

## Column

### Mie Haga, President

Those of you in Hokkaido and Tohoku must be longing for spring to come.

I have planted violet and pansy seeds which I harvested in the beginning of September. For a long time, only the leaves occupied my flower garden, but finally the flowers started to bloom. Every time I see the small seeds germinate, the leaves grow from two to three and bear beautiful flowers, I think of the wonders of life and God's work. From seeding to blooming, I enjoy watering and weeding while waiting for my flowers.

In May I sow the seeds of aikibas and small hibiscus (about 15 cm high). Trenaia seeds are very small, so I wait for them to germinate from where they spilled on the ground, and then transplant the seedlings. In summer the flowers like the ones in the pictures bloom. Ever since I moved to this house 20 years ago, I have been collecting and sowing seeds. In November I sowed King Tut's peas. By mid-April, beautiful wine colored flowers will be seen and peas in purple peapods will be harvested. I relish the feeling of being part of nature.



### Our Activities: Hokkaido Special District

#### Masako Kondo, President

In November, the HSD's president, secretary and treasurer participated in the CW officers' training program and met officers from CW and other districts to exchange ideas. We are thankful for the valuable opportunity that gave us different perspectives. We would also like

to announce that, thanks to your support, we were able to meet all the orders for our "Lutheran Kelp" despite the fact that the harvest is limited to summertime only. When we think of how the kelp is helping your lives, we feel thankful for being connected to the CW. Our newsletter *Olive* was also issued at the end of last year and shared news like this. We receive newsletters from other districts and learn so much from their activities. We circulate the newsletters among the churchwomen's groups in Hokkaido. I believe they can be read on CW's website, so I hope CW lets the members know about them.

Hokkaido was visited by severe cold in January, and the Doto region (Obihiro & Kushiro), which used to experience little snow, had more severe snowstorms due to the recent climate change. A life in northern Japan is one in which you worry about how much snow you would have to shovel around the house before you leave for a Sunday service. Even in the situation like this, women's groups here are holding General Meetings to elect new officers and plan this year's activities.

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Finnish missionaries bringing the Gospel to Sapporo Church. This means it is also the anniversary of the arrival of the Lutheran Reformation faith. We will have a Reformation service in October, but our CW is planning a get-together for this occasion. Our CW does not have many JELCW or district registered churches, but please remember us in your prayers,

so that we can tell our neighbors the Lord's will.



Obihiro Church members

## Activities: East District

### Kumi Yagi, President

We sincerely thank the prayer, support and work from each member of CW, with whom we sang the new song to the Lord as we went through 2015.

Our main activities were:

- ① Presidents' meetings and Churchwomen's gatherings (twice a year) at Den-en Chofu Church, Omori Church
- ② Attending the graduation and entrance ceremonies at the seminary
- ③ World Day of Prayer service
- ④ District general meeting and coffee shop
- ⑤ CW general meeting
- ⑥ Supporting Teens' and Children's Spring Camps
- ⑦ Running a mini-shop at the "One-Day Seminarian" event
- ⑧ Visiting the "Time at the Seminary" event
- ⑨ Visiting Tokyo Nursing Home
- ⑩ ACWC training
- ⑪ Support for other organizations and groups
- ⑫ Publication of the newsletter "Sharon's flowers" (issued twice a year)



Visiting the Tokyo Nursing Home

### Topics:

For the "Time at the Seminary" event planned by seminarians, we visited the Luther dormitory on October 27. At their request, we discussed the topic "the purpose and significance of the CW" including the history using presentation slides. In return, we requested the seminarians to discuss "what the seminarians are currently concerned, interested in and having problems with." After they shared with us their concerns for the church, families and vicarage and their interest at the moment, we all attended an evening service and communion held by Rev. Hiroko Hiraoka

and had supper together. Being touched by the seminarians' straightforwardness and honesty, we realized that we need more understanding for those who are "called for mission" and felt the importance of actively connecting with and supporting them.

Through the activities listed earlier, the realities of each CW and church are becoming clearer as the seasons go by. Knowing what we can and cannot do, and also praying to seek creativity and care for others to compensate each other will lead to a joyous walk together through the year 2016.

