

Our Activities :

Hokkaido Special District

Hopes for the Next Three Years

Masako Kondo, District President

Beginning with this fiscal year, the CW's in Hokkaido holds its Assembly in November, which means that I have two-and-half years left to serve as president with six months behind me. As there has been no opportunity for the officers of each church to meet after the last assembly, I have a little difficulty knowing what ideas they may have for the future.

To be honest, in Hokkaido, the membership is not growing but the society is aging. Therefore, first of all, I hope to maintain the status quo as much as possible.



Against recent, dramatic societal changes, women's groups in churches are clearly going through various changes. What we have seen in Hokkaido was that the failure in changeover of CW's officers has made some people serve indefinitely, which led relationships to break and caused doubts in the raison d'etre of CW's, and eventually, broke up the group.

I would say, therefore, that some congregations are happy with women's groups while others are better off without

them. Maybe, some churches can do without women's organized work. The idea that every church should have a women's group may also be outdated.

I think it is difficult to restart a women's group once it is gone. However, if active groups find out their values and pay attention to harmony, they can pass the baton to future generations.

Unfortunately, I cannot write any concrete ideas to that end now because I have not had a chance to meet others since the assembly.

As you well know, the Hokkaido district is supported greatly by the entire Lutheran Church in Japan through the sale of kelp. This is evidence that CW's are needed. For the kelp project, many church members, some of who have no association with a women's group (because theirs is inactive), take part. I am sure that they are all aware of and grateful to those who buy the kelp. Even if the membership is few in Hokkaido as a whole, we are united.

I have an impression that residents of Hokkaido feel closer to nature than to closely-knit, urban ways of life, maybe because cities are distant from one another. I hope that we could somehow show our presence, even if we may not stand out in terms of registered membership numbers.



Our Activities : East District

“Sing a new Song to the Lord” into the Future

Kumi Yagi, District President

We are crossing the "rainbow bridge" (the theme of the previous term for East District), knowing that the bridge was created and sustained by many prayers and helping hands. Now we are moving forward to the future to “sing a new song to the Lord.” We may encounter problems on our way, but I am sure we can overcome them with our heartfelt hope and joy that we will be united in Christ’s love and trust in the Lord.

At the first District Women’s Meeting, we learned about member’s ideas and expectations through group discussions and a questionnaire. That is the starting point to consider what is needed to continue our actions into the future. We also feel the members’ strong will and sense of responsibility for passing on the history of the JELCW. As we live in a world and society that the Lord has created, we need to face the present and future with new insight for understanding. Let us attend to those issues and walk together, singing a new song to the Lord with prayer and joy.

We will try to have face-to-face communication and build a horizontal relationship with every church, CW’s, different age groups in the church, representatives to other Christian

organizations and outside groups. We will also make use of various media. Especially, we will focus on the following three ministry opportunities;

1. The Next Generation Project

This refers to the ministry to subsequent generations. We will promote understanding and assist the project. We will think about how to make it known widely not only to new CW members at home but also to those abroad and put new ideas into practice.

2. Support to the Seminary

The aid to the Seminary and divinity students is the first step of mission; mission to the next generation and the society at large.

3. Healing through Linking

If a dot is joined to another, it will make a line. If a line is joined to another, it will make a plane. In this way, we can begin with our own healing, then reach out to our neighbors for their healing, and finally, care for society. We should be concerned with people in society who are marginalized because of age, gender or ethnicity and seek direct contact with them as we also engage in ministry to children or senior citizens.



Our Activities : Tokai District

Made to Live by God's Love

Kunie Sakurai, District President

I hope to have a district league that "is made to live by God's love (main theme for this term) and strive to improve ourselves (sub-theme)."

Our district women's league has the greatest number of members in their 70's followed by those in their 60's and then those in their 80's. 20% of our membership is under 60. The main workforce are those in their 70's.

The final year of this three-year term falls on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation by Luther. Study groups and seminars have already begun in churches locally and nationally. Our district league would like to foster relevant studies through newsletters and meetings.



Yard sale at the nursing home "Diakonia"

CW newsletter will be published twice a year. The first one was already issued the end of June. The opening message was written by our rector, Rev. Tomoo Miura on the scriptural theme from Romans 12:2. Next, Rev. Fumiko Naito will report on "Women in the Bible," then Rev. Koji Saito on "Luther Seen through Women's Eyes." We are glad hearing that churchwomen are looking forward to the consecutive message.

The first meeting this term was held in May. In the morning, Ms. Keiko Ooki, member of Oshika Church, played several organ and piano pieces that soothed our hearts, and then played the hymn. In the afternoon, Ms. Haga explained JELCW general meeting agenda to us and held discussions. The meeting was well received by the participants.

