

## *Visit to the Disaster-hit Areas*

Fumiyo Terashima, Communications Officer

Guided by Rev. Noguchi, Japan Lutheran Emergency Relief chaplain, three members of the East District Church Women's Board and two from the JELCW Board visited the disaster-hit areas in Tohoku from July 5<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup>. Our purpose was to listen to the voices of the residents and to figure out what is needed in our future support program.

To me, it was the third time to visit the areas. I was wondering how far rehabilitation/revitalization efforts have progressed in the 28 months after the disaster. I saw some factories back in operation and makeshift shopping quarters open with some shoppers. There were young people, who came by inter-city bus, listening intently to the locals. As to the housing, I learned that 6000 units would be available by next year in Ishinomaki city alone to accommodate survivors who currently live in the temporary shelters.

On the first day, we toured Ishinomaki city. We visited a community center in Kahoku to meet "Kahoku Volunteer Tomo-no-Kai," whose members taught how to make hanging dolls to those who reside temporarily in makeshift houses. The members gave us a hearty welcome and treated us to homemade dishes. We saw a Powerpoint presentation depicting the process of hanging doll project that had continued from August last year to March this year. At first, the survivors held back, thinking it was too difficult for them. However, neither teachers or workers gave up. They stitched to the last, thinking of and praying for the dead.

"I would have been carried away by the tsunami if I had not visited my daughter then," one of the survivors began to say. I saw tears come to her eyes. She told us that she lived by the sea and the entire community was carried away to the sea. She could not feel happy about having survived. Instead, she kept feeling guilty that she alone had survived. It was then that she was invited to the hanging doll project. Before long, her arrhythmia and insomnia were gone. When she said, "I had never cried in front of people," my heart ached.

Survivors in Ogatsu, the area where the damage was most severe, were the first ones to start making the dolls. The local newspaper covered their action so extensively that it caught the eye of one Tomo-no-kai member, who thought they could also do the same, and they did. They complimented us saying, "Lutheran church members have given clothes, visited us, and encouraged us ...." Smilingly they said they were pleased with the project completion and the nationwide roadshow of the dolls that followed. "We never thought that the dolls would go across the ocean as far as to America," they said.

On the second day, we visited the construction site of Maehama community center in Minami-sanriku. They said that the entire community of about 120 people is looking forward to the completion of the new building, so that they can gather and be connected again.

We then visited Mrs. S, who cultures *wakame* (seaweed) and sells it also to the Lutheran church. She treated us with dishes made of *wakame*. As her house is located on a hill, it escaped damage by tsunami. Conversely, she opened her house to many relatives for a certain period. Concerning the deaths of her sisters-in-law, she revealed her mixed feeling saying, "To tell you the truth, I don't want to talk about them because it hurts me. But I think I must tell the what happened for the future generations." Her words remain heavily in my heart.

On the same day, we found an answer to what we came here for; to figure out what is needed in our future support program. We saw woven sandals the survivors living in the temporary tenements in Oppagawa had made, and learned that they are having trouble getting material --- simple, used T-shirts. So we have decided to call for a contribution from JELCW members all across Japan.

Weaving sandals is a part of their living and their psychological support. Let us pray together and help them carry out their activity. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

## ***JELCW News***

Following the resignation of President Kazuko Kato (Kyushu District), Kazuko Nomura (Kyushu District) was elected as a new board member. The Board then nominated Naoko Suzuki for the office of president. JELCW representatives then elected her by a majority.

[ Message by the new president ] Taking the president office Naoko Suzuki

Following the resignation of President Kazuko Kato, we have made a new start with an incoming member for the remaining two years. We have expressed our thoughts in the latest communication, *Hibiki*, issued in September. I sincerely ask for your cooperation and prayer. Thank you.

[ Message by the new board member ] Kazuko Nomura (Oita) Secretary

I have joined the board as a representative from Kyushu District. JELCW has always given me new views and opened my eyes. I am quite attracted to JELCW as such. With your help, I hope to dash to the goal with determination. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Photo:** (from right) Setsuko Ishida (treasurer/vice president), Fumiyo Terashima (communications), Naoko Suzuki (president), and Kazuko Nomura (secretary)



## ***Sabah Seminary News***

### ***Invitation to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of STS***

“Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! This year Sabah Theological Seminary is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With the theme ‘Praise God for his wonderful works’ (Ps. 98) we want to take this opportunity …to give thanks… for the wonderful partners and friends we have from all around the world who partner with us in the ministry of theological education … It is great pleasure to me to extend our warmest invitation to you ….”

~ Main program ~

Oct. 25, 7:30 PM Anniversary multi-cultural concert at STS auditorium

Oct. 26, 2:30 PM Anniversary thanksgiving celebration & Graduation ceremony at STS auditorium

Oct. 26, 7:30 PM Anniversary banquet at Putera Theatre Ballroom

(extracted from the STS principal’s letter)

Ten people from different parts of Japan have expressed their desire to visit Sabah. They will attend the anniversary celebration and graduation ceremony. Please pray that this trip will be blessed as a symbol of friendship between Malaysia and Japan. We will report on this trip in the next issue of JELCW newsletter.

## Obituary

+ Rev. Katuhiko Shigetomi  
March 6, 2013 (at 71)  
Pastor at Megumino Church

+ Rev. Andrew Ellis  
July 20, 2013 (at 85)

Sent to Japan by the United Lutheran Church in America in 1951, continued to serve as Pastor for the entire Christian community; congregational, educational and social welfare, around Kumamoto until his death.

**Please accept our sincere condolences.**

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+ Rev. Yoshiya Kume (retired)  
March 24, 2013 (at 91)

+ Rev. Yukio Ishibashi (retired)  
May 19, 2013 (at 87)

+ Ms. Vappu Kataja  
July 20, 2013

Missionary to Japan by the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland from 1959 to 1994, served for Christian community both congregational and educational.

### ***JLER Support for Woven Sandals, please contribute materials***

The disaster survivors living in Oppagawa temporary housing have finished the hanging doll project and started a new one; weaving sandals. Now we assist their project by sending T-shirts as material.

- \* Adult size T-shirts
- \* Fabric with elasticity
- \* Simple (no embroidery, but one-point initial, etc. acceptable)

The woven sandals are comfortable to wear and quite popular. The material is to be collected and sent by each district. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.



### ***Announcement from JELCW***

Starting with the Newsletter No. 146, the recipients of Thanksgiving donation kindly contribute messages on the first page. For this issue, we are happy to have Ms. Junko Tsuru of Rainbow House.

### ***World day of prayer 2013 : Donation***

345,000 yen was evenly distributed among *Hoshikuzu-no-kai*, and *Child and Family Support Center in Asahigaoka*, a day-care arm of *Chiba Bethany Home*.

### ***Postscript***

The summer heat lasted long, torrential rains hit and damaged Tokyo and elsewhere. By the time you receive the current issue of JELCW newsletter, I hope the temperature is more comfortable. The other day, the popular NHK (TV) history drama aired a scene where they read the 'Sermon on the Mount' from St. Matthew. Christianity was banned for 260 years but now the words of the Bible give power to those in trouble and pain. (F)