

Our Activities: *JELCW Board*

Thank you for remembering the work of JELCW.

In July, September and November last year, the Board visited the disaster-hit areas. There we met Nagomi-kai, a group at the Oppagawa temporary housing that makes woven sandals. This encounter led us to call for contributions of used T-shirts for material. Now, woven sandals and hanging dolls by Hanano-kai, a different group in Oppagawa, are ready to go. We take orders on their behalf (cf. Communication # 40 *Hibiki*). Used T-shirts for material (size L or larger) are still needed.

Invited by Sabah Seminary, 10 members of JELCW went to Malaysia to attend its 25th anniversary and graduation ceremony. Some members visited Sabah for their first time. They were quite impressed by their Malay friends' strong faith and Christian testimony.

To review the work of JELCW and to move it forward, four subcommittees have been established; Board Election (Tokai), Succession of Faith to the Next Generation (West), Sabah Support (Kyushu), General Meeting and Rally (Hokkaido and East) [Districts in parentheses are the responsible districts.] Discussions are presently advancing at the district level. We ask for more involvement by JELCW members whenever possible. The results of discussions are to be submitted to the Board and considered at the next general meeting and rally. Thank you for your cooperation. (Naoko Suzuki, President)

Rev. Dr. Pang Ken Phin
and the JELCW Delegates



Temporary housing



Tour to the
disaster-hit areas

Activities: *Hokkaido Special District*

In Hokkaido, having seen a few women's groups disband, we were concerned about the very survival of the district churchwomen's league over the past two terms that ended the last fiscal year. Naturally, we have had trouble feeling connected to the national league. Upon succeeding the role to represent Hokkaido district, I have decided not to follow the principle of the famous Three Monkeys from Nikko but instead, to take action "to see, to say, and to listen."

Fortunately, looking back on my first year in office, JELCW has provided me opportunities to visit the disaster-hit areas and Sabah. Such first hand experiences have helped me reaffirm the preceding works by my predecessors and, in turn, made me seek networking with district members for future courses. Church members throughout Japan financially support our district by buying kelp, our special product. Packaging of kelp in autumn is a seasonal event for the women's groups from different churches in Hokkaido. It brings the participants closer at the same time.

The other day, we had a joint leaders' meeting, where we all agreed that getting together for a general meeting in the middle of winter is so difficult, decided that we should meet in November instead of February from this year on. In order to keep the league alive, we would like move forward, being conservative and/or flexible as occasion may demand. (Masako Kondo)



Icicles hang from the trees in Hokkaido

Our Activities: *East District*

We have engaged in various projects remembering the victims and survivors of the East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The sale of local products from the disaster-damaged areas is one of them. We scheduled a lecture at one of the District leaders' meetings by Japan Lutheran Emergency Relief Chaplain Katsuhiko Noguchi, and Ms. Yumiko Hatakeyama, the public relations officer from Maehama Community Center.

Rev. Noguchi told us about many different aid programs, using a PowerPoint presentation. We learned that the JLER's work was much appreciated in the disaster-hit areas. Ms. Hatakeyama came over from Kesen'numa to tell us about reconstruction of a community center there; how eager and hardworking the local residents were, how cooperative the financial supporters and material contributors were, and how nice the brand-new building is. Thanks to her PowerPoint photos, we were able to imagine the difficulties the survivors had gone through, as many of us are not web-literate, and have not been to the affected areas.

To close the meeting, Ms. Carol Sack played the harp, which accompanied our prayers for the victims to rest in peace, as well as recovery for survivors who still suffer from mental, economic, or health problems.

We would like to continue to remember them and keep working for them not only individually but also collectively as East District.

(Masako Omaki)



Our Activities: *Tokai District*

Tokai district, 'Churchwomen's gathering' is organized twice a year and rotates among our four sub-regions. The purpose of the gathering is to link different women's groups across the district. The programs include discussions/testimonies to strengthen our ties as sisters in faith, concerts by local members, or visits to any welfare facilities that the regional churches are involved with.

Last fall, a gathering was held at Eiko Church in Sun'en sub-region under the theme of "Let's sing Luther's Hymns," inviting the well-known Luther scholar, Rev. Yoshikazu Tokuzen. There were 90 attendees. His lecture about the relationship between Luther and us was both enjoyable and easy to understand. The Word of God in his lecture sounded even clearer to our ears after Rev. Tokuzen gave away 'Reform candy' to us! He then asked; "What needs to be changed by us living in the present world in order to tell the good news in the society?"

In the afternoon, we enjoyed a mini-concert by Sister Fukuchi and her daughter, with Rev. Tokuzen collaborating. Together we sang hymns by Luther to our heart's content. We knew the reason why Luther had made the hymns. The beautiful voice of Sister Fukuchi and the lyrics by the Christian artist, T. Hoshino were both soothing for all of us. I am sure that many of us were strengthened by the gathering of the sisters in faith, and promised to see each other again.

We would like to have such joyful 'Churchwomen's gatherings' as much as possible, in which the members' talents are blessed, used, and appreciated by all. The first gathering for this year is planned in May at Minori Church, Toyohashi City. (Kimiko Suzuki)



Our Activities: *West District*

The West District Churchwomen's Group held a retreat on Sep 22, 2013, one day ahead of the rally to celebrate the district's 50th anniversary. Fortunately, the retreat gathered more than 100 attendees of both women and men. The main speaker was Ms. Sayoko Ooka, the project leader for gender issues for the Anglican Church. She suggested that we should review our way of behavior in church, not just for ourselves but also for the church to serve a variety of people. The reporter was impressed by her comment, "reviewing the church from a gender perspective allows us to find a new Word of God."

One attendee said, "A gender perspective, as a discipline, will help people to challenge their own life, I realized. To reinforce this, the lecturer added that being a feminist in society could be compatible with being inclusive: people are able to live as they are even if they are in a weak position. I will remember these words."

The reporter understands that to learn gender issues and to have a gender perspective will ensure that each churchwoman or man will remain as she/he is, which in turn helps the church become more inclusive and reach out with new good news. I sincerely hope that more and more people will come to church and that church will provide the Word of God to the needy both in prayer and in action.

(Rieko Saeki)



Our Activities: *Kyushu District*

About 40 churchwomen gathered at Kengun Church for the general meeting of CWs in Kumamoto area on Saturday Feb. 15. They discuss several annual events for them in Kumamoto, including clean-up of Lutheran Aso Lodge, kitchen duties during the Kyushu district teens camp, and the area retreat in the fall. The lodge is indispensable as a venue for church camps and retreats. It is the church members in Kumamoto area that maintain the lodge for users' sake.

A portion of the donation offered at the general meeting is given to "Wakaeda Scholarship." It is a fund to support children who leave one of the three welfare facilities related to Kengun Church, to start out in life. May this program for the youth (and its supporters) grow bigger!

On Friday Feb. 28, a general meeting of CWs in the Chikugo area was held at Hita Church with 23 attendees. All five churches in this area share the same issues; small congregation and absence of resident pastors. At the general meeting, they resolved to have a retreat after the area-wide peace memorial service in August, so that they could share their thoughts and concerns. The reporter was heartened to know that even small congregations could be strong once they were connected to one another.

The potluck lunch, especially the pickles, was delicious! It was a nice and warm general meeting. (Akiyo Iwakiri)



General meeting in Chikugo area