

## The 24th JELCW Newsletter

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 Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church Women  
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Overall theme: “Living Together in the Grace of God”

Subtheme: “Encouraging Each Other in Hope and Joy, We Work Together for Peace on Earth.”

*Scriptural Theme: “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”—  
 Romans Chapter 6: 8*

To you

### We seek for peace by rejoicing, encouraging and being united



**Rev. Tsugu Koizumi**  
**Pastor, Chiba Church**

Who on earth will we rejoice with, encourage with, and be united with? Who actually, at this very moment, are we rejoicing with, encouraging with, and being united with? Who are we seeking peace with?

Are the people that we work with to complete our subtheme the same ones that we are now working with to achieve the goal of it?

What do we need so that we can rejoice and encourage each other? What is the common wish we want to share? What is the peace we seek for?

This foreword, with its many questions, might be unusual. Yet we are now definitely being asked these questions. By whom? Not by the world nor society, but by Christ living in the present world and society. We have long been asked these questions and will continue to be asked into the future.

Let us sincerely continue responding to these questions of Jesus. Jesus doesn't ask who stands beside Him. Instead He asks us, who live together with Him, who lives beside us. It's not that we head for Jesus, but that He walks toward us. We could go anywhere, to anyone because Jesus is always with us.

## Action Plans for 24th Term

### With God's blessing

**JELCW President  
Michie Nakahara**

The JELCW's 24<sup>th</sup> term has started in the year of celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Due to the rapidly aging society, the increasing number of women in the workforce, and the developments in information technologies, the circumstances that surround us have changed dramatically. Taking these facts into consideration, we're required to carefully choose what to preserve, what to abandon, and what to develop for keeping pace with modern times.

The following six agenda items were adopted at the recent General Meeting:

1. Turning our eyes more to society
2. Publishing a newsletter and "*Hibiki*" (echo) twice a year, sharing ideas on our homepage
3. Learning scripture through Bible study
4. Supporting domestic and international missions with donations
5. Succeeding faith to the next generation and supporting mission work education
6. Supporting the victims of earthquakes by selling goods

To achieve these goals, we're resolved to work hard for the coming three years. Agenda item 1, above all, is new for us to work on in our 90 years' history of JELCW.

We're expecting that there will rise a variety of new visions and actions from each and every church and district to answer God's messages.

May JELCW be a federation in which we may live together with God's blessing.



The 24<sup>th</sup> JELCW executive members  
Saeko Sawada, Kyoko Ezaki, Michie Nakahara, Noriko Tsubomoto

### Words from new executive members

**Vice President/ Secretary**

**Noriko Tsubomoto, Hiyoshi Church**

I'm so grateful to be given a role as vice president. I pray to God for the precious relationships and connections between us all and the everlasting succession of faith from one generation to the next. I would always like to be forward-looking.

**Accountant**

**Kyoko Ezaki, Kengun Church**

The sacred lot given to me at 2018's New Year's Day service was Hebrews 12:11, which I think was a very timely one. I will always bear this scripture in mind while fulfilling my role for next three years.

