

# News from Nihon\*

\*Nihon or Nippon is the Japanese way of saying Japan.

October brought cooler temperatures and slow, albeit clear signs of fall in Kumamoto. I have been focused on language learning as I think it would add to the richness of my life as well as make me a better ALT (assistant language teacher).

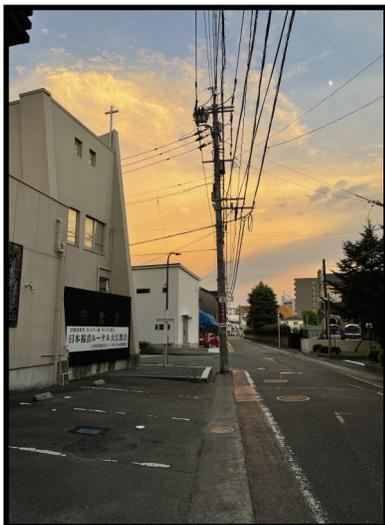
There are two main events that have taken up significant time this month. The first is the celebration of the 100th anniversary of my church, Ooe Church at Brown Chapel at Kyushu Gakuin. The second is the school festival that took place just this weekend. The anniversary service and celebration was delayed a year due to coronavirus and the school festival had not taken place for the past couple of years, also due to coronavirus.



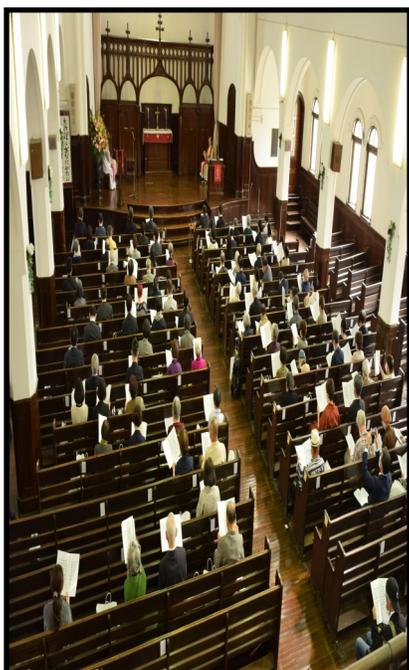
Kyugakusai or the school festival took place on a Saturday. In the days leading up to the festival, the students decorated and planned shops in their classrooms. My students (first year high school students) mainly had photo spots and games in their classrooms. The second year students had food booths outside. Third year students either got to attend for fun or were busy doing other things that day.

Due to coronavirus, attendance was limited to five tickets a student, but there were a lot of people and everyone seemed to have great fun. I was amazed by all the of talent and creativity that came out of the students during this event.

Ooe Kyokai (Church)



Brown Chapel



At the anniversary service, we were given a book with the 100-year history of Ooe Church, edited by Pr. Morita in consultation with church records, including the 70-year history that had been previously written down. I am only going to give you a brief summary of the complex and storied history of the church. My main hope is that you will get a sense for the depth and breadth of the community of which I am currently a part. Also, I am doing my best to summarize information that I had to put into a translator first, so please forgive any mistakes that might occur.

Ooe Church was born out of Kyushu Gakuin School and was officially organized on February 14, 1921 with its first service being held on March 6 of that year. The first pastor was a missionary who had been teaching at Kyushu Gakuin for the previous 6 years.

The 70-year church history acknowledges that the church was extremely easy to form, which was seen as both a privilege and a drawback, as they did not experience the hardships and efforts of missionary work with its formation. The composition of its members has not changed much to this day, with many members continuing to have some connection to the school.

The church's name was changed to Ooe Church from Kyushu Gakuin Church in 1936 during a period of urban growth and development. The book recounts a complicated history for both the church and the school as they tried to survive during WWII. For a period of time, the Ooe Church was merged into Kumamoto Church and in 1947, the decision was made to reform Ooe Church as a separate entity.

As far as the church building goes, the General Assembly of the Church approved a grant for construction in 1958, but the site was not acquired until 1965. Construction began in June 1961 and the building was inspired by the shape of Noah's Ark.

The other piece of history that struck me as I was trying to work my way through the translation of the book is the church has had 20 pastors throughout the years. Pr. Morita is the current pastor and he began serving Ooe Church in 2020. The chapter on the church's history is followed by a chapter looking at their mission towards 200 years as well and then chapters on other people who have been connected to the church.

### Prayer Requests

- ◇ For the people around me who are experiencing health challenges.
- ◇ For my ongoing language learning. I've dealt with feelings of isolation and facing limitation in my ability to communicate with those around me. Some days it doesn't bother me at all; other days, it does.