

Title: "OIC Identity, Part 1 - An Interdenominational, Evangelical, Protestant church"

Key verse: Acts 2:41-42 (NASB95) – "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you all again. Today, I am beginning an ambitious project. I will begin a three-part sermon series on a topic that has been on my mind for a few years: the theme for this series is the identity of Osaka International Church as an interdenominational, evangelical, Protestant church. All my life, I have noticed the Christian landscape around me and I have seen churches from quite a wide variety of denominations, each one emphasizing different aspects of what they believe the Bible says about essential doctrines and the practice of church life. These different churches exist not only in space but also in time – they each come from a particular heritage forged over many centuries. Even though our church is just fifty years old, Osaka International Church also is part of a particular heritage that is hundreds of years old. In these three sermons, I would like to explore with you the various aspects of our heritage. We are Protestant, we are evangelical, and we are interdenominational. We are also international – that is another key part of our identity – but I didn't want to add that word to the title of today's sermon because that would have made my title too long. Certainly we come not only from a variety of denominations, but also from a variety of nations.

Before I continue, I want to quote an important verse that many Bible commentators say is a key verse that teaches us some crucial aspects of what church life is all about. In Acts chapter 2, we read about the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down on a group of more than a hundred Christian disciples in a dramatic way and the Apostle Peter preached his famous Pentecost sermon and many people in Jerusalem accepted the gospel.

Let's read Acts 2:41-42 (NASB95): "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Three thousand new converts were baptized that day and were made Christian disciples. Then in verse 42 we see some essentials of church life. Number 1: teaching – they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. It is so important to get a firm grounding on the doctrine that the apostles taught, the gospel of Jesus Christ – His life, death, and resurrection, His teaching, His sacrifice for sins on our behalf. Number 2: fellowship – also important in church life is our meeting together in community with our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Number 3: the breaking of bread. This is probably a reference to the ceremony known as the Lord's Supper, also called Communion. But it likely also refers to what is known as the "agape meal" (*agape* is a Greek word meaning "love") – this was a shared meal after the main meeting, or a regathering in the evening for a meal together. Number 4: prayer – they devoted themselves to prayer. Prayers are important – essential. They were an important part of the worship in the Jewish temple and they continue to be important to the church today. Our Lord wants us to pray to Him, to praise Him, to seek His provision and to thank Him, individually and corporately.

Beginning today, I will deliver a three-part series of sermons, on one Sunday per month – the fourth Sunday in January, February, and March. Here are the titles and themes of my three messages:

Sermon #1: "OIC Identity - An Interdenominational, Evangelical, Protestant church." The Statement of Faith in our church constitution is a typical Protestant, evangelical statement of faith. In my quotation of Acts 2:42, it says the early Christians firstly devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine

and this first sermon in my series will focus on the main doctrinal foundations of Osaka International Church.

Sermon #2. "OIC Identity - Our Statement of Purpose." In our church constitution, we have a statement of the Purpose of our church and I really like the way this is phrased and how it touches on several of the essentials of living together in a church community, some of which are reflected in my theme verse in Acts 2:42. Did you know we have a statement of Purpose? You will hear more about it in my next sermon next month.

Sermon #3: "OIC Identity - The Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion)." These are the two essential ceremonies that mark a Christian church, and they are prominently mentioned in our constitution's statement of Purpose. I'm going to devote one message to these two important ceremonies.

Today, we are doing Sermon #1 in this series on OIC Identity: we are an interdenominational, evangelical, Protestant church. Let me read the first half of the Preamble to the OIC Constitution: "Whereas a group of English-speaking Protestant Christians resident in the Osaka area, believing it to be the will of God that the followers of Jesus Christ associate themselves in fellowship for mutual encouragement, for public worship and for active service, did band themselves together and organize the Osaka International Church ..." English-speaking Christians from a variety of backgrounds came together to form this church. The founding pastor was a Baptist. The man who wrote the constitution was a Presbyterian – he was the chaplain at Yodogawa Christian Hospital. In our early years, we also had Charismatics and non-Charismatics, Methodists and Lutherans, and we had other Christians from a variety of denominations. Quite a variety. But what tied everyone together was that they shared an evangelical and a Protestant heritage. When I arrived at this church in the 1990s, what I loved about it was that here I found a Christian family that was broadly accepting of Christians from a variety of denominations, but it is not liberal in theology, instead standing on a firm evangelical doctrinal foundation.

