

## What New Thing is Coming?

*If the one thing that is constant is change,  
this holds true for mission also.*



*In 1955 Presbyterians helped establish the Rokko Christian Student Center in Kobe, Japan to reach students in an area with several large schools.*

Dear Partners in Mission,

Often seeds sown mature and grow beyond our expectations. It's exciting to see this happen over many years as faithful followers begin one thing, and it changes and evolves into something new, something we haven't yet perceived. That's what has happened here in Kobe, just one stop on the train from where we live.

Isaiah said, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa. 43:19) Perceiving what's coming next is often a matter of faith not sight... "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1)

I attended a celebration at the Student Center recalling past achievements and visions of things yet to come. What's behind this? I believe it was the willingness of leaders to change.

Presbyterians began serving in the area around Kobe in 1897 and by 1907 Kobe Theological Seminary opened, which later changed its name to Central Theological Seminary.

Several of the seminary graduates went on to establish eleven self-sufficient churches. However, with the establishment of the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Seminary was closed in 1941. Things changed; missionaries were repatriated.

Then things changed again after the war. Presbyterians helped establish the "Rokko Christian Student Center" to reach youth through Bible studies, English worship classes, choirs, plays, and Latin classes. More than three hundred students registered over ten years.

Things changed again. Presbyterians transferred the activities of the center to the United Church of Christ in Japan, in hopes that revitalization would take place by providing a place for more activities, including larger accommodations to hold seminars. The hope was to host seminars by inviting youth to participate, and by creating a place for dialogue with the youth in the church.

In the 1960's change was blowing in the wind in many universities here. The student center continued to hold seminars with the awareness that they were providing a place to listen, discuss, and learn.

Growth brought more change. As the number of students increased, the meeting hall needed to be remodeled and expanded, and housing was also needed. Presbyterians helped by donating land. The purpose of expanding the building was not only to host more activities, but also to facilitate their becoming self-sufficient. The building included income-generating condominiums, rental housing, stores, and parking.

To become self-supporting a Kobe Student Youth Center Foundation was established. When the opening of the new "Kobe Student Youth Center" was held in 1972, the center had a new look. The housing section was named: "New Life."

Today the Kobe Student Youth Center continues to hold seminars, has a library, provides rooms for cultural activities,

Korean language studies, classes on Christianity, organic farming, and environmental issues.

Some who carried the mantle over the years have been integral to these changes and came back to see.



*Ms. Kazu Nishiyama (center) attended the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration since the center became independent. Still spry with a twinkle in her eyes, she began serving with Japan Mission in 1954!*



*At the celebration Mr. Park Soon-Yong shared how as a Korean he first came to Japan as a fisherman but couldn't speak Japanese. Now he is the Director of the Center.*

### What's Next?

The Center will collaborate with *Women's Net Kobe* to create a new "model of mutually beneficial living" for the next generation of women to secure affordable housing, find employment, and receive support and education.





*Ms. Reiko Masai shares the vision for entering this new phase of mission with and for women.*

Thank you for being a part of the changes: past, present, and yet to come. Thank you for supporting Presbyterian mission efforts through your gifts and prayers. Please continue to pray for our partners here in Japan who faithfully bear witness through compassion and care for those on the margins.

Behold! By God's grace change comes; new things sprout forth.

Grateful to serve,

David and Sue Hudson