

The United Church of Christ in Japan karuizawa Church

The background of Karuizawa Church and the people who laid its groundwork

With 11 churches in Karuizawa Town and with 4 churches in Old Karuizawa alone, this Karuizawa Church is deeply rooted in this area as being noted for its most long-standing history of being a church for Japanese people.

In 1897 (Meiji 30) when the more than 600 foreign missionaries from various countries and of varying denominations came together and built Union Church for themselves, the Kyuuichi Uehara family who operated a store in this town prayed earnestly about their desire to have a church for Japanese people.



Hereby with the cooperation of the missionaries that built Union Church, on December 1st, 1905 (Meiji 38) they made the Uehara house a meeting place and began a work as a church.

In June 1912 (Meiji 45), on this property donated by Miss Den Sato, a believer, a church building was built that was designed by Mr. W. M. Vories.

This prayer was offered up at the time the work began as a church. “May missionaries, Christians, and non-Christians come together equally in cheerful fellowship to help each other as God’s workers with no discrimination, with the church’s underlying secret being that of feeling thanks, hope, and courage regarding the lives of those people gathered together.”

Now, with the passing of 100 years, this prayer has been the power in overcoming manifold trials.

At the time the Uehara family began this work, they were strongly opposed by unruly people. But they made this prayer their mainstay and sacrificed themselves to building this church.

Leading the missionaries, that helped the Uehara family in this work, was Missionary Daniel Norman.

Reverend Norman was from Ontario, Canada.

After coming to Japan in 1897 (Meiji 30), he distributed hand printed tracts, utilized such newspapers as The Shinano Daily, evangelized in front of post offices and train stations, preached in prisons and such in Tokyo, in various prefectures in the Hokuriku region and in Nagano Ken, while also building several churches.

In particular, “Karuizawa is to be a place to seek pleasure in nature, not to seek pleasure in people.”

So, over a period of 40 years, Mr. Norman dedicated himself to safeguarding

and cultivating nature and culture by bringing about the building of hospitals, roads, streets and town water facilities, the establishment of tennis courts, social morals, the blockage of “over-building”, maintaining an environment for healthy social living, preserving nature, and conducting such cultural life events as musical concerts and lecture meetings.

He was called “Karuizawa’s Mayor” with respect and affection.

In 1916 (Taisho 5), this church opened a church affiliated kindergarten. It was the origin of the “Daniel Norman Memorial School Institute” educational foundation.

This was Reverend Daniel Norman’s work in Karuizawa, giving his life to laying the foundations for various beneficial things.

But in 1940 (Showa 15), as the sun set on the eve of the upcoming great war, he could not avoid returning to his own country.

On June the 20th of the following year, he was called to Heaven. He was 77 years old.

From that year’s (1940) August 19th commemoration to the 25th year after his call to Heaven, on August 16th, 1965, The Karuizawa Church, Union Church, and The Karuizawa Kai (tennis club) held a joint memorial service in remembrance of the many benefits bestowed upon us in Karuizawa by Mr. Norman

Reverend Norman’s name was Daniel Norman but people whole-heartedly called him “Norman Sensei” with intimate affection. Daniel himself and his own family referred to him as “Norman”.