

Our prayer “Beginning” from the “End”

\*The moderator and the congregation pray alternately, and everyone prays together the parts where "ALL" is written

**1. To be able to look towards the “End”**

- God the Perfecter of the world, who will eventually come as the Lord of glory and renew heaven and earth.
- We, the churches of Japan that stand firm on Biblical Faith, are thankful that we have deepened our cooperation in missions through six Evangelistic Conferences from the Kyoto Conference to the Kobe Conference and have participated in the evangelical mission both in Japan and abroad. We believe that the Lord of missions Himself will advance His Work, and we offer this prayer unto the Lord in expectation of Him. (Commentary 1)
- We are now standing at the “End” times. Nation is rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and peace is being threatened. There are major earthquakes, severe famines and unknown epidemics taking place.
- Environmental destruction is rapidly progressing, and disasters are becoming more severe. Ongoing persecution and conflicts throughout the world are also serious. All kinds of divisions encircle the world, and the entire world is in pain and groaning with widening inequality, poverty, and ethical confusion. (Commentary 2)
- The difficulties the churches in Japan are facing are also multifaceted and serious. It is evident that many churches are aging, and the number of full-time ministers is declining. Pastors are having to oversee multiple churches and churches without pastors are increasing, churches are merging and closing, and the burnout of those serving continues unabated.
- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has brought about fellowship challenges and economic difficulties. Furthermore, there are many families that have been broken by heresies and cults born out of Christianity, and many people are hurt both mentally and physically.
- ALL: Lord, help us not to turn our eyes away from the reality of this time to which we have been sent, but to be searched and taught by God the Holy Spirit, and to live in repentance and trust in the Lord. We look to the vision of the “End” days and serve You with hope. Lord, have mercy on us.

**2. To be able to “Begin” mission cooperation beyond our positions**

- Creator God who created us in His own image.
- Let all who have been born into this world live out the gospel with dignity because of the life God has given them.
- May we be aware of and reach out to children who are suffering without being able to raise their voices at home and at school.
- May young souls know the Lord and grow healthy in their appreciation of their divine origin and significance, and may they praise the Lord even as they study, work, and play. May they live in the abundant fellowship of Christians, being rooted in the hope that the Bible speaks of, and may they live in a true relationship with God throughout their lives. (Commentary 3, 4)

- May those who walk as singles and those who are led into marriage learn from the Bible the blessings that are given to them, and may they walk in the joy that is in the Lord, using their gifts. May families be built in God's love, and may each family member be guarded against all dangers, including violence and abuse, and may they enjoy the blessings.
- May those who age accept the various changes with the hope of eternal life, and may they walk remembering that though the "outer self" is wasting away, "our inner self" is being renewed day by day. (Commentary 5)
- There are people in the church who suffer from prejudice, discrimination, and lack of understanding, such as sexual minorities, foreigners, homeless, and people with serious illnesses or mental and physical "disabilities". By listening to their groans and struggles, and by bearing each other's weaknesses, let us be a church that is covered by the power of Christ. (Commentary 6)
- May the laity and ministers work together in building up the Lord's church, understanding the differences in their roles, respecting, and supporting each other's individuality. And let us be convinced that each believer who lives by faith in every area, including the workplace, community, and home, will be used for His Kingdom. (Commentary 7)
- ALL: We transcend our positions and share the gospel in a way that will reach our respective positions, knowing the joy of living in the fellowship of the Church and respecting one another. Lord, grant us both wisdom and a never-ending passion for missions.

### **3. To be able to "Begin" a mission cooperation beyond our denominations**

- God the Redeemer, who has added us to His Church with Christ as the head and made us members of His body.
- May the Church worship God alone in truth, and in His name faithfully engage in the work of evangelism, teaching, and ministry, so that we may live out the loving fellowship. (Commentary 8)
- While studying the history of the Church, help us to discern what should be changed and what should not be changed. In the past, most churches in Japan, in cooperation beyond denominations, have sinned and are guilty of participating in the war, practicing idolatry with the emperor as a god, and supporting the government to force people in Asian countries to bow down at shrines. We repent of our sins.
- May we watch over the political situation of our time, intercede for the government, and through the forgiveness of the cross of Jesus Christ and by the power of His resurrection, live in His purity. Reveal our hidden sins and help us overcome the temptation of idolatry that creeps upon us in different forms. (Commentary 9)
- As we have been urged through the Lausanne Movement, we desire to witness Jesus Christ through our "words" and "deeds" and spread the Gospel throughout the world.
- The church has continued its work in the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and other disasters that have struck various parts of Japan. We have been strongly taught of the mission of the church on earth to bear the pain there and of the necessity of cooperation beyond denominations.
- May our comprehensive understanding of the Gospel deepen among us and may we work together to fulfill our social responsibilities.