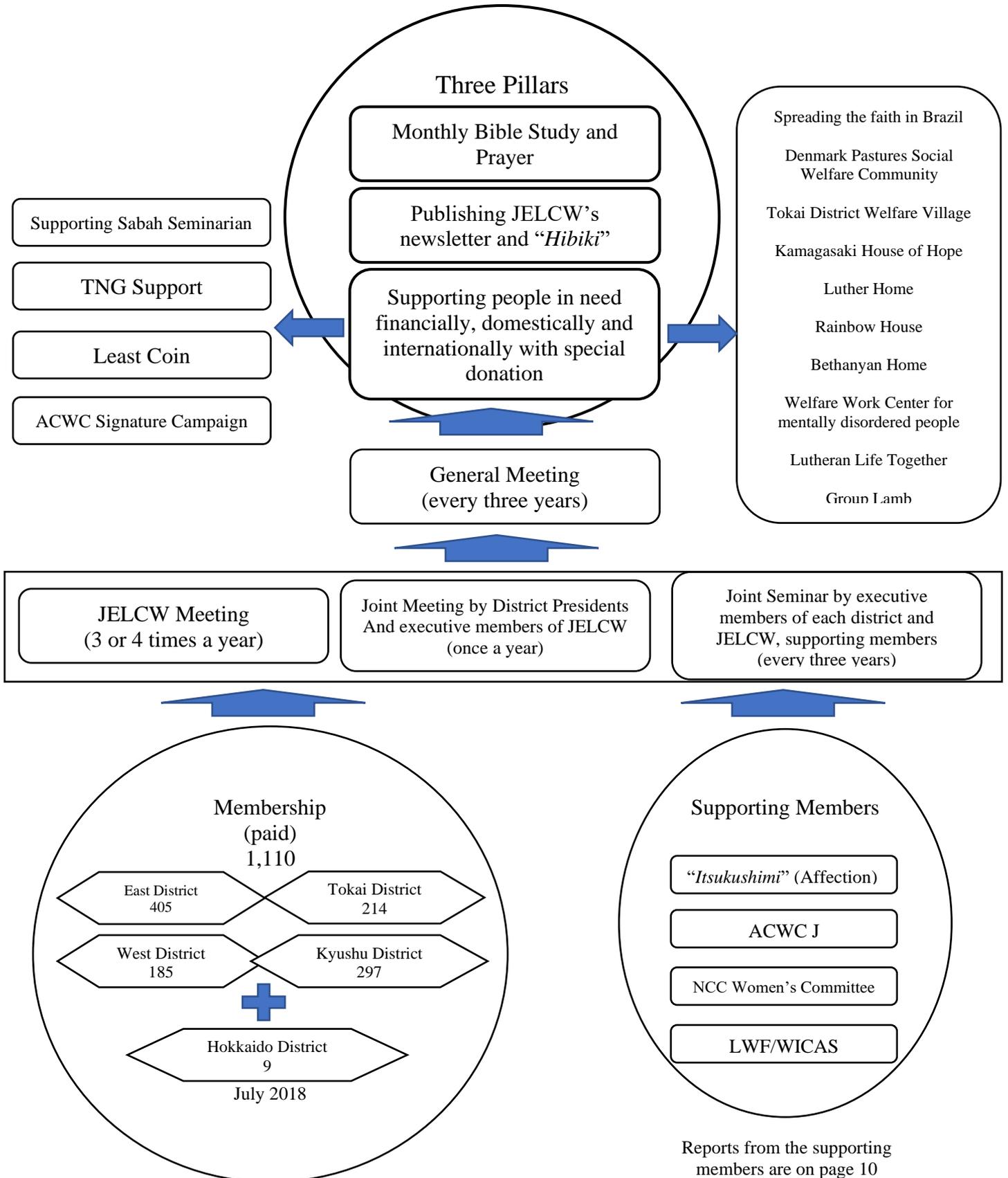
**Recorder/ Documenter**

**Saeko Sawada, Koromo Church**

I've accepted it in the end! I hope I will be able to complete my role, singing the children's hymn "How Good it is to Follow Jesus" to myself and feeling the blessing of it.

### What exactly is JELCW doing?

JELCW consists of three pillars: bible study, newsletter, and bridging the gap between domestic and international support. As individuals our strength is miniscule, like drops of rain. But united in faith, we are an ocean capable of great deeds. We are certainly succeeding in our tradition of sharing the power of the Holy Spirit.



## East District Women's Group

**President  
Naomi Ichikawa**

### Praying Together

God gave me an ordeal to withstand on that day. My quiet retired life with a lot of leisure time at my disposal totally changed when I was appointed president of the East District Women's Group in February of 2018. My heart was immediately filled with numerous worries and concerns. At present, however, I feel more blessed than worried. Through the actual activities done during these past days, I could easily observe and strongly feel the tangible cooperation and collaboration that has always existed in our tradition. Allow me to convey these wonderful experiences of mine to you all and I'd love to let our neighbors know the love of God and share it with them.

In April, the Presidents' meeting of the East District was held at Ookayama Church. Divided into small groups, we discussed what exactly should be done by the women's group. We're going to discuss it further at the meeting held in October.

It was a great joy to have more goods and more people for the coffee shops than we had thought both at the district's meeting and the National General Meeting.

