

Japan Membership Program

Two Japanese women

Five American women of varying ages

Pam Phillips-Burk – played by Harriet Ballow

Scene opens with two Japanese women discussing the upcoming General Assembly and Convention. They both have a list of names.

Japanese Woman #1: I am having three women visit my home; they are to be my “group” to introduce to my women’s ministry circle.

Japanese Woman #2: I am having two women from America visit with me. And they are very special!

Japanese Woman #1: Special? Why are they so special?

Japanese Woman #2: I’m not sure, but my letter says that they have *titles*.

Japanese Woman #1: Oh. You mean like “Mrs” or “Miss” or “Dr.”?

Japanese Woman #2: Well not exactly. I am not sure what they mean, but one is *perpetual*.

Japanese Woman #1: Let’s look up that word (says the word “perpetual” in Japanese). Hmm...it means something like going on forever....Hm...that is a strange title. What do you suppose that means as a title?

Japanese Woman #2: Oh my. Do you think it means that this woman is going to live forever...and she is very, very old? With lots of wrinkles? What do you suppose she will look like? Maybe she will be like Mt. Fuji, erupting continuously.

Both women giggle and continue to look at their list

Japanese Woman #1: It says here that there is a woman who is a “diamond”, a “patron”, a “silver,” and a “gold”. My goodness, these women from America surely have strange titles...and they must have lots of money in order to be titled as silver, diamond, and gold. Do you think they travel with all those jewels?

Japanese Woman #2: Well, I can’t wait to meet my guests. Maybe one of them will share their jewels with me!!!

Later that day Pam Phillips-Burk (Harriett Ballow) escorts the five American women to meet the two Japanese hosts. None of them look strange, but the Japanese women keep giving them sly glances and exchanging looks with each other. All are introduced by name and residence. Greetings and small talk are exchanged.

Japanese Woman #2: Rev. Phillips-Burk, you said these were *titled* ladies; where is the one like the volcano?

Pam: Like the volcano?

Japanese Woman #2: Yes, the perpetual one... the one who keeps going over and over and over (everyone looks confused until it hits Pam/Harriet)

Pam: Oh! You must mean the woman with the Perpetual membership.

Japanese Woman #1: Yes! Yes! We want to see her...and also the golden lady...none of these ladies look golden or sparkly like diamonds or silver.

Pam: Oh, no. There are no golden or diamond ladies. These are memberships that the American Cumberland Presbyterian Women present to their fellow members for special occasions; I'm sure that it must be very confusing. Maybe we can explain.

Perpetual Member: Last fall on Women's Ministry Sunday, my church paid \$30 American dollars to make me a perpetual member of Women's Ministry. This began in 1924 when Mrs. Eva Hughs sent 30 dollars to the board of Missions with instructions that only the interest was to be used to pay her dues each year for the rest of her life. In the States, those women who are active in their local Women's Ministry group pay dues or fees each year to help provide money for various activities and ministries of the group. That's where the term or title *perpetual* comes in.

Diamond Perpetual Member: In 2002, a new membership was added; this one for women who have served their church for at least 10 years. It is called the Diamond Perpetual membership, and although it is not shiny or set into a ring, it is highly prized by the women who receive it.

Patron: I became a Patron member when my region honored me after I had served three years as an officer. This \$100 donation can be made in honor of any woman, or man, who has worked to further the cause of missions in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It is a real honor to be given a Patron membership.

Silver Patron: It is hard for me to realize that I was eligible for a Silver Patron membership. This signifies that a woman has served in women's ministry for 25 years and was proposed by Mrs. Lucille Butler Convention President in 1994. She thought that there were many women who were active in the denomination, as well as their local churches, but would not be able to serve for 50 years. The silver patron membership is bestowed with a donation of \$125 American dollars.

Golden Patron: Well, obviously, I am the elder stateswoman of the group...but there are advantages to age. I have earned the privilege to have a Golden Patron membership bestowed on me for my fifty years of service to the Cumberland Presbyterian church. My women's group paid \$150 to the Board of Missions to have this honor presented to me on my birthday...and I won't tell which one! It seems like only yesterday when Beverly St John was Director of Women's Work, and I can't believe that Cornelia Swain has been retired for over five years and that Pam has been director that long. My! How time flies when you're having fun....and I always have fun with Cumberland Presbyterian Women - in any language!

Japanese Woman #2: This is so exciting! I want to have a title, too. It is such a worthy cause to give to. But tell me again WHERE the money goes when a membership is bestowed?

Pam: That's a very good question. All of the money goes into a special endowment and the interest earned is used to further missions around the world. It is used for missionary support, for new church development in Brazil or Laos. It is used to provide hot meals to children in Colombia. It is just amazing to think where ministry takes place because of this one endowment. Which, by the way, stands at over 1.6 million US dollar. I'm not sure just how much that would be in yen. These memberships or titles are a wonderful gift for your Cumberland Presbyterian friends. There is a fit for everyone and all these ladies certainly felt it was an honor.

Japanese Woman #1: Oh, yes. Let's hurry to our meeting. I want to be on time so that you can tell everyone in our circle how they can have special titles, too. This is so exciting! I can't wait to be golden! (or silver or whatever.)