

For the Future: Keep Praying as “Neighbors”

A few years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the land I visited had been completely transformed. The dirt mounds seemed to continue to the horizon and the heavy machineries were seen everywhere. Soon people will move into this place, but I felt conflicted. The impression of “*Lutheran-san*” stayed with the people even after the “Tonaribito (Your Neighbor)” project ended in its third year. Pastor Noguchi and the people still have a good relationship to this day.

Two years ago, the people from Ishinomaki visited Matsumoto Church. It was their first time to come to a church. Because they did not know anything about churches, some of them even said, “the church also has a kitchen.” One of the visitors said that she was mesmerized by the stained glass window, and described the experience as being “physically drawn to” the window. A member of Matsumoto Church heard this story and made a piece of stained glass art for her. The artwork was then entrusted to Pastor Noguchi and he presented it to this woman during our trip. It was a moving experience for us as well as for her and the people of Ishinomaki. I witnessed a connection being

made among the people.

I hope, whatever form it takes, we can keep being part of their lives as long as possible. What we did may be small, but we found a great joy through Pastor Noguchi’s work, which made this connection fruitful.

Immediately after the Kumamoto earthquake, some members of the church in the Sabah Seminary in Malaysia emailed us, concerned for our well-being. They said that they would start a fundraising project for us, and soon donations were pouring in. It was not the amount of the money I was thankful for; I was thankful and grateful for their thoughtfulness and caring hearts. The people my predecessors had supported were such caring “tonaribito (neighbors)!” The whole experience made me realize this joyous truth.

No matter how small and insignificant it seems, keeping the connection alive and continuing to pray for our neighbors will eventually create a greater bond of people that we can maintain for the future. Each one of our prayers has crystalized into these experiences. Thanks to God!

(Akiko Nemoto, Treasurer)



23rd JELCW Officer Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, June 21, 2016 1pm -8pm at Japan Evangelical Lutheran Sendai Church
Attendees: Naoko Kokatsu, Masako Kondo, Kumi Yagi, Kunie Sakurai, Nami Matsumoto, Mari Hara, Mie Haga, Etsuko Yanai, Akiko Nemoto, and Noriko Sugimoto

Agenda:

“Succession of Faith”:

Rethink the succession as “sharing of faith,” not “passing down of faith”

- In the TNG division, which works with faith-succession programs, it is important to have an attitude of learning and praying with the participants.
- It is possible for JELCW to be part of the support structure for TNG

JELCW Newsletter: Discuss a new concept for the newsletter

- Because the newsletter is a collective expression of faith, the opening column “Mikotoba” should be maintained
- Incorporate JELCW members’ opinion to fulfill the newsletter’s role as an information publication
- Provide contents that can interest non-JELCW members

General Meeting: General Meeting will be held at a hotel in June 7-8, 2018. The decreasing number and aging of members has been taken into consideration.

- Schedule:
First day (1pm-8pm); Opening service (with Communion), Workshops (“Succession of Faith” and “Radiation in Fukushima”), Dinner
Second day (9am-4pm); General Meeting (Election of the President, amendment of the bylaw about the number of members, etc.), Sending

Calling for contributors for the workshop “Succession of Faith”

Supporting the Disaster Areas:

Continuation of the support for the Great East Japan Earthquake & Tsunami and the Kumamoto Earthquake

- Great East Japan Earthquake & Tsunami: Plans to visit the disaster areas in late-May, 2017 (Tentative, will solicit participants)
- Kumamoto Earthquake: A fundraising drive will start. All CWs will participate. The donations will be sent to the Kyushu District

The relief fund for the Kumamoto Earthquake has reached 864,052 yen. Praise be to God! The support from the women from across the country was delivered to the Kyushu District CW’s League.

JELCW’s current situation: Membership has decreased by 270 people in the past seven years and 13 churches have cancelled their JELCW memberships.

- If we remain in the current situation, eventually we will not be able to keep the organization functional.
- Our focus is to serve the way only churchwomen can
- The traditional roles of women in church have changed
- Discipleship as the moving Body of Christ will involve both men and women