## Activities: Tokai District

### Kunie Sakurai, President

I am relieved that we were able to take over the activities of the previous CW, hold two meetings, and publish the first and second issues of the CW's newsletter *Agapanthus* for the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> term. Also, we are thankful that we could continue supporting Fukushi-mura by monetary contribution, heartfelt bazaar donations from the sisters of the CW and the offering of Christmas presents. In the May gathering we held an organ and piano concert and received worship instruction by Ms. Keiko Ooki of Ojika Church. In the afternoon, we discussed the agendas set by the JELCW's general meeting. In October, we hosted a lecture by Catholic priest, Father Hisaaki Haresaku, followed by a group discussion in the afternoon. Both events were encouraging, filled with grace of sharing faith and favorably received. As for the CW newsletter, we set the goal high to make it interesting to read and filled with power to teach the gospel.

We pray that this year again, our sisters can walk together hand-in-hand, powerfully, and move forward.



Handmade cards and cookies for children at Pasture Home

## **Activities: West District**

### **Nami Matsumoto, President**

It is our reality that each district churchwomen's league already has enough to do within the district. Last year we attempted to spread the use of email-based communication. While it was met with both positive and negative responses, the senders and receivers are slowly getting used to it. Because the JELCW is becoming weakened, we need to secure a method of communication that utilizes minimum effort. We continue to pray and ask for your understanding and cooperation for this change.

Every two months, we are sharing event information of each church and CW. The interest level seems to vary and it is uncertain if it helps with building the "connection." However, we are hoping that it gives us an opportunity to think of neighboring churches, and we have decided to continue this effort. We will also continue the West District's newsletter *Hanamizuki*, for the same reason, despite the voices that question its necessity. The newsletter will mainly focus on introducing churches.

It is the CW officer's understanding that the core purpose of CW, district churchwomen's league and JELCW is either being "moving bodies of church members that pray and support" or "moving bodies of the church which you can support by participating, even when you cannot be directly involved." But on the flip side, it also means the moving body does not have to be CW. In reality, there are churches whose CWs are not functional by themselves.

How do we, church members, accept this situation and what do we want to do? We would like to pray and think about these questions in the area and district meetings and liaison meetings.

### **JELCW Support: SABAH**

**Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!** (2 Cor 9:15)

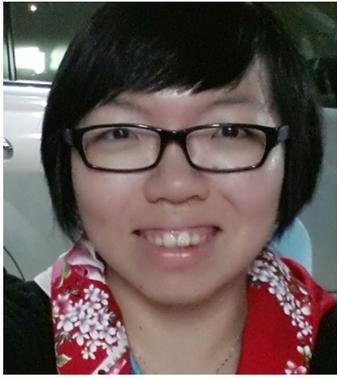
**Jeremiah Lo, Graduate**

There is a lot to say about what I have acquired from the theological education throughout the past 4 years, but I would like to sum it up with a thought that came through my mind a few times recently. In my first year, a lecturer said to me, "the more you learn, the more you know that you have yet to learn." Today I can feel what the lecturer was talking about. The more I study, the more I feel the profoundness of our Lord and His kingdom, which makes me want to strive even more to understand. I realize that the day I can completely comprehend all this will not come, but I also realized that God has guided me all the way through my doubts, my questions, and my journey to study His Word and all it takes to get involved in His ministry. Therefore, with all I have acquired from the past four years, I shall give all I have to the church to shepherd the people of God and to make them His disciples as in the Great Commission in Matthews 28:18-20, I personally believe that God has given me the gift of teaching among all wonderful gifts.

I would also like to mark my highest gratitude to fellow sisters (and brothers) in Christ in JELCW, that you have partaken this very noble journey in raising many servants of God. Our Lord has His good will on your participation to bring this ministry to a higher level, and I strongly believe that more needs to be done, and shall be done in the hands of our Lord, as we commit ourselves to Him in faith.

Finally, I am grateful to have reached another milestone in my life of service to our Lord. I believe the beginning of my next journey marks the flip to another glorious page in our Lord's faithfulness and providence as I begin to serve at the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia Chinese Congregation in the beginning of December 2015. May our Lord grant me a humble spirit, a watchful heart and a focused mind as I walk on the road of being the witness of the Gospel. May all glory and praise be to our Lord Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.  
Your brother in Christ,





***Evelyn Yong Kah Khee***

Date of Birth: 24/9/1986  
Sex: Female  
Marital Status: Single  
Programme: M.Div 1  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year)  
Department: Chinese  
Race: Chinese

Evelyn is the only child in the family, grown up as the 4<sup>th</sup> generation Christian. Since she was young, she has been actively involved in various church activities. After her A-level course, she continued her study at UCSI Univeristy in KL, taking Bachelor of Nursing (Hons.). Then, she came back from KL upon completion of her study but she was not offered to work in any government hospital.