-Activities Ahead-

1. Presidents' meeting and women's gathering in October
2. Selling goods at a one-day seminar
3. Attending ACWC's seminar
4. Attending JELCW's seminar
5. Exchanging friendship with the residents of Tokyo Elderly Home
6. Supporting groups in need
7. Publishing "Sharon no Hanadayori" (Letters from Rose of Sharon) twice a year



'We are open!' (Entrance Hall of Tokyo Church)

## East Pacific Coast District Women's Group

**President  
Shigeko Sakai**

### We are the Branches

The bond between the trunk of a grape tree and its branches is so strong that they don't easily get separated. No matter how long a branch grows, grapes are born near the end of it. We are ordered to stay on a branch of the tree. The tree is Jesus. I've learned that being on a branch is not so difficult a task to do because the trunk holds the branch very strongly. I've also learned there's no need for us to strive, practice asceticism, or sacrifice. Believing in God firmly, we have set sail into the unknown sea.

Thanks to a great help from our pastor as well as our sisters, we, new appointees, could publish our newsletter "Agapansasu" (Agapanthus) at the beginning of July. We have no words to express our gratitude.

There'll be a women's gathering at Eikō-Shimada Church on October 20<sup>th</sup>, the theme of which is "Healing and Being Healed." Our brother, Mr. Toshiaki Takeuchi, a psychosomatic physician and psychiatrist, is planned to talk on the theme. We'll also have a tenor singer, so please don't miss the gathering if you'd like to be healed.

Our hearts are too full for the things close at hand to tell our hopes. All we can say is we'll go on and on bearing our colors and aroma.



'Greens Fair' in May (Welfare Village)

## West District Women's Group

**President  
Sumie Kuniyoshi**

### West Wind (*Nishi no Kaze*)

In accordance with JELCW's general theme, we chose the scripture "Ask and you will receive, so that your happiness may be complete" (John 16:24) to support our general theme "Live with Christ Under God's Power." We've started by praying for unity and a walk with Jesus.

The action plans are as follows:

1. We cherish the relationships between churches as well as within each church, and strive to deepen them through sharing and enriching our faith, believing that an individual's faith can be strengthened not only within each individual, but by interacting with others as well.
2. We most gladly help people in need, being grateful for our being helped by God, friends, and many others.

We send e-mails named "West Wind" every two months to the people who are registered to inform them of our events and some happy stories.

We'll continue to pray for people in difficulties as we've been doing so in the past. Right now, we're praying for the people victimized in the West Japan Torrential Downpour. We especially appreciate Hiroshima Church Women's Group for their sincere work.



Sending out a newsletter '*Hanamizuki*'  
(Osaka Church)

## Kyūshū District Women's Group

**President  
Miho Hirayama**

### Always with Christ

The 20<sup>th</sup> term started when we were blessed with the words "Congratulations, blessed women!" at an inauguration. Empowered by my fellow workers, I am thankful for the happiness of being able to work joyfully. Our newsletter "*Michishirube*" (A Signpost) announced two themes of this term:

1. To learn how our brothers and sisters have grown their faith by asking them what church means to them.
2. To introduce the exchanges with elderly members of each church. Everyday activity is a light and a guide. May we be encouraged by sharing it!

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, we held a gathering inviting Ms. Junko Tsuru (Saga Church) as a speaker who built "Rainbow House" 30 years ago and has been successful in making it larger year after year. Her speech was precious enough to make us feel closer to the House.

We pray for independent members who hope to remain in faith. We also pray for the members who have difficulties going to church. It is our great wish not to let anyone feel solitude through mutual prayers. We hope to broaden a circle of prayer lit up with the light of 50 years' history together with strong and mentally flexible women.



Visiting 'Rainbow House' in July  
(Saga Church)

## The 24<sup>th</sup> JELCW Grand Meeting

**Overall theme: “Living Together in the Grace of God”**

Subtheme: “Encouraging Each Other in Hope and Joy, We Work Together for Peace on Earth.”

Scriptural Theme: Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him”—  
Romans Chapter 6: 8



Opening service with a prelude of hand bells

### Opening service: The Deceased Memorial Worship

Sermon: Pastor Naoko Kokatsu  
“Ask me for anything in my name”  
(John 14:8-14)



Hand bell choir ‘ELPIS’  
(Nagoya Kibo Church)



Holy Communion



Entrance of pastors/clergymen



### Lecture Meeting

Lecturer: Ms. Terumi Kataoka

Representative of Aizu Radioactivity Information Center / Co-representative of the Association for Children's Radiation Exposure Trial

Theme: Think deeply over what truly pleases Christ  
-A message on Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster after 7 years



Taking a vote



Agape Mealtime (*Aisankai*)



Inauguration Ceremony



Mini Bazaar



Discussion

The 24<sup>th</sup> JELCW General Meeting was held at Meruparuku Hotel in Nagoya on June 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. A total of 260 attendees got together and shared a time of blessing.