District Activity Reports & Announcements

District	Activity Report	Announcements
Hokkaido	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April the presiding district minister was changed from Rev. Chitose Sakamoto to Rev. Yoshiyuki Hikasayama. • In May a social gathering within the Hokkaido District CW's League was officially scheduled on October 9. • In June the "Lutheran Kelp" sales announcement was mailed out. • The activities of the "Fureai Mail" project has started. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On October 9, we will host Kozue Koizumi to speak at Sapporo Aspen Hotel with a reception to follow. Everyone is welcome. • The kelp is sent out from mid-September.
East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 4 was World Prayer Day. We held a gathering in Tokiwadai Baptist Church to learn about the current situation of children in Cuba, and we prayed together. • We set up a coffee shop at the District General Body Meeting on March 21 and the Nationwide General Body Meeting on May 3 to 5. The proceeds from the May coffee shop were donated to the Kumamoto Earthquake Relief Fund. • Presidents' Meeting & Women's Gathering were held on April 16 at Sei Pauro Church with Rev. Naoko Kokatsu as the lecturer. The topic was "Caregivers' Truth and Purpose." A discussion followed the lecture. • Koshin Area CW's Gathering was held at Matsumoto Church on June 5. 46 people participated in the worship, briefings from each participating church, and a social hour to discuss their church lives and share their stories of becoming Christians. We are thankful that all of the District Officers and Kofu Church, whose JELCW membership has currently ceased, could participate in the gathering. The gathering was organized by Iida Church and the venue was provided by Matsumoto Church. • The district newsletter "Flowers of Sharon: Hot News" vol.1 was published on July 15. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have a booth at the "One-Day Seminary (open campus)" event on September 22. • A lecture "Care Receivers' Truth and Purpose" by Mutsumi Takahashi, Director of Tokyo Nursing Home and Rev. Saana Ito is scheduled on October 15. A discussion will follow the lecture. • A visit to Tokyo Nursing Home is scheduled in November.
Tokai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The District CW visited "Green's Fair" at the Denmark Bokujo on May 3 and donated the proceeds to the Fukushima Donation Fund. • We invited Terumi Kataoka, Director of "Save the Children from Radiation" from Aizu Radiation Information Center to speak at our CW gathering on May 28 at Eiko Church Yaizu Chapel. The topic was of a current social issue and met with a great interest by the audience. An 81-year-old member from Yaizu Chapel also shared her story of "Daigo Fukuryumaru." A presentation of the TNG Spring Camp was shown at the gathering as well. • The district newsletter "Agapanthus" vol.3 was published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 4th CW Gathering is scheduled on October 1 at Koromo Church. The scheduled events are: Kantele & Gospel concert by Miki Ozawa; talk "From the Field of Elderly Care" by Mieko Kanetaka, Assistant Director of Special Elderly Nursing Home Diaconia; and a group discussion of the topic "What Constitutes a good Christian end to life?"
West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three "Hanamizuki Gatherings," district-wide meetings were held with guests Hanna Pettinen and Miki Ozawa on May 10 at Osaka Church (Kansai area), May 11 at Seijo Church (Higashi Chugoku area) and May 14 at Atsugi Church as its special worship program (Nishi Chugoku area). The theme was "Through the Eyes of Finnish Hymns." • The district newsletter "Hanamizuki" vol. 3 was published. • Email news subscription is becoming gradually accepted. • District officers visited Shion Church Masuda Chapel, which has one JELCW member, and Matsuyama Church, whose JELCW membership has ceased, to worship with the members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A district CW program "Reformation 500th Anniversary is Also the 500th Birthday of Hymns!" is scheduled on March 19, 2017 from 4pm. It is the day before the West District's Reformation 500 service (March 20, 2017).

Kyushu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagasaki Church restarted their membership. We are thankful for their coming back to the JELCW. • We helped our youth/collegiate group's handmade <i>somen</i> noodle sales. • We held a gender study last year and realized that it is difficult to raise awareness among the churchwomen by themselves. • We currently do not have our own support program for the Kumamoto Earthquake but are offering support for the District's program. To care for children in psychological distress, we introduced the works of "Child Fund." • We helped the sales of items the District made for the Reformation 500th Anniversary. • The district newsletter "<i>Michishirube</i>" vol. 99 was published. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expanded officers' meeting is scheduled in February 2017. The discussion topic is "<i>Shukatsu</i> (preparing for the end)" (tentative). • We are accepting "My Story" article submissions. • 100 copies of "<i>Iko no migiwa</i>," a product of "Silver Project" will be reprinted (2000 yen/copy). A copy will be gifted to each district. To purchase, contact Murozono Church CW.
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Activity Reports & Announcements from International Organizations

<i>Itsukushimi</i> Reporting Members: Hisako Ishitobi, Akie Moroyama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 16 Itsukushimi Seminar was held at Tokyo Church. "Women in Diakonia : Diakonia seen through the Bible and History" by Dr. Kjell Nordstokke, Former President at Diakonhjemmet University, Norway.
ACWCJ (Asian Church Women's Conference) Reporting Members: Naomi Tajima, Keiko Renge *Committee Meeting is held on the 4 th Friday of every month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar "Being One with Christ" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kansai Area: Friday, October 7, 10:30-15:30 at Japan Protestant Episcopal Kawaguchi Christ Church Message: Father Iwashiro (Kawaguchi Christ Church), Bible Study: Rev. Furumoto (Chaplain, Heian Jogakuin), Keynote: Mariko Iwao (Social Worker, Mead Shakaikan). ○ Japan Committee: Friday, November 11, 10:30-15:30 at the United Church of Christ in Japan Fujimi Church Message: Rev Otsuka (UCCJ Megurohara Church), Bible Study: Rev. Kim (The Korean Christian Church in Japan). Discussion Leader: Rev. Hidaka (Japan Baptist Convention Hiraoka Joyful Chapel). • Reports from the 2015 Seminar is sold 500 yen/copy. To purchase call Tajima.
NCC Reporting Members: Noriko Ishitani, Yamato Yasuda *Committee Meeting is held on the 4 th Wednesday of every month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 18-20 Asia Joint Meeting (to resolve the "Comfort Women" issue) at Seoul. Two members attended. • May 25 Internal Meeting "Stop the Violation of Women and Children's Rights" at Sangiin Giin Kaikan. 5 members attended. • Reports from 2016 World Prayer Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total amount of offering: 8,173,192 yen ○ JELC will donate 320,000 yen to Denmark Bokujo Social Services, Orphanage/Youth House "Kodomo no Ie" and Kengun Church Wakaeda Scholarship Committee. ○ Seminarian Mie Yokoyama will also receive 50,000 yen as a support. ○ 2017 World Prayer Day liturgy is currently being edited in the Philippines. • Friday, March 3, 2017 is the next World Day of Prayer. Please join us in the worship and prayer for the women and children of the Philippines.
LWF/WICAS Reporting Members: Masae Nishida	<p>To celebrate the Lutheran Reformation 500th Anniversary, we continue to work on the project to create a book of "Herstories" that contributed to the history of the Lutheran Church.</p> <p>The Lutheran World Federation's <i>Gender Justice Policy</i> is now being sold (300 yen/copy). The booklet describes how to empower women and protect their rights in order to achieve gender justice. To order please send an email or fax with the number of booklets and your address. The booklets will be sent with a payment slip.</p>