I would now like to describe for you these three terms that I have been using to describe OIC, beginning with the word "Protestant."

#### Part 1: The Protestant Reformation

In two places in our church constitution, you will find the word "Protestant": in the preamble, which I read for you a moment ago, and in the section on the pastor, which states that the pastor of this church must be an "ordained Protestant minister." So, what does it mean to be a Protestant church? It means to be distinct from the Roman Catholic Church and from some similar churches farther east. Let us take an excursion into history and take a look at the Protestant Reformation in 16th century Europe.

I am sure that many of you have heard of Martin Luther. He is the Christian monk who is credited with getting the Protestant Reformation going, although other people before him had prepared the way. During the Middle Ages, the institutional church in western Europe had developed many questionable practices that are not actually mandated in the Bible and the church had developed several doctrines that likewise seemed to depart from sound biblical teaching. In addition, power in the European church had been centralized in the hands of the bishop of Rome, and the Roman form of worship in the Latin language had been enforced in most of Western Europe.

Young men seeking a life of devotion and service would enter monasteries and take vows of chastity and poverty. One such man was Martin Luther, a serious-minded man who zealously engaged in the various exercises of self-discipline and self-denial that were expected of Christian monks, even going so far as to whip himself in pursuit of denying the sinful desires of the flesh. But he came to realize that these man-made practices were of no use in overcoming these sins. Because he had a keen intellect, he was sent to the new University of Wittenberg to become a professor there and while he

was preparing sermons on the Book of Romans, he came to the increasing realization that the way to a righteous standing before God was not through the self-denying practices of man-made religion but through simple faith in God and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He called this discovery the birthday of his faith.

Luther found the answer in Romans 1:17 (NIV): “For in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘*The righteous will live by faith*.’” We live by faith. The righteousness that God bestows on us comes through faith, not through the various religious practices that were mandated by the institutional church. But just by simple faith. This notion was a liberating idea for Martin Luther and it freed him from the fear that his efforts at religious practice would not measure up and the fear that he would fail to earn God’s favor. That is not the route to gain favor with God. The righteousness that God bestows on us comes to us through faith and not by works. This is the key doctrine that distinguishes the Protestant movement from the Roman Catholic Church. However, I should tell you that after the Protestants made their protest in the 16th century, the Roman church did make corrections to several problematic practices, although there are still several significant doctrinal differences between the Protestants and Catholics.

As I pointed out a moment ago, Luther felt liberated when he discovered the teaching in Romans 1:17 that the righteousness we have from God comes to us through faith and not by works. Other verses in the book of Romans emphasize this key truth as well. Romans 3:28 (NASB95): “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.” This is the doctrine of justification by faith alone – this is the fundamental teaching that the Protestant Reformers emphasized.

Let’s read Romans 10:9–10 (NASB95): “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; <sup>10</sup>for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

We are saved through faith alone. This is the Reformation principle known by the Latin phrase *Sola Fide* - “by faith alone.”

There is another Reformation principle: *Sola Gratia* - “by grace alone.” We are saved only by God’s free grace, not by anything we do to merit His favor. Protestants say we are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV): “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.” Verses 8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Verse 8: salvation is by grace through faith ... and it is not our own doing. Verse 9: it is not through works. Verse 10 tells us about work: it says we are God’s workmanship. We didn’t make ourselves, we didn’t save ourselves. He is the one who saves us and the one who molds us. For what purpose? To do good works. Good works come *after* salvation – this is how God designed it. He wants us to walk in these good works. Good works are a part of the Christian lifestyle, but they are not the means by which we are saved. That is the key point that the Protestant Reformers emphasized.

These are two important principles of the Reformation: *Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia*. There is another extremely important principle: *Sola Scriptura* – “by Scripture alone.” It is by Scripture, first and foremost, that we derive our doctrines and learn to live our lives as Christians – the Scripture is our final authority on all of our doctrine and practice. With this principle, the Protestants were rejecting the

Roman Catholic Church's additions of doctrines and practices that were not clearly spelled out or mandated in Scripture.

*Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia.* These are the three main principles by which the Protestant Reformers distinguished themselves from the Roman Catholic Church and this is the heritage that we at OIC have inherited. The Reformers did not reject everything from church tradition, however. They kept certain teachings from various church fathers, such as Saint Augustine, as long as those teachings matched what the Scriptures say. And the Reformers adhered to the ancient Christian creeds, such as the Nicene Creed, because these creeds outline important doctrines that are derived from the Bible. I adhere to the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, but I also learned early in my Christian life to appreciate the work of my forefathers and to embrace the Nicene Creed and the other ancient creeds, as well as the principles of the Protestant Reformation.

Before I move on, I should mention some groups that claim to be Christian but which we do not consider to be truly Christian at all. I am referring to such groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and the Unification Church. These churches depart from orthodox Christian doctrine and practice in significant ways. I notice that several genuine churches here in Japan feel a need to make a statement on the literature that they hand out to people or on their website, stating that they have no association with those three groups that I just named.

Well, I now want to move on to another aspect of OIC's identity ...

## Part 2: We are an Evangelical church

When Martin Luther first got the Reformation going, their churches were called Evangelical churches. That is because they believed that they had rediscovered the true gospel message. The word "evangelical" comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning "good news" (the gospel) – the message of eternal salvation that is offered through Jesus Christ. These days, this word "evangelical" is used to describe those churches that put a strong emphasis on the authority of the Bible, the historic Christian doctrines, and the importance of evangelism and personal conversion.

The Statement of Faith of Osaka International Church shows us to be in this heritage holding to evangelical theology. I would like to read four out of the ten articles of the OIC Statement of Faith:

- We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life. II Timothy 3:16.
- We believe in one God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I Peter 1:2.
- We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross a perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the majesty on high, He is now our High Priest and Advocate. Luke 1:34,35, I Timothy 2:5 Hebrews 8:1,2.
- We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and that only such as receive Jesus Christ by faith are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become the children of God. Romans 3:25,26 Ephesians 2:8,9.

Here are some of the essential doctrines of orthodox Christian evangelical theology: first of all, the authority of the Bible for all doctrine and practice ... secondly, belief in the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and in the divinity of Jesus Christ ... also, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as an atonement for our sins ... and the importance of receiving Christ by faith. If you would like to learn

more about these doctrines in our Statement of Faith, you can go to the church website and look for the series of ten sermons I did outlining the ten articles of our Statement of Faith.

There is a British scholar named David Bebbington who has studied evangelicalism and he has defined four hallmarks of the evangelical movement. The course I took in seminary on church history outlines these four characteristics this way:

1. First, evangelicals believe in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. It's called biblicism ...
2. Secondly, evangelicals believe in the uniqueness of salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ – crucicentrism.
3. Evangelicals also believe ... that personal conversion is a key element ...
4. Finally, the fourth key element in most evangelicalism is the sense of urgency about evangelism and missions. This activist mentality has characterized Christians really down through the ages.

[Source: Frank A. James III, *CH102 Introducing Church History II: Reformation to Postmodernism*, Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Segment 52.]

You can see that some of the statements I quoted from the OIC Statement of Faith are right here said to be characteristic of the modern-day evangelical movement.

The first hallmark of the evangelical movement is biblicism: the belief that the Bible is the supreme and final authority for all faith and practice. A key verse here is 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB): “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.”

The second hallmark that Dr. Bebbington highlights is crucicentrism, the centrality of the cross of Christ, for that is the place where Jesus Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. In 1st Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul describes the fundamental Christian message, which he received and which he now passes on to us. Verses 3 and 4 (NASB95) say this: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” Christ died for our sins and He was buried and He was raised from the dead three days later. This happened in time and space 2,000 years ago – we evangelicals affirm that these are real, historical events.

And we say that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was an atoning sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin. Romans 3:25a (NIV): “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood — to be received by faith ...”.

This is the main work of Christ on our behalf: to pay the penalty for our sin and put us back in a right relationship with our creator. We call this the work of Atonement on our behalf. Atonement. Look closely at that word. “AT” ... “ONE” ... -ment. To be made “at one” with each other. When two former enemies (God and us) make peace with one another, they can now be “at one.” This is the essence of atonement. The barrier that separated us from God has now been removed – and that barrier was our sin.

