

JAPAN MISSION UNIT 2023 REPORT

The JMU has eleven members. Nine of us are working in parish ministry, one is the JPIC coordinator, and one is retired. These two live in rental accommodation. Most of us are of a good age, but still are committed to missionary and pastoral work. Health issues have become more serious for some of the members.

Last April, as recommended by Alvaro, the JMU organized a workshop to help us to consider the issues connected with ageing, retirement and health care. Mick McGuire was the facilitator of the workshop and was very helpful. The JMU leadership is in constant consultation with the senior members about their health and their future. They are well aware of their limitations, and we are working together to ensure their continued participation in ministry until it is no longer feasible. Documentation related to retirement, health insurance and final wishes are being collected and being revised where necessary.

The members usually meet about four times a year. In 2023, that was at Saint Patrick's Day, Workshop on Transition, Annual Retreat and Saint Columban's Feast Day. These are the times that the whole JMU are together, though Frank was not able to attend due to his health. Our furthest members live over 1,000 kilometers away yet make a special effort to be present for our gatherings.

We held an election for the new JMU coordinator, with the result that Leo Schumacher has returned as coordinator. Leadership and finances are administered part-time by members with other ministries. In this way we can staff Columban positions and still be active in missionary activity. Divestment, flexibility and cooperation are necessary for this system to work, and it does quite well here. Members of Columban administration (non-Japan MU) often are surprised at our structures here, which includes no full-time staff, no contracts with dioceses, no real estate and a lot of personal responsibility.

Last November the JMU celebrated the 75th anniversary of Columban mission in Japan. This took place at Katase parish, where Columban priests have worked for many years, with Pat Blanchfield the current pastor. It was a great occasion to give thanks to God for the mission in Japan, for the lives of all Columbans, dead and alive who worked here, and to show our gratitude to the people. Most of those who attended the mass are members of the Columban Supporters Group. Each year we send out 5 newsletters or cards to our long-term supporters, who still wish to maintain a connection with the Columban Society, even though Columbans no longer minister in their parishes. Once a year we have a summer collection, with the proceeds going to help Columban mission, e.g. for the victims of Pakistan floods or the Rebirth center in Myitkyina, Myanmar.

As coordinator, I attended the IRMU in Seoul, which I reported on to the MU. This is all leading up to the 2024 chapter, for which Leo Schumacher was elected as a delegate. Joseph Kang was present at the JMU's pre-chapter gathering. We were informed by CA, that as the JMU has eleven members, Leo attends in an ex-officio capacity. Therefore the JMU is eligible to choose an additional delegate, which resulted in Nguyen Xuan Tien being elected to attend the chapter in Lima, Peru.

Over ten years ago, the Japan Region started the process of transition to a Mission Unit, which went along with the sale of the no longer needed large center house. The initiative for this came from Japan, but of course was done in close consultation with CA. We are proud of the changes that we have already taken. I am very grateful for the commitment of the members to mission, the self-reliance that they have shown and the generous support they have shown towards my leadership.

JMU Coordinator

Nguyen Xuan Tien