We express our gratitude to the 23<sup>rd</sup> group and the executive members for their efforts to carry out the local meeting successfully.

The following bills were approved in addition to the general theme and the action plans (p.2).

1. President of JELCW is elected by mutual vote among representatives from each district and requires approval at the general meeting.
2. Inspection committee is to recommend two auditors and they are to be approved at the general meeting.
3. Donation to Sabah Seminary will be continued unless some circumstances beyond our control take place.

## [Sabah Theological Seminary]

We've been supporting Sabah Theological Seminary, which was founded 30 years ago in Malaysia, since 1993. Please pray for the seminarians who are studying Christ's messages in a country where the number of Christians is not large.

### -Messages from 2018 Scholar Recipients-



Rebeca Liew Yit Jein  
Born October 1993  
Year 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate  
Major Chinese  
Nationality China

Rebeca is from a Christian home. She accepted a calling from God when she participated in "Life Group" at the age of seventeen. After high school, she entered a college in Kota Kinabalu where she studied hotel business and got a license for management. During her college days, she kept praying and was sure of the calling.

She chose to attend a preparatory program sponsored by Basel Christ Church for one year to get herself ready to enter STS in 2018.

Kotakinabaru . . . . . The capital of Sabah  
The largest city in East Malaysia  
(Malaysian territory in Borneo)  
Tawau . . . . . The 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Sabah  
Kunaku . . . . . A small city in Tawau province  
Ranau . . . . . An inland city in Sabah



Ahasyweros Bin Muka  
Born March 1994  
Year 1<sup>st</sup> year (Dip.Th)  
Tribe Murut

Ahasyweros is from a Christian home.

He graduated from high school in 2011 and worked as an engineer to fix waterwheels in 2012 and 2013.

In 2014, while he was working in a factory, he dreamed a dream of serving fulltime in a church. He was called by God and he accepted it.

In 2015, he joined the short-term missions by the Sabah Theological Seminary (STS) and from 2015 to 2017, he served in BCCM Kunak and BCCM Melangking Sukau Sandakan as a trainee in church.

He entered STS in January of 2018



Gan Ching Hua  
Born November 1983  
Year 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate course  
Language Chinese  
Nationality China

Gan Ching is from a Christian family. He became a Christian when he was a college student. After graduation, he returned to Tawau to work as an engineer in the palm industry.

He felt a calling from God one week after he attended a camp called "Experience as a Seminarian." Then he received Pastor Andrew's guidance. He was convinced that the calling he felt was certainly from God, not from inside himself. Later, he quit everything he had been doing to serve full-time at Basel Christ Church in Kunaku for a year. He entered STS in 2017.



Jusira Binti Lemor  
Born February 1988  
Year 1<sup>st</sup> year (undergraduate)  
Language Malay  
Tribe Dusun

Jusira is from a Christian family. She was the only one who accepted Christ at a PPT program in 2009. She served for two years at her local church. After high school, she worked at a nursery school as an assistant teacher. In 2014, she felt a calling that she should offer all her time to God and chose to become a trainee in Tuaran area.

She served in Kilanas in 2014 and 2015 and in Tinnum in 2016 and 2017.

Then she entered STS in 2018.



**[The Next Generation (TNG)]**

**Chairperson  
Tomoo Miura**

- Purpose**  
TNG aims at succession of faith to the next generation from infants to young people, as well as their education. CS, the camps for high school students and youth activities which used to be carried out at each church or in each district have started to be planned and administered on a nationwide basis since 2000.
- Gratitude**  
Thanks to the support by JELCW Lutheran Association, members' parents, and many more, we've been fortunate enough to continue our activities. Camps, particularly, couldn't be successful without the gracious help of JELCW's members. We express our heartfelt gratitude to JELCW.
- Result**  
A positive cycle has developed that sees camp participants returning as camp staff years later. Some even decide to be baptized. A strong bond is definitely growing among us young people.
- Request**  
Our activities can't be maintained without people's help, donations, and prayers. We hope for the same understanding and appreciation as ever so that TNG lasts long.

**Infant Division**

**Leader Mieko Asakura**

We make birthday cards and stickers to sell them to small children aged 0 to 7 and their family members. 'Kohitsuji (Lamb) Letter' is published under the slogan 'Messages easy for anyone to understand.' We're thinking of using SNS to cut down costs.



