

## WEA Secretary General visits the Japan Evangelical Association

Secretary General Thomas Schirmmacher has become the first top leader of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) ever to pay a visit to the **Japan Evangelical Association (JEA)**, which is the member evangelical alliance from Japan in the Asian Evangelical Alliance and the WEA. He was accompanied by his wife Christine (a professor and WEA spokesperson on Islamic affairs) and daughter Esther (WEA Islamic Relations Coordinator).



WEA Secretary General Thomas Schirmmacher with board and staff members of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA) as well as the chairperson and secretary of the Japan Lausanne Committee © WEA

Schirmmacher's time with the JEA included a special two-hour session with its board and staff members, plus the chairperson and secretary of the **Japan Lausanne Committee**.

In addition, Schirmmacher returned to Japan again two weeks later as a speaker at the Seventh Japan Congress on Evangelism (JCE7) in Gifu, Japan. JCE7 is the largest pastors and missions conference in Japan, held once every seven years.

“As a G7 country, Japan is one of the most important industrial nations in Asia. But in economically strong Japan, Christians are only a small minority among the many religious groups (especially Buddhism and Shintoism),” said Rev. Toshinori Ishida, chairman of the JCE7 board and former chairman of the JEA. “And this is despite the fact that

the gospel came to Japan some 500 years ago. Throughout these years, many missionaries have preached the gospel with sweat and tears. Therefore, I call upon you to pray for Japan so that our country will turn back to our Lord Jesus.”

Also present at the meeting were Rev. Isao Mizuguchi (JEA Chairman); Rev. Takahito Iwagami (JEA General Secretary); Rev. James Hisao Tanabe (Executive Council member of the Asia Evangelical Alliance); Rev. Toshinori Ishida (Chairman of the JCE7); JEA board members Rev. Naoyuki Kawashima, Rev. Hiroo Kambe, and Rev. Shinobu Yamazaki, Rev. Dr. Billy Nishioka (Asia Theological Association and former JEA board member), Rev. Dr. Toshionori Kurasawa (Chairman, Japan Lausanne Committee), and Ms. Atsuko Tateishiwere (Secretary, Japan Lausanne Committee).

A central topic of discussion was evangelism in large cities and metro areas, as half of the Japanese live in three metro areas. Tokyo is the largest metro area in the world with close to 40 million people. Interestingly, in the 1720s, Tokyo (called Edo at that time) was the first city in the world to have attained a population of one million people, far exceeding London, the second-largest city at that time with an estimated 630,000 people living in its metro area.

The JEA was established in 1968. It grew out of the Japan Evangelical Mission Association (JEMA), which was originally organized by foreign missionaries and remains an important JEA affiliate.

The meeting took place at the [Ochanomizu Christian Center](#) in Tokyo, which houses the offices not only of the JEA but also of many other Christian entities in Japan. It is closely connected to the history of evangelicals in Japan and to the diligent work of American missionaries in Japan directly after the end of World War II. The land was purchased in 1949, and the first offices in the building were dedicated in 1955. In 1967, the Billy Graham Tokyo International Convention supported a major expansion of the facility, and the Ochanomizu Bible Institute was established there in 1994. The center is easy to reach, as it sits opposite to the central JR Ochanomizu train and subway station.

The JEA publishes twice a year an English bulletin “Japan Update”: [https://jeanet.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Japan-Update-84\\_layout3rd.pdf](https://jeanet.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Japan-Update-84_layout3rd.pdf).