For the October meeting, we are going to invite Father Masahide Haresaku from Tama Catholic Church as lecturer. The meeting starts in a worship service and ends in a worship service. All of us are looking forward to joining in giving praise and listening to a sermon that we normally have little chance to listen to.

We have long taken care of the social welfare complex "Fukushi-mura" through our prayers and support. In May, several members of the CW's opened a shop for its "Green's Fair." In July, its special elderly nursing home "Diakonia" had a summer festival and many CW's in the district donated various goods for its yard sale. The yard sale drew many visitors and made the home very happy. We are grateful to announce that the profit from the two sales were directed to Fukushi-mura.



Churchwomen's Meeting

Our Activities : West District

Search for a Link

Nami Matsumoto, District President

Following the district assembly, the West District Churchwomen's league has started with a focus on furthering inter-CWs links as its first step. We want to do so by considering the methods and putting them into practice.

This is because we often hear from members that they want to keep in touch, although they are too busy with their own church to visit others, have no human resource or power left, or the distance between churches is too far for them.

As we are weak and frail, we have difficulty remembering the love that God has given us, keeping it for ourselves, or praying for ourselves. We cannot spread His word, either. But, we know through our experiences that God shows his concern through people, to heal us, encourage us and empower us beyond expectations. I think this is why we feel "a link is important."

So, the following are the actions that we will take in order to further our connections.

- To use Internet to send more reports timely, in addition to the newsletter that has been distributed via email since the last term.
- To nominate more than one person as receiver of such messages so as not to miss them but, instead, to share information easily with anyone, anytime.
- To facilitate comments, requests, or questions from each CW
- To encourage two-way communication between the board and each CW
- To make a bimonthly announcement of

each church's events for members to pray for them, and if possible, to participate.

In addition to these commitments, we have changed the name, 'Presidents Meeting' to 'Liaison Meeting', hoping the new name will draw more attendees to the meeting and make it more transparent.

If we can have more reliable and effective communication, we may easily think of our sisters, give thanks together, pray and be joined to one another. Hopefully, we will feel power welling up inside of us to visit others.

We need members' help to make information come and go. Needless to say, internet communication is not 'face-to-face.' So we have serious concerns. Yet, if this challenge could expand our link to be more fruitful, that may strengthen us and something fun may come out one day.

We should not forget that there are small churches where women and men work together for any organized effort. In such cases, we should not cling to a gendered, 'female' group but rather, we should be inclusive. We should also reflect upon ourselves if we behave as role models for the busy, hard-working younger generations, who barely manage to attend worship services. There are many more issues for us to think about. We would like to keep listening, discussing, and praying to move forward.

Finally, we would like to extend our support for our representative to the national league, and walk together hand-in-hand with our sisters across Japan, with trust in the Lord who is next to us.

Our Activities : Kyushu District

God and I

Mari Hara, District President

Praise the Lord!

The General Meeting and Rally in June has given me much encouragement and questions for God at the same time. After that, the 19th-term Kyushu district churchwomen's league commenced. We have discussed and concluded that we will take a close look at the important relationship, 'God and I,' and include our 'neighbors.' In doing so, we think we must understand the current situation we find ourselves in and do what we can step-by-step.

Thanks to the previous-term officers and the Silver Project Committee, a booklet for our seniors, 'Beside Still Waters,' was published. This will help us visit those who cannot attend church and join in communion with them.

It is certain that our members are aging and the concern about this differs by community. However, I believe everyone has a fervent dedication toward God. I hope the booklet will help us step forward, pray for the one next to us, listen to their voice, develop better relationships, and continue to walk forward.

To start the first year of this term, I would like to have a retreat this fall to gain deeper understanding of the relationship between 'God and I.' I want the participants to share the

result in their own sub-region and ask members to write a 'Her-story.'

This project is in line with WICAS's Her-story initiative. I would like to issue a collection of witnesses in the next three years. For those who have trouble writing by themselves, I will provide someone who will take notes for them. Consequently, this may help establish an interchange, thereby creating a spiritual place-to-be for our elderly.

When they witness, the seniors will recognize once again the blessings by God, while we, the listeners, will be blessed by learning God's love in a real context. If we, infused with enthusiasm, can give witness ourselves powerfully, we may be able to give subsequent generations a hope in God.

As society has changed, our way of life has also changed. Now, a majority of women have jobs outside home. Most of the board members juggle the obligations of both CW and work. I will ask the Lord what I can do with my limited time. I hope we can move forward, helping and praying for one another as a team.

