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Weekly
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Ikego Detachment Holds Tree Lighting Ceremony



Photos by MC1 Kaleb J. Sarten,
CFAY Public Affairs

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CFAY Holds International Christmas Celebration

Story by Garrett Cole, CFAY Public Affairs

With the holidays quickly approaching, the feeling onboard Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY), transforms into a lively small-town atmosphere as it prepares for a flurry of seasonal events, both on and off base. One longstanding tradition combining the Japanese and CFAY communities is the International Christmas Celebration (ICC). The ICC is a bilateral event held at the Yokosuka Chapel of Hope every December. This is the second year the service has been held since the pandemic and is the first service to anticipate attendance of local guests from off base.

"It started around forty years ago as a joint service between a local Japanese church, the Yokosuka Christian Center, and the Chapel of Hope," shared Cmdr. David D. Kim, CFAY command chaplain. "Although the service has historically been much bigger, some of the local churches are still slow to come out of the COVID scare and are limiting attendance at public gatherings. This year, we invited forty-four churches, and seven are sending attendees. We're expecting around a hundred guests."

The first ICC was held at the Yokosuka Civic Hall in 1983 and was the brainchild of two local Japanese churches and the Chapel of Hope. The service used to alternate between the Yokosuka Civic Hall and the Chapel of Hope until 1985, when the chapel became the main venue for the event. Since then, it has been held annually on the first weekend of December until 2020 due to the pandemic. While the event was held last year, only

Americans attended in person. This year will be the first year Japanese members will participate in person.

This time-honored tradition has a long history of bringing attendees from both on and off base to celebrate the Christmas season and highlight the bilateral relationship with our host country. Opening remarks will be given by Capt. Les Sobol, Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, and the Chief of Chaplains, Rear Adm. Gregory Todd. The service will also feature special guest Rev. Yasuko Shibata of Musashino Yokosuka Church and music provided by the Yokosuka Citizenship Committee. The reception will be held in the Nile C. Kinnick High School gymnasium following the service with pizza, cookies, and drinks.

Events like these are vital as they help to strengthen our relationship with host nation communities. The International Christmas Celebration offers people from all walks of life the opportunity to gather and embodies the spirit of the holiday season.

"This event is important to participate in and to be a part of," said Sobol. "We celebrate the ICC with our neighbors, and it's essential to have that relationship with the outside community. Our chaplains are such an integral part of this community. They are the enablers of what it means to live life the right way."

Though the holiday season is typically a time of joyful celebrations, it can also be filled with stress and hardships. For those who have lost loved ones or are separated from family or friends during this time of year, it can be quite difficult. The strength of a community is established by every member's personal well-being, which is especially important for overseas assignments. The chapel and other organizations assist by partnering and helping to build spiritual and emotional resilience during this season.

For more than 75 years, CFAY has provided, maintained, and operated base facilities and services in support of the U.S. 7th Fleet's forward-deployed naval forces, tenant commands, and thousands of military and civilian personnel and their families.