That is the second hallmark of evangelicalism: the cross of Christ as an atoning sacrifice for our sins to restore our relationship with our Creator. The third hallmark is personal conversion. Each person must make their own decision to follow Christ. For each individual Christian, the process of conversion may look quite different, with some people taking a long time to decide and others a short time. Usually, we expect to see a remorse for sin and a turning to God in repentance and faith, although this manifests itself in different ways for different people.

Romans 10:9 (NASB95) – “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Acts 2:38 (NASB95) – “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’.”

The fourth hallmark of evangelicalism is the sense of urgency about evangelism and missions. The very name “evangelical” implies our concern for evangelism, the proclamation of the gospel message and the call to repentance and faith in Christ. This is highlighted in the Great Commission, when Jesus Christ gave this charge to His followers in Matthew 28:18–20 (NASB95): “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’.”

I would like to quote for you the OIC “Vision Statement” which appears on our Sunday bulletin. Here is our church vision:

“To exhibit the life & love of Jesus Christ, in unity within cultural diversity, so that expatriates and Japanese in the Kansai area may be drawn to a saving and growing faith in Christ.”

*So that expatriates and Japanese in the Kansai area may be drawn to a saving and growing faith in Christ.* This is the mission of our church. This is the mission of every local church: to reach out and touch the people in their neighborhoods and workplaces with the message of the gospel. To share the gospel with non-Christians. To encourage our fellow Christians to walk close to God and grow in their faith. To touch the lives of our family and friends and business associates and coworkers with the message of the gospel. To invite them into the fellowship of the church and into a relationship with Jesus Christ and to spiritual growth as Christian disciples.

Now let me move on to the third part of today’s message.

Part 3: We are an interdenominational church

Please bear with me as I tell you a bit more history describing different denominations. I have just completed a master's degree at a Christian seminary and one of the interesting things I learned in the Church History course was how the various Protestant groups in the early decades of the Protestant era started drawing up detailed doctrinal statements to give precise definitions to key biblical topics such as sin, salvation, regeneration, justification, sanctification, as well as predestination and free will. These groups not only needed to define themselves in distinction to Roman Catholicism, but also the different emerging Protestant groups were drawing up doctrinal boundary lines distinguishing themselves from each other – the Lutheran church, the Anglican Church in England, the Reformed church in Switzerland and in the Netherlands ... and then there were also churches springing up at the grassroots level, such as the Swiss Brethren and the various Anabaptist groups. Although they all adhered to the doctrines of Sola Scriptura and salvation by grace through faith, they differed on how they viewed numerous other biblical issues.

When Martin Luther and the other Reformers translated the Bible into the various vernacular languages, they did a great service for the people of God, because the people could now read the Scriptures in their own language and take personal responsibility for their own spiritual lives. That is surely a good thing. But there was also a downside to this, because it also meant that various people came to some contradictory conclusions on certain Bible doctrines and such conclusions could and did cause division. These different groups each drew up confessions of faith that outlined their beliefs, but they also defined themselves to distinguish themselves from other Protestant groups.

I told you at the beginning of this message that while I was growing up, I saw the Christian landscape around me and I saw all kinds of different churches. Then, while I was in college, I attended a marvelous non-denominational church where the pastor carefully and systematically preached through each book of the Bible, digging into the Greek meaning of the key words in the text and I was in awe of his careful biblical explanations. In my youthful zeal and idealism, I thought that if we all could just go back to the original Greek and understand it properly, we could erase our denominational differences. But then I noticed that people in other denominations had their own Bible-based defense of their own strongly-held doctrinal points of view. Baptists and non-Baptists, Calvinists and Arminians, Charismatics and non-Charismatics – not only did these groups use the same Bible but I noticed that God was using and blessing these various churches despite their differing understandings of certain parts of Scripture. During my mid-20s, I often felt depressed at all the division I saw among Christians. These groups often severely criticized each other, and that made me feel despair. But I noticed that God was using and blessing these different Christians from different denominations ... because although they had differences of opinion on several doctrinal matters, they actually were agreed on essential doctrines – the essential doctrines that I have outlined earlier in this sermon. This began to give me some hope. In hindsight, I think that a lot of the criticism I heard was too severe – yes, some Christians have made some mistakes on some doctrinal points and we should seek to make corrections, but for the most part, these Christians are sincere, faithful brothers and sisters in Christ and I desire to see us discuss differences without so much negative criticism of other Christian groups.

