Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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CFAY Chapel of Hope celebrates annual International Christmas

By Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

Sailors, civilians, family members and their Japanese counterparts filled Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Chapel of Hope to enjoy the annual International Christmas celebration Dec. 13.

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed provided opening remarks for the event and welcomed the multicultural crowd to the chapel.

"Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Fleet Activities Yokosuka's 27th International Christmas celebration," Weed said. "Thank you all citizens from the United States and Japan, and all other countries in attendance, for sharing your valuable time to worship with us as one community."

A crowd of more than 800 filled the pews to enjoy an evening of song, dance and reflection on what Christmas truly means. The celebration featured singing by an assortment of both adult and children's choirs, from both on and off the base. Keeping with the international theme of the night, bible passages, Luke 2:1-20, were recited in Spanish, English, Italian, Japanese, Tagalog and Korean languages.

Also, Kurihama Church Reverend Hideyuki Kubota provided the Christmas message for the evening in Japanese.

"Let us thank God today, from our hearts, that we may celebrate this International Christmas together," said Kubota to begin his sermon. "Let us thank God for inviting us here and for giving us the rich fellowship of Christmas. Let us be thankful to be able to sing hymns and to wonder at the events of Christmas. And let us write indelibly in our hearts the meaning of the events of Christmas."

A crowd of more than 800 Sailors, family members and Japanese filled the Chapel of Hope to enjoy an evening of song, dance and reflection on what Christmas truly means during the International Christmas celebration held on board CFAY Dec. 13.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Andrew Smith

The evening also featured the lighting of the Advent Candle by CFAY Chaplain Allen Vaughn and his family, a benediction by CFAY Chaplain Donald Moss, and a benediction by incoming Chaplain Barry Metzger. Those in attendance were also treated to performances by Japanese opera singer Yasuko Tanaka and The Yokosuka City Committee Gospel Choir, led by Thomas Givens, who roused people out of their seats with his spirited renditions of Christmas songs.

Although the night was filled with entertainment, food and drink, the true joy of the evening for the revelers was to be able to join their brothers and sisters in faith in a celebration that transcends race, nationality or creed.

"We have something in common that brings us all together, and anytime you have something in common like that it helps break down the cultural and language barriers that might otherwise keep people apart," said CFAY Chaplain William Stewart. "Christmas isn't about language or nationality, it is about an event we all celebrate and is very meaningful to all of us and to have the opportunity to come together and celebrate that event is very special."

Farmer's Market draws bushel of support from base community

Story and photo by MC3 Devon Dow,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

The Yokosuka and Hayama Agricultural Association, Yokosuka City Hall and Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) team hosted the Yokosuka Farmer's Market on board CFAY Dec. 12 at the commissary red brick area for Sailors and their families.

In its fifth year serving the base community, the market provides the opportunity to purchase seasonal fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers grown by Japanese farmers.

"I believe the Yokosuka Farmer's Market is a good way to expand the local products to the American community here on base,"said Michi Nishino, a volunteer for the Yokosuka International Association. "The goods we provide the people here are locally grown, fresh and affordable. The customers are always telling us how cheap the prices are for the goods, so in the end it works for everyone."

During the early hours of the market, Yuto Yoshida, the mayor of Yokosuka, was on hand and spent time passing out samples and greeting customers as they shopped. Vendors offered various free samples including honey and mikan (Japanese tangerine) jam, which were among the popular items customers sampled and purchased.

"My son and I have really enjoyed ourselves here today. My son is definitely a fan of the free samples,"said Musician 1st Class Chris Samms. "It's my first time coming to the market and I should have brought more money to purchase more vegetables."

One couple, who has visited the market for the past three years, said they look forward to the experience.

"Personally, I am not a vegetable eater myself, but my wife is,"said John Jensen. "I enjoy coming to the market with her. The vegetables are beautiful, even as a non-vegetable eater it makes me almost wish I ate vegetables."

Collecting a bag of fruits and Japanese radishes she just purchased, Jensen's wife, Jan, a teacher at The Sullivans Elementary School, said the market is a great way to learn more about the Japanese culture.

"I hope they do more of these markets here," Jan said. "The vegetables are beautiful, they are of great quality and you cannot beat the prices. I think it is great that the Japanese community takes time to come here and sell natural products that we are not used to getting here."

Yokosuka Sailors and family members purchase fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers grown and sold by Japanese farmers at the Yokosuka Farmer's Market Dec. 12. The event was co-hosted by Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Morale, Welfare and Recreation team, the Yokosuka and Hayama Agricultural Associations and Yokosuka City Hall.

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Ending a year of fierce competition, Sailors and civilians gathered at the CPO Club for the annual Captain's Cup trophy presentation ceremony Dec. 9.

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The U.S. Navy continues to execute a strategy of information awareness and vaccination of personnel to fight against the H1N1 flu.

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