

Tribute and Appreciation for Rev. Tsutomu Shoji

(Announcement on the passing of the Rev. Tsutomu Shoji, former General Secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan(NCCJ))

It is with great sadness that we share this announcement. Rev. Shoji passed away at his home around 11:00 am on Tuesday, August 25th, 2020. He was 88 years old. Rev. Shoji had been in and out of the hospital for several months but he was able to spend the last week of his life with his family in Tokyo. He had dedicated his whole life to serving the Lord by working for the oppressed, fighting discrimination, and supporting human rights for those described by Jesus as the "least of these" in our world.

Rev Shoji was born in Kanagawa prefecture in 1932. He graduated from Waseda University and attended seminary at both Union Theological Seminary in Tokyo and Union Theological Seminary in New York. An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), Rev. Shoji served different UCCJ churches and retired as a pastor in 2003. Rev. Shoji served the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) as the General Secretary, from 1978 to 1985.

During his time as the General Secretary of NCCJ in the 1980s, Rev. Shoji strengthened ties with NCC Korea. NCCJ and NCKK worked together on issues related to the democratization process of South Korea and for the unification of the Korean Peninsula. Rev Shoji was instrumental in strengthening NCCJ's involvement in the ecumenical struggle for justice and peace in North East Asia. Rev. Shoji was one of the principal ecumenical leaders in preparing and hosting the WCC's landmark 1984 Tozanso Consultation on Peace and Justice in North East Asia. Rev. Shoji was a visionary and foresaw that the Tozanso consultation would help contribute to unification in Korea and peace in North East Asia. He assisted WCC by giving necessary logistical assistance and recommended the names of the Japanese church leaders to be invited to such a unique international, ecumenical, epoch making gathering. The Tozanso Conference, later it is widely called the " Tozanso process" set the pathway for the most tenacious ecumenical engagements for the Korean Peninsula, as evidenced in the recent anniversary celebration of a June 22 Convocation arranged by the WCC in declaring a People's Korea Peace Treaty.

Among other numerous ecumenical contributions in Japan and at the international level, Rev Shoji was also serving NCCJ as the chair and a member of the Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee. He also served on the Koryo Museum in Tokyo as the first Chair of the Board of Trustees. Rev. Shoji was gentle and soft-spoken but he was a man of

conviction. He was passionate about challenging the Japanese churches to become more aware of Asian realities, and to get involved with peace issues.

Rev Shoji will be remembered as one of the renowned leaders in the ecumenical movement. He will be greatly missed.

We give thanks to God for Shoji-sensei's life and many accomplishments. He was a blessing not only to the churches in Japan but also to the wider ecumenical family of God throughout the world. It was my honor and privilege to have a chance to work with him.

May Shoji-sensei rest in eternal peace.

Rev Shoji is survived by his three daughters.

Toshi Yamamoto (Rev.)

Former General Secretary of the NCC-Japan