

**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH ANNUAL
CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRY CONVENTION
A Mustard Seed Faith**

Tokyo, Japan

June 9, 10 & 12, 2008

Monday, June 9, 2008

Opening of Convention

The Convention opened at 10:00 a.m. at the Asao Citizens Hall in the Big Meeting Room, with a welcome and greetings by Convention President, Beverly Stott and her daughter, Roberta Smith, as interpreter.

The constituting prayer was given by Liliana Manzano of Cali, Colombia.

Beverly recognized the executive committee of the Japan Presbytery Women's Ministry for all their many hours of work in preparation for Convention. They were introduced as Keiko Nagaya, Michiyo Kokubu, Michiko Sesoko, Hideko Ushioda, Miyako Shibazaki.

The following announcements were made: 1) following the worship service there will be a group picture; 2) Tuesday afternoon will be the work trip – be sure to dress casually; 3) pins and cards are for sale at the back table; and 4) be sure to buy a ticket to win the African quilt.

Convention Worship and Celebration

The worship service opened with the "Call to Worship" led by Beverly Stott, Convention President. The hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth" was sung. Music was led by the music ministry team - Naoko Sarasawa and Momoyo Kokubu. The prayer of confession was in unison, followed by the words of assurance. The Convention hymn "Little is Much When God is In It" was sung. The prayer of illumination was voiced. Special music was offered by Momoyo Kokubu, organist. The scriptures Philippians 2: 1-2 and Matthew 13: 31-32 were read followed by prayer.

Beverly Stott brought the message. God led her to speak about her own faith journey beginning at birth until the present moment. When she was four or five years old she would sit under the table while the women quilted and talked. God was already preparing her to be a missionary. By the summer of 1951 when she was 15 years old, she was sure she would attend Bethel College. The next year after she entered Bethel College, Melvin D. Stott, Jr. (Buddy) entered also. They only had one class together, but God was leading and directing their path. In 1956, he asked her to marry him. They were married in 1957. God blessed them with two sons. In the second year of seminary, Buddy became very sick. He fought God about becoming a missionary, but eventually became a missionary candidate. Soon after this decision their third son was born. In November of 1963 he received a call from the Board of Missions to go to Japan as a missionary. After they were in Japan, their daughter was born, and she interpreted for her mother during this meeting of Convention. Beverly went on to share how God had been

busy in their lives, all of their lives planting seeds of faith. She talked about how those seeds have bloomed into a beautiful expression of God's kingdom in Japan Presbytery today. There were lots of laughter and tears as Beverly delivered her moving message.

Following the message, Beverly invited the congregation to stand and affirm their faith together in their own languages (the worship bulletin was printed in both English and Japanese).

Beverly introduced the Convention Offering by introducing Kevin Henson, director of the Cumberland Presbyterian Children's Home in Denton, Texas. He brought greetings from Texas and recognized Joy Wallace, a member of the Board of Trustees at the Home. Kevin made a presentation to the Japanese Women's Ministry on behalf of the Children's Home. He told them that these small tokens would remind them that others around the world are praying for them. They were presented to Keiko Nagaya, president of the Japan Cumberland Presbyterian Women's Ministry, who accepted the gift on behalf of the women. The offering was received and will go to *Single Parent Family Therapy at the Cumberland Presbyterian Children's Home*. The doxology was sung and a prayer of thanksgiving was offered by Kevin Henson.

Opening worship was brought to a fulfilling end by everyone singing the hymn of commitment, "Great is Thy Faithfulness," which is the other Convention hymn for the coming year.

Cleste Yuen brought greetings from Hong Kong Presbytery. Momoyo Kokubu interpreted for her in Japanese.

The benediction was led by Beverly Stott. Convention was adjourned until after lunch.

June 9 – Afternoon Session

Convention resumed at 2:00 p.m. with Beverly Stott calling the meeting to order. Lola John, president of Cumberland Presbyterian Women's Ministry in Choctaw Presbytery brought greetings. She explained that the handcrafted necklaces on the chairs throughout the meeting room were gifts from the women of Choctaw Region. Following this, the music team led everyone in a time of singing and fellowship.

The Credentials Report was read by Keiko Nagaya. (filed and marked "Appendix A") There was a total of 177 people present (140 from Japan/37 from outside Japan).

Colombian representative, Liliana Manzano, made a presentation. She explained the Colombian outfit that she wore. She showed us a video on Colombia, South America which included information like the Hot Lunch Program, the Women Heads of Families project, and the building of new buildings.

Michiko Kuwahara was recognized as the designer and creator of the Convention 2008 banner. The banner will travel with the Convention President in the coming year and then be placed on display in the denominational center in Memphis, TN.

