



From the Northern Countries

Hokkaido Special District Churchwomen's Group

Hokkaido has three Churchwomen's groups.

The groups are small but they pray for and communicate with each other.

■ On October 9, 2016, the day before the 100th anniversary service of mission to Sapporo Church, the Hokkaido Special District CW held a long awaited social event. We invited former president of the JELCW Sae Koizumi as a speaker and she gave a speech titled "One step of ten people is more than ten steps of one person." Pastor Asami and his wife who served in Sapporo Church, Mrs.



Hoshino, Pastor Soberi from Finland, and the current president and vice-president of JELCW attended the event. Ms. Kumiko Kono also came from Kumamoto prefecture and reported on the Kumamoto Earthquake. The three churches are introduced below.

Churchwomen's Group, Sapporo Church—our past and present

Back in 1969, Sapporo Church did not have a churchwomen's group but the members felt the women had a unique role in their service to the church. Upon discussing the idea with the pastor, an action plan to start a group was created in the following year. Activities such as monthly meetings, a book club, a handicraft group and *Udon shokudo* (noodle lunch preparation after Sunday services) were organized. Back then, the number of the women participants was more than double the current membership, so activities such as the young wives' group and volunteering at Sapporo Church Kindergarten were held. Sewing like apron making which reflects old days was very popular in the handicraft group.



Currently, we have 15 members and we still hold monthly meetings and *Udon shokudo*, just like before. We prepare meals for the church celebrations and support children of the Philippines, which has given us a great joy. Still, with the aging membership and for the growing number of working women among us, our activities need help from other church members.



On a cold, winter morning, we cannot get out of the house to prepare *udon* noodles and other meals without shoveling snow out of our driveway. For all the work we do, we should help each other first. We hope our women's group will be able to find a breakthrough under these circumstances. Above all, we hope that each of us will be filled with the Holy Spirit and that we can pray for and support each other.



"No no hana no kai," Hakodate Church

History

One day in 1964, the wife of Pastor Hino, who was serving at Hakodate Church at that time, and church member Masako Masuda sat down in the living room of the parsonage and prayed together. And thus our women's group was born. In 1966, the group started a church bazaar to sell handmade items. From November 1974, various meetings (a handicraft group, Bible class and home gatherings) were regularly held.



In 2004, the name of the group was changed to "*No no hana no kai* (Gathering of wildflowers)" because the name "churchwomen's group" would give off an impression that it was only for married women. It was an effort to attract more women from different age groups, regardless of their marital status. We now prepare and serve after-service lunches on Sundays and help out on occasions like church celebrations and various events (Hakodate Morning Prayer Meeting, district camps, the children's group and concerts). We are also responsible for altar flowers, church supplies and organizing books in the church library. Every November, we make pickled turnips and serve them at the Sunday lunches.



Issues

Just like other churches, we are also facing the issue of aging membership. Right now the group's members are in their 50s up to 80s. Active members of the group are in their 60s and 70s and they don't have jobs. We have downsized our meal preparation activities and bazaars helping each other and keep on doing what we can. For the growing aging issue, when the time comes to change our activities, we pray for the Lord on what we should do for Him and for the church and go forward.

"Suzuran no kai," Obihiro Church CW

History



Our group first registered with the District CW in 1982 but withdrew from it at one point. In 1999, we registered with the organization once again and in January 2000, the group officially became "*Suzuran no kai* (Lilies of the Valley)" after it was approved by the Obihiro Church General Assembly. The group is emerging as a few volunteers supporting the foster children of CCWA (known as "*Pieta no kai*"). Since 2013, we have been making "towel caps" for patients undergoing chemotherapy and delivering them to hospitals around Christmas.

An issue

Since we don't have many participants in the activity other than on Sundays, we independently do small services when we think we can.