After waiting for 1 year, she decided to try looking job vacancies at private settings. By God's grace and guidance, she was employed by one of the local private Obstetrics & Gynaecology setting and worked for about two years. During her working life, she was deeply touched to share gospel to the people when she came across with those abandoned or neglected pregnant ladies. She had the urge to do more beyond taking care of the physical health of the people. She received God's



***Wong Lee Tzu***

Date of Birth : 11/3/1987  
Sex : Female  
Marital Status: Single  
Programme : BD  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year)  
Department : Chinese  
Race : Chinese

Wong Lee Tzu came from Sandakan. She believed in God and received God's calling since she was 10 years old. She has been taking part in church activities, including youth fellowship and Sunday School since she was a kid.

Before she decided to respond God's calling, she had been working in MSIG Insurance Company for more than 4 years. After that, she enrolled for BD programme at STS in year 2014.

calling and took a year to prepare herself in a 1-year preseminary programme organized by BCCM CGC. Then, she enrolled for M.Div 1 programme at STS in year 2015.



***Elphy Sikana***

Date of Birth: 02/10/1990  
Sex: Female  
Marital Status: Single  
Programme: B.D  
(3rd year)  
Department: Malay  
Race: Murut

Elphy comes from Christian family and active to Sunday school since young age. When in Sunday school she was touched by pictures of Jesus holding small children and felt Jesus loves her too.

As she active in church activities she motivated and burdened by the ministries that needed full time pastors.



***Anitah Laria***

Date of Birth: 10 April 1991  
Sex: Female  
Marital Status: Single  
Programme: B.Th(3<sup>rd</sup> yr)  
Department: Malay  
Race: Murut

Anitah was born in a Christian family and was active in Sunday school. But when teenager she felt going to church is boring and meaningless.

One day a group of visitor came to her homechurch and held a revival meeting. She was touched by God's Word and realized she was meaningless without God. She surrendered her life to God and longing to teach children to know God personally as their saviour.

## Welcome to the Kyushu District!

The Kyushu District is divided into Kita-Kyushu, Fukuoka, Ooita, Kumamoto, Chikugo, Minami-Kyushu and Nishi-Kyushu. Each area has its characteristics and our sisters with unique talents are conducting regional activities. This page introduces a small portion of the activities.

“Craftwork”



“Having fun at craft workshop”



“Christmas service was very busy! Many people came from other churches of the area. The sanctuary was filled and bustling with people. We welcomed them with all our hearts.”

In all churches, large and small, each member is giving everything she could to God. With friends from the area, we are one body of Christ. Even those who are in their 80's contribute. Oh, those in their 90's, too?

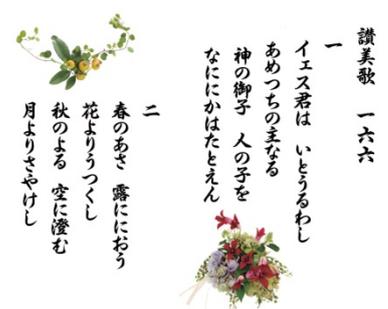
The Kyushu District Churchwomen's League this term would like to hear from each one of the sisters: how they met God, things they cannot forget, the first time they visited a church, and what their lives are like now. We believe the love of God is in the center of everything. We want to talk, listen, communicate and pray. At the retreat, we learned about "gender" in a seminar and workshop and focused on our existence as important individuals God created.



We realized that there were thoughts and feelings within us that tie ourselves and others down. We also learned the importance of having conversations. Voicing our feelings as well as listening to and respecting others' feelings is the first step to peace. We will start sharing many sisters' voices from now on. May the love of the Lord reach as many people as possible!

**IKOINO MIGIWA**

The senior project of the District Churchwomen's League's finally bore fruit. The booklet "Ikoi no Migiwa" has Bible verses and the words of the hymn in large prints.



It is intended for worship and visits with those who are in hospitals and nursing homes. The project was made possible by the passion of the senior project committee members. The first edition has been distributed to all churches of the District and, by request, will be reprinted again. One booklet costs 2,000 yen plus tax. If you would like to purchase one, please contact us at Murozono Church CW's. Fax (096) 335-7800