- May the work of the Church be enriched by the diverse ministries of Christians, that the Kingdom of God would be fulfilled in all areas, and that the Gospel will advance.
- ALL: Lord, we go beyond the boundaries of denominations, churches, and ministries to serve and learn from each other, and work together in missions as one body, the church. Add love to us and give us a humble heart. (Commentary 10)

#### 4. To be able to "Begin" mission cooperation beyond regions

- Sovereign God, who loves, gives life, and cares for each of us living in Japan and around the world.
- May we understand the history, culture, and customs of our region, and may we speak words that reach the hearts and realities of diverse people while respecting their lives.
- Breathe the breath of the Gospel into the local culture and equip and use us for the creation of a new culture in the Lord and for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.
- May we not be bound by various conventional missional methods and frameworks, but may we choose what to carry on, what to discard, and may we take on the challenge of new initiatives. (Commentary 11)
- May we be set free from stereotypes, and may we be flexible and be bold in our approach to contextualize the gospel to the local culture, so that we can build up churches that will bring blessings to the world.
- We will continue to pursue and practice opportunities to share what each church has been taught and share the blessings it has received beyond regional barriers, especially "urban" and "rural" barriers in Japan.
- Please protect churches and mission organizations in difficulties. Lead us not to be isolated, but to support each other with prayer and offerings, and have fellowship, including online.
- Above all, there are people and regions that have been affected by the disasters and remain in difficult circumstances. We will continue to listen carefully to the great pain and voiceless voices in Fukushima and places elsewhere. (Commentary 12)
- ALL: May we not let the facts fade away or overlook them as someone else's problems. Rather, let us have a sense of walking with those who have been affected by the disaster, a sense of being prepared for future disasters, and a sense of being involved beyond our regions.

#### 5. To be able to "Begin" mission cooperation beyond cultures

- God, the Lord of reconciliation, who pours His eyes on every corner of the world and makes the most of each culture.
- There are ongoing wars in Ukraine and many other parts of the world. Lord, bring peace. Let us be aware of our own desires within us to create strife and let us become peacemakers.

- The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. Let us make a world where there is no more hunger and exploitation, and where we help, support, and share with each other. (Commentary 13)
- With the advancement of science and technology, unprecedented problems and new harm are rising. May we rightly fear God and not despise the biblical ethics and life. Rather, may science and technology be used beneficially in the Lord and contribute to the improvement of human life (Commentary 14)
- The beautiful world God created is groaning under the influence of sin and corruption. Forgive us for our sins of greed. Use us as stewards to restore order in the created world, bringing a halt to global warming and environmental destruction, and to fulfill a world in which all creatures can rest in harmony. Use this 7<sup>th</sup> Japan Congress on Evangelism as an opportunity to pave the way for Church-wide efforts for environmental conservation to take shape.
- Lord, we will work across borders and cultures to address various global issues. (Commentary 15)
- To do this, we will first promote partnership and cooperation between Japanese churches overseas and foreign language / multilingual churches in Japan, as well as with missionaries engaged in all kinds of work.
- We appreciate and welcome our brothers and sisters who have come to Japan from abroad. Out of respect, we will learn from each other's differences, will work together as a church open to multiculturalism, and will take charge of the missions that expand throughout the world.
- ALL: Our work is part of your mission. We will labor to the best of our ability, being assured that You will initiate and eventually complete it. Give us your perspective.

## 6. To be able to “Begin” from the “End”

- Lord, we are facing very difficult situations. But we do not lose hope in the Lord. We lift our eyes and look forward to the day that the Lord will come again.
- “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”” (Revelations 7:9-11)
- Because of this hope, we “Begin” in this place of “End”, beyond positions, beyond denominations, beyond regions, and beyond cultures. Bless our mission cooperation.
- “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19)
- ALL: With thanksgiving and anticipation, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles)

Note: The "Commentary" is not translated, but is available in Japanese on the website.