

JAPAN ALLIANCE CHRIST CHURCH  
105TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION  
YOKOHAMA DECLARATION

“TO SERVE JAPAN AND ASIA AND THE WORLD IN THE 21ST CENTURY”

We, the Japanese Alliance Christ Church, together with all our believers, on the occasion of our 105th anniversary, inheriting the spirit of the first missionaries, reasserting under the permission of God the “yesterday,” “today,” and “tomorrow” of our mission, facing the 21st century, we make the following declaration before God.

1. The history of the Japan Alliance Christ Church opened with the arrival in Yokohama on November 23, 1891 (Meiji 24) of 15 missionaries of the North American Scandinavian Alliance Mission which was founded by Frederick Franson and his colleagues.

2. It cannot be said that the time in which the missionaries arrived was a propitious time for evangelism. It was a time when with the promulgation of the “Great Japan Imperial Constitution” in 1889 (Meiji 22), the “Rescript on Education” in 1890 (Meiji 23), and the like, the central foundation of the Meiji state was being established, western thought was being rejected, and regression to nationalist ideology was being strengthened. In spite of this, the missionaries, burning with zeal, headed toward hitherto unevangelized areas all over Japan where other denominations had not entered: the Izu Peninsula, the Boso (Chiba) Peninsula, Hida, and Ainu territory. In those days evangelism in unevangelized areas entailed great hardship and persecution in life or death situations. It required strong faith and patience and many years until the foundation of the mission could be secured. Nevertheless, the missionaries overcame all kinds of obstacles, endured hardships, labored in the work of evangelism and service, and built the foundation of churches in each area.

The Japan Alliance Christ Church (Nihon Domei Kirisuto Kyodan) inherits that spiritual legacy and mission foundation to this day.

3. After that, among the missionaries the birth of the Nissui (Swedish-Japanese) Alliance Christ Association was seen, and the Japan Alliance Christ Association was formed in 1922 (Taisho 11). During the war, with the enforcement of the “Religious Associations Law” the The United Church of Japan (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan) was founded in 1941 (Showa 16) and (the Domei) was amalgamated into Section 8 (of that body). After the war some of these churches decided to separate from the Japan Christ Church, and reformed as the Japan Alliance Christ Church (Nihon Domei Kirisuto Kyodan) in 1949 (Showa 24).

4. Looking back, during the war, especially during the “Showa 15 year war” (1931-1945) our denomination was unable to repudiate the idolatry problem caused by State Shinto making the emperor (Tenno) a living god (Arahitogami); on the contrary we accepted this as national observation, and we were unable to completely obey the first and second commandments of the Decalog “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.” Further we were not able to live positively as peacemakers with the churches of neighboring countries, but supported the efforts of the nation in colonization and wars of aggression and cooperated in the invasion of the Asian region. Thus we committed the sins of invasion and coercing idolatry in the sight of God and neighbor, particularly our Asian neighbors. However even after the war

we did not notice these facts and lived for the most part in a state of insensitivity which did not lead to repentance.

Looking back on the history of our denomination during the over 100 years of history of modern Japan, we, clergy and laity, confess before the Lord and repent of the fact that we were unable to continually obey God's Word, "the only absolute rule of faith and practice," and sincerely beg the forgiveness of God and our neighbours. Henceforth we earnestly desire to stand firmly on the principles of Bible faith, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be transformed into a church of Christ bearing a reality worthy of the gospel.

5. We, standing on the threshold of the historic milestone of the 21st century, are honored to inherit the excellent spiritual legacy of the pre-war/post-war missionaries which was characterized by "mission based on a worldwide vision," "a passion for soul-winning that grudges no sacrifice," and "cooperation in mission which is not caught up in denomination building." We inscribe deeply upon our hearts the pious faith attitude shown in the motto of Frederick Franson "Constant, conscious communion with Christ." Further we resolve to succeed to the missionary spirit of the early missionaries who sank their plowshares into difficult pagan soil and dared to aim at unevangelized territory.

6. Looking back on 105 years of mission, the calling and being of our denomination is to live resolutely for the gospel mission. Furthermore, (our calling) is, by the unity and cooperation of every church, living in the hope of Christ's second coming, receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, aspiring to holy lives, to go forth into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature until the end of the world.

In the area of home missions we will fulfill our calling in an age when the country is again starting to tread a dangerous road, aware of our mission as a sentry entrusted to us by the Lord, to persevere in the "120 million

men for Christ campaign". In the area of foreign missions we will, in response to the "Macedonian call," fulfill the call to world missions in this age of world-wide, inter-ethnic disintegration and turmoil and poverty. For this purpose, by rechecking and revitalizing organizations and agencies within the denomination, we will further refurbish the personal, family, local church, and denominational structure for mission.

Our prayer as we face the mission of the 21st century is, fixing our eyes on Japan, Asia, and the world, rejoicing that we can hold in common the gospel with the people of God worldwide, not minding sacrifice, to become a flock that is burning and shining in evangelism.

We of the Japan Alliance Christ Church, clergy and laity, before God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, hereby so resolve and thus declare our aspiration for a fresh start and a new advance.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14)

November 19, 1996  
Mission 21 Yokohama

(訳・R. シェード)