

A historical note on Asian Rural Institute(ARI) and Nishinasuno Church

At an occasion of "welcome lunch" for
ARI Participants by Nishinasuno Church of UCCJ

ARI Sunday: May 26(Sun),

I. The relationship between ARI and Nishinasuno Church.

a. Before ARI; South-East Asian Christian Rural Leader's Training Course: (SEAC-1960~72) of Rural Evangelical Theological Seminary(TRI) in Tsurukawa, Tokyo.

- Nishinasuno Church and late Rev. Haruo Fukumoto(former Nishinasuno Church pastor: 1957~97) had involved and participated the various programs of rural mission in Asia. He also got acquainted with SEAC programs and Dr. Toshihiro Takami, then SEAC director.
- During summer months, SEAC participants came to Nishinasuno Church for their study visit, rural survey, farm practise etc. every year.

b. Establishment of Asian Rural Institute in Nishinasuno, Tochigi(ARI: 1973~)

- In 1973, SEAC program was moved to Nishinasuno, Tochigi-prefecture, present location changed its name to ARI, Asian Rural Leader's Training Course. Nishinasuno Church(Rev.Fukumoto) fully supported the establishment of the institute. Since various supports and intimate relationship had been maintained between SEAC and Nishinasuno Church for more than ten years, Therefore, the location of new training program site of ARI was decided in Nishinasuno. The church sent Rev. Fukumoto as an Executive Standing Board member and associate director in financial management and some other church related local members involved the establishment of the institute.
- Rev. Fukumoto and the church has helped to bring about the resources locally available especially business people both inside and outside of the church.

c. Relationship between ARI and local churches.

- After ARI started its training program in Nishinasuno, the Tochigi district of UCCJ has started the ARI Sunday programs(in June). Nishinasuno

- church has coffee hour and fellowship lunch every month too.
- service for the the worship service to have better communication. The Church also practses ARI Sunday in every month to invite the participants for the message and fellowship. The church provides English interpreting
- Ms. Miae Park, former staff member of ARI(1994~02) and a missionary from the Presbyterian Church of Korea is now the pastor of Nishinasuno Church and seeking even close relationship with ARI.

II. The programs and activities of the church.

a. What is Nishinasuno Church?

- Historically speaking, Nishinasuno Church has a root of the Methodist church and established in this town in 1893, over 108 years ago. During world war II, the church joined to Kyodan(The United Church of Christ in Japan-UCCJ) in 1941 and became a member of Kanto Parish.
- The UCCJ is the largest protestant church in Japan-some 1,700 churches and approximately 200,000 members. The UCCJ is member of National Christian Council(NCC), Christian Conference of Asia(CCA), and World Council of Churches(WCC) and some other church affiliation.
- As already mentioned, our present pastor since last April is Ms. Park. The church is govern and managed by elected members of council. The total adult member is 80 and 13 members are living outside of this district (Tochigi). There are also about 20 visiting members including some non Japanese members. We have over 13 million yen budget which comes from the offerings.

b. The programs and activities

- The church has a motto for this year(April-March); 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control' (Galatian 5:22~23).
- There are regular church service and meetings such as; sunday worship service(10:30 a.m. on sunday), church school(sunday school) for kindergarten class through high school, bible study(Thursday morning), English

bible reading meeting(Tuesday morning), prayer meeting(Wednesday morning and evening) etc. There are age and gender groups, such as youth, women, adult men. You will be most welcome to any of these meetings and groups.

- There are also 8-committees including mission, evangelism and church music, social concerns and service, international exchange and fellowship who sponsored fellowship like today's.
- The church participates various responsibilities and duties of Tochigi district(17 churches) and Kanto parish(147 churches). There are also many different kind of activities led by an individual member of the church and a group according to the needs and interests of the community. There is Spanish speaking congregation worshiping in this church every Sunday afternoon recently.
- There are several organizations affiliated to the church beside ARI who has very close relationship such as Nishinasuno kindergarten, Elm sheltered workshop for handicapped person, Nasu YMCA, Gideon club etc.

III. Invitation to Nishinasuno Church program and activity.

We, as members of the church are extremely grateful to have you here in our midst coming next 10 months or so and beyond. We are also looking forward to see and to work together for you and our betterment of the entire community.

(May, 2002: Kikuchi)