Beverly introduced missionary speaker, Midori Yanagisawa, who works for Japan International Food for the Hungry organization. She visits and ministers to the poor and hungry throughout Asia. Around 1986, she heard God's call on her life. She studied in the United States for one year and then came back to Japan to serve. Japan International Food for the Hungry serves as a bridge between Japan and the rest of the world. Her home church is Koza Cumberland Presbyterian Church. She was appointed as a lay missionary of her church. She ministers in India to families living in the slums. She visited three African countries this year and saw how God was working there.

Beverly announced evening worship at 7:00 p.m. at Parthenon and dismissed Convention to attend the focus groups located throughout the building (calligraphy, origami, traditional tea ceremony, kimono, and flower arrangement). Focus groups will conclude at 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Convention reconvened at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by Beverly Stott. Music leaders, Kaori Hosoya and Masako Miyaike, led the group in a time of singing and fellowship.

Beverly introduced the Bible study leader, Rieko Kinoshita. Ms. Kinoshita read Mark 4:30-32, the parable of the mustard seed. She had us form groups of three to discuss two questions:

- 1.) What change has taken place in you since you became a Christian? (such as attitude, behavior, etc.)
- 2.) What influence have you had for the good on others?

She then invited participants to form small groups once again to discuss two more questions:

- 1.) What kind of church or women's group do you want yours to become? What kind of influence do you want it to have in your society? What kinds of things do you want them to do?
- 2.) What kind of society do you want your area to become because of the good influence your church has?

Many people shared in large group discussion which followed. Mrs. Rieko provided the discussion questions in both Japanese and English on the projection screens. Those who could speak English helped to interpret the comments and discussion. Mrs. Rieko closed the Bible study experience with prayer.

Beverly announced a 15 minute break.

Upon returning from the break the music leaders led us in the theme song, "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

The Credentials Report #2 was read by Keiko Nagaya. (filed and marked "Appendix B") There were a total of 155 people present (114 from Japan/32 from the US/5 from Hong Kong/2 from Colombia, SA).

Beverly made an announcement that the work trip bus would be leaving at 12:30 p.m. today.

The Endowment Program Membership skit was presented by Yumi Arase Setsuko Furuki, Harriett Ballow, Debbie Cox, Lita Swindle, Carol Hale, Sally Sain, Following the skit, the Japan Region Women's Ministry Executive Committee were each presented with a Perpetual Membership given by CP Women's Ministry (US).

Beverly introduced three very special women in Japan Presbytery. Hide Washizu was the first Women's Ministry president in Japan Presbytery. She is 97 years old and is a member of the Koza Church. Keiko Sesoko is Rev. Sesoko's mother. Ayako Ikushima is Rev. Ikushima's wife. These three women served faithfully and diligently through the 60 year history of Japan Presbytery. These women, along with many other special women in Japan Presbytery supported and encouraged the ministries of all three missionaries sent to Japan Presbytery throughout the years. Mrs. Washizu, Mrs. Sesoko and Mrs. Ikushima were the only ones of this generation who were able to attend the Women's Ministry Convention.

Pam Phillips-Burk delivered the blessing and benediction and Beverly Stott announced that Convention was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. Approximately 50 people went on the work trip in the afternoon to Takinogawa Gakuen, Japan's first School for the mentally challenged. A charter bus and box lunch was provided by Japan Women's Ministry and took about 45 minutes to travel to the facility. Participants first visited the chapel and hear the story of the facility from the director and former chaplain. The first piano on the island of Japan is located in this chapel and it is fully restored. Momoyu Kokubu played this historic piano for the group. She also accompanied Joanne Wilkinson (Alabama Grace Region), who sang a song. Following this gift, Convention participants handed out small gifts to several of the residents who were in attendance and interacted with them for a brief time.

The participants were given a tour of the facilities and shown a movie about the founder and history of Takinogawa Gakuen. Before leaving, everyone was treated to light refreshments of tea and watermelon.

Thursday, June 12, 2008

While not officially part of Convention, Japan Women's Ministry was in charge of the worship service on Thursday morning which included all Convention and General Assembly participants. This worship service had a definite "missions" theme. Speakers were the Reverend Sarah Lee, from Southeast Asia and Mrs. Michelle Gillis, from South Korea. Rev. Lee preached in Japanese and the English text was displayed on the projection screen. Mrs. Gillis spoke in English and her text was displayed in Japanese on the screens. Both of these women gave powerful witnesses to God's activity in Asia and around the world.

An offering was received and it was given to various Cumberland Presbyterian ministries in Southeast Asia, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Colombia, South America. It was also divided between several ministries of Japan Presbytery – Izumi Church, Ichikawa Grace Mission Point, Asahi Mission Point, Mata-de San Joan, Licentiate Rieko Kinoshita and Missionary Midori Yanagisawa.

The Convention and General Assembly experience in Japan was brought to a close at the final worship service that evening.