began an adult Sunday School class on second Sundays after lunch, studying the Westminster Confession on the Doctrine of the Church. .

Session meetings and informal session meetings, sometimes twice a month, take time and energy. But how thankful we are for the plurality of gifts and eldership granted. Pastor Ogata's careful planning, having been moderator of Tohoku Presbytery a decade ago--keeps us on track.

In 2007 I had the opportunity to preach at other chapels—3 times in Yamagata to help Mr. Yaegashi on home assignment, twice at Fukushima Chapel, 4 times at Shiroishi Chapel, once at Kita Nakayama Chapel, plus once at Tsuruko's home church in Asahikawa in August.

In 2008, I will be preaching, the first Sundays, at Shiroishi Chapel's 3 p.m. service, to assist new RCJ supervising pastor, Mr. Sakamoto of Kita Nakayama Chapel, who replaced Eiko Chapel's Pastor Sato who retired last November. Shiroishi's chapel committee approved my suggestion of holding an after service prayer time when I preach. We began with 5, Feb. 3, including Tsuruko and me. Pray others will join. The three others were the faithful women attending Thursday prayer meetings, led by the wife of retired pastor Ishii. Tsuruko and I had the deep privilege of being the last visitors at Katta Hospital of longtime Shiroishi Chapel committee member Mr. Suzuki who went to be with his Lord the next day, Nov. 5. His wife preceded him, Jan. 14. Both, I believe, were the fruit of Heber McIlwaine and my father's meetings at the TB sanitarium in nearby Yamashita, a half century ago. I felt the weightiness of the privilege. They had come to Christ through the work of OP missionaries, and we OP missionaries had the privilege of reading Scripture and praying with him before his passing into glory. His clasp was firm though he could not talk. It is hard to think of the chapel without them. Non-Christian relatives testified of their love and faith.

We appreciate much the help of the Cummings and mission cooperating evangelist, Pastor Ogata and his wife. He works at a store as Megumi Chapel can provide only a \$500 honorarium monthly for all his labors. We pray earnestly for their adult non-communicant son and daughter who now rarely attend services. We appreciate greatly Pastor Ogata's mother as well as Mr. Ishihara being formerly added to our numbers, in June.

In 2007, at Pastor Ogata's urging, to renew an OP presence, I attended many classes offered by the Reformed Theological Institute, Sendai branch, meeting, Mondays, at East Sendai Church and, Fridays, at Sendai Church, and also attended planning meetings. Pastor Yoshida of

Sendai Church and present Tohoku Presbytery moderator heads the Sendai branch. He is teaching on Reformer Martin Bucer's view on the Church; Pastor Sakamoto, on Christian counseling; Pastor Yoshioka, on the Church; Pastor Kando, on Vos and Biblical Theology; and Pastor Tateishi, on the Confession. Mr. Ogata plans to teach on the Westminster Assembly. I was asked if I would like to teach a class. I had to decline as I did not feel I had time to prepare (in Japanese) and I felt that many of the "bases were covered" by the indigenous church pastors. However, if they feel I could contribute by teaching a more familiar subject, e.g., from the Westminster standards, I may volunteer in the future. Each class meets just a few times a quarter.

As missionaries our focus is on pastoring, teaching and evangelism. We do not always report on non-evangelistic, but just as important, other aspects of our work. We have always had close ties with Japanese brethren. Attendance at general assemblies, presbytery, presbytery officers' meetings, theological lectures, ministeriums, Sendai area pastors' and church officers' meetings—do take time but is the other half of our work—helping build the church from the inside. In 2008, we look forward to deepening ties and continuing to work side by side with RCJ brethren.

Tsuruko prays for a successor—but laborers are few in a mission work. Among her tasks, she is chapel treasurer, gracious hostess, receptionist, evangelistic flyer designer, distributor, translation helper to missionaries, etc. We praise God. But after a year of labor, off and on, this February, the largest Evangelical publisher in Japan, Word of Life Press, will be publishing RC Sproul's second book translated into Japanese, Tsuruko's translation (with Murray's help) of "Saved From What?" A Christian bestseller in Japan is one that sells just a thousand or two books—so Christian translation work is essentially voluntary. But we pray the Lord will use the hard hitting book to strengthen His Church in Japan. A boyhood friend of Murray's and head of another mission organization, has said he'd like to use the book at a large Evangelical seminary in Japan. In the translator's postscript, Tsuruko mentions Sendai Megumi Chapel, the mission, the RCJ, and Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary. We pray this too will advertise the work of these organizations.

Pray for Tsuruko's once a month Saturday afternoon "Temple Daughters" (Murray's nickname) Bible study in her kitchen with about 3 to 5 young married and single women (including Melissa) from Sendai RCJ churches. They have gone through John Calvin's "Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life," etc. Pray also for Tsuruko's testimony to students and staff as she will be teaching two English classes, first semester only, at the Baptist Shokei University in Natori, an hour's drive south, and hopefully again at the related high school, downtown.

January 29, I was installed at a service at Sendai Church as a duly sent missionary of the OPC Presbytery of the Dakotas. Delegation members from the OPC Presbyteries of New Jersey, Ohio, Dakotas, as well as from the Ad Hoc Committee for the Support of the OPC Japan Mission participated. At the end of 2007, I edited and put together the 35 page Megumi Chapel 10th anniversary booklet with 45 color photos. We pray we may be able to put out an English translation, too. This was followed in January with the 22 page booklet for the chapel's annual congregational meeting, though this year, thankfully, there were 3 pastors to shoulder the project. In 2008, I pray we will soon be allowed to become again regular members of the mission.

Melissa Withington:

The Mission greatly appreciates the work of Miss Withington. She is very active in the youth ministries at the churches and in the presbytery. This has afforded her many opportunities to participate in Bible studies, follow-up with contacts made through English classes and be a friend to the lonely Christian ladies in the churches. We continue to plead that another

missionary associate might be sent to work alongside Melissa and the rest of the Mission. There are many, many opportunities to share the hope of Christ with those about us.

This is a dark land. Not unlike America it has gone after other gods. Mission colleges have closed their gates to proselytizing on campus. Community centers run scared to allowing religious organizations use their public facilities. Some Buddhist sects, The Divine Light, Moonies, JWs, Mormons, and other new religions have given people reason to be skeptical and frightened of religion. But they still are searching. Pray that the God of all grace might shed His love abroad through us. Pray that we might shine as lights in the midst of a dark and perverse world. May we be faithful in proclaiming the gospel of peace, calling men and women, boys and girls to the foot of the cross of our redeemer-king Jesus. Christ for Japan, Japan for Christ. May He reign throughout this land.

The Mission rejoices in the decision by the Foreign Mission Committee to 'discontinue its intermitting of the work in Japan'. We ask that more laborers be sent into this dark and needy land.

Respectfully submitted by the Japan Mission