



Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC)

Congregations in Kumamoto

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PANDEMIC ALMOST OVER AND THINGS RETURNING TO NORMAL

Spring in Japan is the season for graduation and school enrollment. In the past three years, Jiai-en facilities only held a limited number of graduations, entrance ceremonies, and promotion ceremonies, but the pandemic has mostly subsided (most people are still wearing masks though). In March and April, Pastor Sumimoto and Pastor Hitoshi presided over 10 gradua-



tions, promotions, and enrollment ceremonies for Jiai-en facilities. Thank God and thank you for your continued prayers and support.

HITOSHI FINISHES TEACHING AT KYUSHU GAKUIN

At the beginning of 2019, Pastor Kosoegawa, Principal and Chaplain at Kyushu Gakuin (a Lutheran high schools) asked me to teach the Old Testament to their students because he was too busy with his other duties. Although that was not part of Hitoshi's initial agenda in Kumamoto, he taught three classes per week for four years. This April, a new chaplain, Pastor Higasayama, was called to the school and Pastor Kosoegawa remained as principal, therefore, Hitoshi's time at the high school came to an end. There was a touching farewell ceremony for teachers leaving Kyushu Gakuin.



TGTF ~Hitoshi's Reflection~

(This article was written in Japanese for Kuwamizu members and Hitoshi wants to share this with you.)

"Thank God It's Friday" was the title of an American movie about 45 years ago. It seems that the theme song continues to be played at discothèques even in Japan. In English, we often see and hear the phrase abbreviated "TGIF". There is also a restaurant chain called TGI Friday's in the United States and in the Tokyo area.

In Japanese, TGIF literally translates to "Kamini kansha (Thank God) Kyowa Kinyobi desu (Today is Friday)." However, when the phrase is used in English, it refers to the joy felt at the end of the week; the day before the weekend begins. In Japanese, it is used in context of "Hana Kin (Flower Friday)". But as Christians, let's think about the deeper meaning of TGIF.

This year, the week of April 2nd was Holy Week, and Kuwamizu Church held worship services at 7:30pm for three consecutive nights from Holy Wednesday to Holy (Good) Friday. On Good Friday there were two additional services, one was in English. Of course, it is meaningful for Christians to give thanks to God on this special Friday.



Hitoshi thinks there's a deep hidden meaning to TGIF. Since the day of Jesus' resurrection was Sunday, Christian churches hold services every Sunday. And the phrase TGIF is used every week. We should remember the Friday of the Cross every week, which shows God's enduring love toward humanity. He mercifully forgives us and continually gives us our lives. Amen.