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Pastor Yoshio Iwamura visits Zaporizhia in Ukraine and talks with the director of theological education at Kyiv Theological Seminary

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From June 11th to 24th, The director of “Kayoko Fund” Miwa Sasaki, and Pastor Yoshio Iwamura of Kobe International Christ Church entered Ukraine via Poland. They visited the capital Kyiv, Irpin and other cities in the central and the southern areas, including Bucha, where a large number of residents were massacred during the war by Russia. This time they visited Zaporizhia for the first time.

Visit a village on the opposite bank where you can see the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant

They left Kyiv on the night of the 18th and traveled about seven hours by bus to Zaporizhia, which is close to the front lines of the Ukrainian and Russian forces. Zaporizhia, the capital of Zaporizhia Oblast, is a city that stretches across both banks of the Dnieper River, which flows through central Ukraine. About 70% of the southern part of the province is currently under the control of the Russian military, while Ukraine maintains about 30% of the northern part, including Zaporizhia.



Photo: The Kakhovka Reservoir dried up after the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam collapsed

About 250 kilometers south of Zaporizhia, the Dnieper is dammed by dams to form the vast Kakhovka Reservoir. The Zaporizhia nuclear power plant, believed to be Europe's largest in Enerkhodar, is on the east bank of the Kakhovka Reservoir and is now under Russian military control.

The Kakhovka Reservoir dried up after the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam collapsed. Mr. Iwamura also visited Vyschetarasivka on the west bank, which faces the Zaporizhia nuclear power plant, and heard stories from local people, including the village chief. Vyschetarasivka is a village located about 50 kilometers south of Zaporizhia with a population of about 3,000. Most of the residents make a living by fishing.

However, in early June, the dam at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Station, located at the southern end of the Kakhovka Reservoir, collapsed. Bishchetarsifka was located upstream of the dam, so there was no flooding damage, but the water level dropped significantly, making it almost impossible to catch fish. Partly because of this, the village's population has now decreased to nearly two-thirds.



Photo: Alexander Village Chief of Vyschetarasivka

Pastor Iwamura, who has been involved in disaster relief activities in Japan and overseas for many years as the chairman of the Kobe International Support Organization, said, “There are many examples of flood damage due to dam bursts and discharges in Japan, but the water upstream of the dams is depleted. This is the first time I've encountered a case where people are unable to make a living because of it.”

Interview with the Director of Theological Education at Kyiv Seminary

The Kayoko Found (headed by Miwa Sasaki), an overseas division of the Kobe International Sustaining Organization, has been conducting on-site inspections since May last year in order to open a home for orphans in Ukraine, the Kayoko Children Home. This was his fifth visit, and his first visit to the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra in the Pechersk district of Kyiv. He spoke for about an hour with the priest Mitrofan Bozko, who is in charge of theological education at the KThS on the grounds of the abbey.

Pechersk is the oldest district in Kyiv. The Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra has a vast site of 90 hectares, which is about four times the size of Himeji Castle in Japan, and is located on a hill overlooking the city of Kyiv. It has a history of nearly 1,000 years and was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1990.



Photo: Priest Mitrofan Bozko

In an interview with Pastor Iwamura, Priest Bozko said, “War is condemned by the law of God, because we should not kill. It is clear that war is a crime.” On the other hand, as citizens of Ukraine under military invasion by Russia, we understand that it is our duty to protect our land from invaders. But even so, he said, “If soldiers want to come to our church and partake of the sacrament, they must confess to killing, even if it is their duty.” He took the position that there was no excuse nor exception for the murder crime.

He also noted that Ukraine and Russia are both culturally and historically Christian (Orthodox) countries. “In Ukraine, not only we Orthodox but all Christians pray for the Ukrainian government.

and the army that protects the country. But when we cross the border, Russian troops (with the blessings of the clergy) are heading towards Ukraine. So it's a test. How on earth can Christians antagonize each other and face each other like enemies?" However, Bozko pointed out that such actions will probably become a big problem after the war is over, especially when it comes to witnessing Christ to those who do not believe in Christ, citing that some Protestant churches in Germany blessed Nazi leader Adolf Hitler during World War II, he said:



Photo: Interior of a building damaged by a Russian military drone attack

“Even if we say that the Orthodox or Christian way of life is to live in peace with God and man, to bring the whole human race back to Christ, and to heal this wounded world, I'm sure people will say, 'That's a good thing to say. (You religious leaders) support war.' So this is a big test for us. “ In addition, Priest Bozko said, “As St. Paul said, we do not have a home in this world, but we are heading for heaven.” It's in a proper kingdom, and that's where our citizenship is.” However, even so, he admits that it is difficult to have such an idea in wartime. It's hard to have these two perspectives, that we are all one in Christ.”



Photo: From the right: Pastor Yoshio Iwamura of the Kobe International Christian Church, Mr. Vlad Rybalevskiy who showed us around Zaporizhia, and Miwa Sasaki, director of the Kayoko Fund, the secretary general of the Kobe International Sustaining Organization.

After completing his visit to Ukraine, Pastor Iwamura told the newspaper:

“Communism, the two world wars, and fascism arose from the Christian realm. And now, the wars brought about by Christianity, which fights to the bone and flesh, are pushing the limits of democracy, which was born from Christianity. Modern philosophy. The United Nations, whose predecessor was the League of Nations, which was born from the thought of Immanuel Kant, who is said to be the founder of the world, the Taiwan emergency, China's “One Belt, One Road” initiative, and economic globalization, humankind has not found a clue to a solution. It is precisely because of such times that radical eschatological ideas have sprung up. In a sense, humanity is on the verge of death. Christians are the first to show that the essence of human beings is love of neighbor, which is not threatened by death. Christ said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34 NIV). As I said, Christians have a responsibility to practice this new command” .