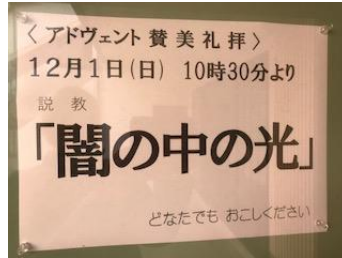




Worship outside on campus includes John 1:1-5 before we turn on the Christmas tree lights



Sermon theme (Light in the Darkness) for the Advent Praise Service at Ginya Machi Church, and the first Advent candle



**“The light shines in the darkness”
Nagasaki, Advent 2019**

Autumn was long and warm in Nagasaki, and it seems that winter and the Advent season have come on us very suddenly and together as we have entered December.

Our chaplain at Kwassui says that his theme for Christmas this year is the non-retaliatory attitude which leads to peace but which is impossible without God’s help. Mine is light, the light of hope, as I find myself dealing with various situations where there is despair and inability to cope with life. I find it helpful to stop and look at the lights, whether the flame of a single candle or the many lights of the Christmas trees, and remind myself that the season is really about the True Light who has come into the world. December is busy, so much so that the traditional name for December (i.e. not the pragmatic name, which is just “12th month” as you can see in the church notice pictured above) is Shiwase, (師走, “teacher” + “run”), implying that even the (lazy!) teachers are running... Not much chance of being lazy now until the winter break, but all too easy to be focused on what has to be done next instead of on receiving the light and trying to be light.

The last two pictures are after the first Advent morning worship on our Nursing Campus. When our Chancellor heard why I wanted pictures, he thought he and the organist should be included! We all need prayer.

The darkness has many forms, and there are many ways to “be” and “bring” light. MWiB have recently given an Empowerment Gift to HELP (House in Emergency of Love and Peace), an emergency shelter for women and children in Tokyo run as one of the activities of a Christian women’s organization called Kyofukai. This started from the influence of the Women’s Temperance Movement in America. However, the Japanese leaders felt that forced prostitution was a bigger problem here, and chose their name, which means “going against the wind”, to reflect their wider interest in women’s problems. Having met the (then) leaders when I first came to Japan, I was able to visit again for the first time in over 30 years with Steve Pearce and Thelma Commey (now the Youth President) who came to visit this summer, and I was impressed again by how their work provides a glimmer of hope for women whose circumstances have become very dark. The Empowerment Gift is very much appreciated.

And at Kwassui we celebrated our 140th anniversary on December 1st. We pray that we too can contribute to providing light for society and sharing the light of Christ in a dark world.

With best wishes,

Sheila

PS I will be in the UK on furlough Jan. 28 to Mar. 7 -- diary still has spaces!

