

*"I am the resurrection and the life; one who believes in me,  
though s/he dies, yet shall live..."*

JOHN 11:25

## New Beginnings

**E**aster is a time for alleluias and shouts of joy for new life, and new beginnings! This year it falls in the month of April. In my work in Japan, April is also the beginning of a new school year, a new group of freshmen to get to know, each with their own hopes and dreams for new adventures at Doshisha University.

April is a joyous time, yet it also has a special sadness for some at our University. April 25th is the two-year anniversary of a train accident that took the lives of 107 people. Four of those killed and over 20 severely injured were students of our University. It was one of the worst railroad accidents in Japan's history. In Japan, where trains are expected to be on schedule, this train was exceeding the speed limit, and derailed on a curve.

Following the accident, the entire campus was engulfed in grief. The University held several worship services the week after the accident and then continued to hold daily prayer meetings during the lunch hour. Over 3500 people attended the services. There was such a real sense that the Christian faith brought the University community together, uniting us in a common bond, in the midst of our grief and pain. Three months after the accident, a memorial service was held with over 500 people attending, including the families of the victims. Though most people are not Christian, the worship brought us together. In Doshisha's 130 years of history as a Christian school, this was yet another moment when the Christian witness made a difference.

Now two years later, joy in resurrection often replaces our sorrow. Life has moved forward more lightly, more happily. My hope is that we continue to witness to the Good News in times of joy and in times of grief - and the in-between times too.

*O, God, you have offered us new life, may we seek to bring renewing joy and hope to our world!*

Martha Mensendiek is a missionary teaching social welfare at Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan through the Council on Cooperative Mission.



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