**Child Division**

**Leader Akiko Kawada**

We're supporting Church schools. The CS textbook is filled with sermons for children and good ideas for branch classes. Our message cards are so popular! Most children come back to spring camp after graduating from summer camp (Information on Child Division available on the website for free).



**Teen's Division**

**Leader Kaoru Okada**

We're sending out messages based on scriptures through blogs, SNS and mail magazine. Our biggest event is 'Teens National Spring Camp' or 'Haru-kyan.' There are about 90 campers every year and around 40 staff are involved in process from preparation to reflection. Some are led to baptism through Bible study and discussions held at the camp.



**Youth Division**

**Leader Daichi Takeda**

We started 'Bible Camp' (an extension of *Haru-kyan*) several years ago as an opportunity to study more about faith, enjoy reading the Bible, confirm our faith, and share the blessing of walking together as Christians. We try to make good use of SNS and other means of communication to make our connection stronger.

To be a seminarian, then a pastor committing himself/herself

To be a voluntary worker in church

To be a TNG camp staff



## Reports from supporting members

### *Itsukushimi (Affection)*

**Kanto Member Hisako Ishitoki**  
**Kansai Member Akie Momiyama**

We appreciate your prayers.

The Kansai Group held their 16<sup>th</sup> seminar on September 29<sup>th</sup> from 13:00 to 15:45 at JELC Osaka Church under the theme 'Women in the Bible' ~ Encouraged by Diakonia.

We invited Ms. Urara Masaki, a teacher of Bible Greek at Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary and Kansai Bible Theological Seminary, as a speaker.

She supervised a Bible class at Aoba Nursery School attached to the Lutheran Church in Norway for over 13 years. Ms. Masaki has been working long on establishing an enjoyable way to learn Greek with her students, which is an awfully difficult language to study.

Her soft and gentle way of vividly describing women in the Bible trusting and following Jesus was healing.

### **NCC Women's Groups (*Nihon Christianity Conference*)**

**Yamato Yasuda**

- We've changed the meeting day from the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of every month
- 2019 World Prayer Day will be held on March 1<sup>st</sup> (Friday), the theme country is Slovenia
- The price of a booklet for World Prayer Day was changed to ¥200 for Japanese, English, and Braille versions. We need your understanding and cooperation.
- Slovenia study will be held on November 10<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) as a pre-gathering for World Prayer Day.
- The application for NCC Women Seminary Scholarship from JELC has been approved.
- Forum 'Reading the Bible from the Viewpoint of Feminism' is now being prepared. Details will be announced as soon as they are decided. We expect to have a large number of attendees.

### **ACWC J / Asian Church Women Conference Japan**

**Naomu Tajima, Keiko Renge**

We are grateful to you for all your cooperation to 'Least Coin Campaign' and 'ACWC Signature Campaign.' ACWC exchanges mutual prayers among 19 allied countries in Asia. In May, we said a prayer of mourning for the victims of a terrorist bombing at the Surabaya Church in Indonesia and also for over 130 people who lost their lives in a horrible rainstorm in India. In July, that for the quick rescue of the boys trapped in a cave in Thailand. Prayers for the heavy damage due to the West Japan Torrential Downpour were sent in from our allies. ACWC's 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly is to be held in the year of its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 8<sup>th</sup> in Bangkok, Thailand. Tajima-san will be attending it as an observer. The report on the assembly will be in a forthcoming issue.

### **LWF (The Lutheran World Foundation) / WICAS (Women in Church and Society)**

**Michiko Mochizuki**

We praise the name of God.

I'm feeling nervous accepting the role of a liaison, but at the same time I'm clearly reminded of the WICAS World Meeting held in Mexico, where I was dispatched about 20 years ago. We prepared the report on the status quo in Japan regarding the five agenda items, as well as a rope symbolizing our solidarity. We discussed until late into the night to make a final declaration. It was very fortunate of us to hear the news that the late Nelson Mandela (who passed away in 2013) who had been confined for years was finally set free. We, the participants cried out and applauded most excitedly. It is sad to say that the five agenda items existing at that time, such as domestic violence and natural disasters, still remain across the world. I believe that smooth transference of information can be achieved through electronic devices and SNS. Mutual understanding and cooperation can be realized through your prayers. Your support and understanding is as always gratefully appreciated.