Let me share with you one more passage of Scripture that has helped me as I have pondered these differences among Christians. It is Romans, chapter 14. In that chapter, the issue the Apostle Paul was discussing was some differing practices among Christians. He was addressing some matters of differing convictions among Christians on how one should approach certain practices – issues such as whether a Christian can eat meat that had been purchased in the marketplace or if a Christian ought to observe certain holy days in the Jewish calendar. I don't have time today to explain why some Christians thought that some of these practices were problematic. But I wish to draw out a principle from the issues raised in Romans 14. Let's read some portions of this chapter.

Romans 14:3-8 (NASB95): “The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup> One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; <sup>8</sup> for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.”

Although the issues discussed in Romans 14 are differing ideas on how to respond to certain practices that were controversial in the first century church, I would like to use the principle outlined in that chapter to discuss our response today to differing opinions on some doctrinal matters – not core, primary doctrines like those I have described earlier, but opinions on matters that are of secondary importance. One example of a matter that is of secondary importance might include the differing viewpoints Christians have of the manner and timing of Christ's return.

The lesson I take from Romans 14, when applying it to the denominational landscape that I see, is that our fellow brothers and sisters from a different denomination are fully convinced that their doctrines and practices are correct ones, and they hold to these convictions with a clear conscience before God. And, like I said before, I have seen God use and bless Christians who have differing theological perspectives. Verse 4 – we shouldn't judge a fellow Christian with a different conviction, because God

is his or her judge. Verse 5 – let each person be fully convinced in his or her own mind, in their own conscience. Verses 7 and 8 – we belong to God and we are each individually responsible before God. This chapter shows me I should have some tolerance toward my brothers and sisters with differing theological convictions or denominational emphases. We must be agreed on the essentials – the primary, core doctrines that I outlined earlier (the Bible, the Trinity, the atoning sacrifice of Christ, etc.). As I said before, there are some groups that are far from orthodox Christian doctrine, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons – these groups we do not accept as having proper doctrine. But toward our fellow evangelical Protestant brothers and sisters, let us show a degree of tolerance on doctrines and practices that are secondary issues and not primary. For me, this is what it means to be a part of an evangelical and an interdenominational church.

There is a little slogan that I have mentioned to you in previous sermons and which I would like to repeat here:

*In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.*

#### Part 4: What we have in common

Whether you are Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, non-Charismatic, or come from some other denomination, there is actually much that unites us despite our various backgrounds and denominational heritages. Many of those Christians who come from the conservative strain of any of these denominations affirm those key evangelical doctrines that I outlined before: the authority of Scripture, the crucifixion of Christ as the sacrifice for our sins, the importance of personal conversion and the need for evangelism. If you affirm those essential doctrines, we can fellowship together and work together arm-in-arm as we live out our Christian calling, despite differences we might have on other doctrinal matters.

I like to remind myself of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 (NASB95): “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Here is our essential task: evangelism, discipleship, and teaching. These are the primary things that the Christian church is to be focused on accomplishing – and we at OIC recognize these priorities as well. This is what we have in common.

#### Conclusion

During the 1990s, we had a pastoral candidate visiting us at OIC and he had an interesting question for our church council. He said, “You have so many people from so many different denominations – how can I teach such a group?” The church council responded by saying to him, “Just open up the Bible and tell us what the passage teaches.” He later told us that when he heard that answer, he thought to himself, “That is the church I want to minister to!” Indeed, this is the church I have loved and served for 30 years, a church that wants to hear the plain Bible taught and explained, with the gospel proclaimed faithfully and the people serving with whatever gifts the Lord has provided them.

Back a half-century ago, when a group of Protestant Christians resident in the Osaka area decided to band together and form Osaka International Church, they came from differing backgrounds but shared the same fundamental Christian convictions. When I first arrived at OIC, I found a lively church with a variety of brothers and sisters who sometimes had differing ideas. But we loved and respected one another. A church both interdenominational and with a solid evangelical foundation – that’s what I have loved about Osaka International Church. Let’s move forward into our future standing on that foundation and active in service both inside and outside the church, loving one another and bringing more people into the Kingdom of God.