

Vision of Praise

February 2025

From the editor

The year 2025 is the year to pray for peace together with heavenly hosts. For this issue, we would like to share the testimony of the redeeming love of Christ, "We Bet Our Life In Christ" by Hatsuki Kijima, a staff worker in Ashiya. May peace of God who made heaven and earth be done in you, in your family and on the earth!

We Bet Our Life In Christ

Hatsuki Kijima

Seeking for Christ's Healing

My husband was a Japanese cook. He had a dream of owning a restaurant in the US. In 1981, after we got married, we moved to California and opened a Japanese restaurant. Everything was going well, but he started to drink alcohol at work.

As a Christian, I took every Sunday off and brought him to church. He got baptized after a few years, so I was happy, thinking "He definitely will stop drinking." However, he started drinking more. He got arrested due to DUI again and again, and I was angry and sad every day. My only wish was that he would stop drinking!

One day, my church friend told me about Pastor Peter. She said, "A pastor from Philadelphia is coming. He has a gift of healing. Go and see him and ask him to pray for your husband." I thought this would be our last chance. If

nothing happens, I would go back to Japan with my son. I decided to gamble on this meeting. It was 1988, our 6th year in the US.

When Pastor Peter prayed for us for the first time, he started the prayer saying, “Thank you, Lord.” I was amazed that he first thanked Him for such a terrible situation. I didn’t feel Jesus for a long time but I suddenly felt His presence. “Jesus is here. I want to feel and know Jesus what Pastor Peter knows.” A desire to know Him grew in me.

After meeting Pastor Peter, he wrote to us from Philadelphia. In the letter he said, “Now your husband, Hiro, is addicted to alcohol, but have an image that he is healed and lives in joy. And pray, thanking God for your drunken husband. This is Christ’s prescription. If you do all this and nothing happens, you can throw the Bible in the trash.” I was surprised! I had never heard such a radical prescription of thanksgiving. I thought I was cornered in the dead end, but suddenly a way opened up before me.

I started the praise gathering at my house even when Pastor Peter returned to Philadelphia. It was the opening day of the praise gathering on Thanksgiving day in 1989, I received a phone call and found that my husband was incarcerated for 9 months due to repeated DUI. I was shocked, but I can now say that the Lord was with me and protected me with the praises and prayers of the body of Christ. For the first time in forever, I was able to spend Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year with my 2-year-old son in peace. Every week, I visited my husband in jail.

I was worried to see him, but he looked better physically and spiritually as he was without alcohol. It was the most restful time for my family.

At the time, Pastor Peter often quoted Romans 8:28.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

(Romans 8:28 NASB)

One day, my husband was praying in the jail, and heard a voice:

Take a step forward just as you are.

I will make you God's glory.

He met Christ again. Seeing my husband in peace, I believed with much hope that he would never repeat the same mistake.

Take a New Step Forward

But the Lord's scenario was totally different from man's thought. After serving his sentence, my husband started working at a Japanese restaurant. He ended up being fired from all 7 restaurants due to his alcohol problem. There was nowhere for us to go. After discussing, we decided to relocate from California to New Jersey in order to attend Kohitsuji no Mure worship service. It was to follow the Lord's desire, "Take a step forward just as you are." We sold everything and only had a Toyota Van when we left. After arriving in New Jersey, we decided to

serve the Lord and received a training to be a staff workers in Kohitsuji no Mure.

During our 8 months in New Jersey, we attended worship services and gatherings, and my husband was able to distance himself from drinking. And then, we returned to Japan and held house gatherings in Tokyo for 3 years.

However, he started drinking again and ended up quitting God's worker. It was around Thanksgiving in 1999.

Around Thanksgiving in 2001, the year of 911 terror attacks in New York, my husband went to Chicago alone to work in a Japanese restaurant. He wanted to start all over as a cook and return to God's work ultimately.

But on the Thanksgiving in the following year, he suddenly started drinking, and in December 2002, had a heart attack and was taken to heaven. As I saw him in the coffin, he looked like he was taking a nap.

I felt relieved to see him in peace. I met him 4 days after he passed and the staff at the cemetery warned us about his state. I thought Jesus took him without suffering. When we had our last conversation, he was in tears, saying to me, "I cannot find it. No matter how hard I look I feel empty...." I said to him, "There is nothing to look for, because Jesus is with you. I heard the Church of the Wind would be built soon, so let's go there together and you can open a sushi restaurant there." He said, "I envy you. You have a place to go." I replied, "No, it's for the two of us." He then said with a more relaxed voice, "Please wait for one more week. I'll email you." These were his last words. It was a roller coaster marriage. He passed away suddenly

and his loss was difficult for me to accept. It took me 7 years to truly understand that the death on earth was not the end.

I Have Been Waiting

In the season of Thanksgiving in 2008, the Church of the Wind was completed in Ashiya Japan. When I entered the sanctuary of the Church of the Wind for the first time, to my surprise, I saw my husband, a bit embarrassed, together with many others, looking down on us from the ceiling. I almost lost myself, but eventually was comforted, knowing he was with Jesus. I instantly knew he became a God's worker in heaven. I felt my husband's pains, sadness, and regrets were all healed as if he were telling me, "Thank you for realizing there is life. We don't die even if we die on earth." When people on earth become aware of the people in heaven, the more they rejoice and will live in the Lord's desire. In heavenly praises, sadness, regrets, and even anger are reconciled by the cross.

The Lord's perfect redemption is done in all who returned to heaven and us on earth. My husband's death taught me that death truly is not the end and everyone continues to live in God's love.

*I have been waiting
for the time and the place
for the ones in heaven
to worship together with the ones on earth.*

(August 10, 2008)



The Sanctuary of the Church of the Wind

October 27, 2024

Kohitsuji no Mure Christian Church
3-25 Yoko-cho, Ashiya, Hyogo 659-0034 Japan
URL:<https://kohitsuji.com/english>