

For the Next Generation

At the 23rd General Meeting of Officers in Sendai Church in June, the officers discussed the succession of faith. In hopes of sharing the discussion with the fellow members of JELCW, we are publishing the minutes in the newsletter.

“Succession of Faith”

This phrase is quite often used in the Lutheran Church, but not too much action has been dedicated to changing the situation. We wanted to know how you feel.

The difficulty of this phrase exists in the interpretation. For example, ★when used regarding children and youth to describe the action of succeeding the adults' faith, there is no problem. However, ★when used by adults describing their action to pass down their faith to the children and youth, the interpretation of the phrase becomes problematic, though grammatically correct. The term “succession” is beautiful when used by someone willingly receiving from someone else, but if it means making someone succeed them, it could have the undertone of being forced and pressured onto the person succeeding. It is never positive. It also implies a hidden hierarchy based on age.

When it comes to faith, we thought perhaps a more fitting verb may be “sharing.” The Gospel is “spread” but the joy begins when it is shared with others. If the “succession of faith” becomes a “sharing of faith,” then it can be applied to the young and old, men and women. Also, the relationship between the succeeding party and the successor will be equal. When we say “sharing faith with children,” “sharing faith with young people,” or “would you want to share faith with middle-aged ladies?” the people we are talking with could be friends, families, associates, strangers, the old or the young. This is actually quite convenient and it makes us free!

When we use the phrase the “succession of faith” at the CW and other meetings and if

we are discussing about a different generation, we, the middle-aged ladies tend to take the stance as the succeeding party.

-Do I really have the faith that is worth passing down to young people and children?

-Should I push my faith onto the younger generation when I don't even know their values?

-It is a heavy burden to carry if a hierarchy is inevitably established.

Such comments show that our attitude is not very enthusiastic even though we try to be positive. Also, it is possible that we are creating an accusatory atmosphere that says, “Are you not inheriting our faith?”

We looked at the 75-year-history of the JELCW and the phrase “succession of faith” was found in the Succession of Faith Program in one of the International Camps. This was probably the first time the phrase was ever used. When we learned more about the program, we realized that it was used to describe the effort to create and develop an environment where the children can inherit faith from their parents. I assume this convenient phrase was then overused by the JELCW and CWs and gradually started to represent the activities that promote the passing down of faith to young people in general. (*Please note that this is a personal opinion.)

This year again we held the TNG All-Prefectures Children's Camp. In TNG, a committee for The Next Generation, we rarely hear discussion about the “succession of faith.” The committee itself hardly has the overtone of passing down/succeeding faith. The reason, I suppose, is that the staff

members plan the programs with an attitude of learning and studying together with the participants, whether it is the Spring Camp, Youth Camp or Bible Camp. In my opinion, it is only natural—everyone who has been on staff will agree that they have learned so much with the children and often they were the ones being taught by the children—that the committee adopted the attitude to “share” their faith with others.

This is merely a suggestion, but how about we replace the “succession of faith” with “sharing of faith” in all documents in JELCW? We hope the change in the

TNG

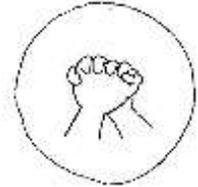
What does TNG stand for? We discussed this in our District Newsletter (issued in December 2015) and explained the activities. The offering from each CW has been allocated to support TNG, but from 2016 we started to specifically ask for “Donations for TNG Support” along with the Tokai District’s the Next Generation Growth Support (support for youth activities).

TNG’s activities include the Teens’ Camp in the spring. We were planning to visit the camp and give a report at the CW meeting on June 25, 2016. Unfortunately, we could not make the visit due to a schedule conflict, but we were given the photographs and heard the details of the camp from the staff. We presented the materials in a PowerPoint presentation at the CW meeting (90 participants). Ikumi Hori who was closest in age to the teens served as the MC.

expression may also change people’s conscious minds. We may even dream of having a friendship based on spreading faith, overcoming the difference in generations.

Perhaps, the situation our Church is facing does not allow any other choice but to share our faith with the children and youth. We should always have this awareness [...].

(Nami Matsumoto, West District)



In the morning, we had welcomed and heard from speaker Terumi Kataoka, who is the president of “Save the Children from Radiation” at the Aizu Radiation Information Center. We heard the report from the Spring Camp in the afternoon, while still extending our thoughts to the children of Fukushima. The images of 100 teens from all over Japan learning together were projected onto the large screen. Sister Hori read the well thought-out script with humor, and we spent the hopeful, delightful moments together listening to the descriptions.

May all the children of Fukushima and the children of the Spring Camp have a bright future ahead of them! I am probably not the only one who felt strongly that it is our mission from God to help the children the best we can.

(Kunie Sakurai, Tokai District)

For the Society:

Reports from the Areas Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake & Tsunami

My Second Visit to the Affected Areas

Two years ago, the Tohoku district I visited for the first time was just a vast and empty land, which had lost its many people who were supposed to be living their daily lives there.

After two years have passed, the place was surrounded by the newly created large dirt mounds and embankments. It looked as if the town had become a fortress, and I felt uncomfortable.

There was the firehouse building where an employee broadcasted the warning until the last moment of her life, urging the people of the town to evacuate. The building had been under consideration to be preserved as a memorial, but it was covered in dirt and only the top half was left visible above the ground. The locals probably have many different thoughts, but it looked as if the tragedy itself was buried underground. Even an outsider like myself wondered if it was really for the best.

When we visited the temporary housing again, the garden maintained by the residents was full of blooming dianthus flowers. Looking at the pretty pink flowers, I

hoped that they brought some joy to the people who lived there.

Just like the last time, the residents welcomed us with home-made food and we were reunited with the people we had met before. I thought we had had a—once-in-a-lifetime encounter back then, but the second chance to meet them was just as delightful. They remembered us fondly in the last five years, calling us “*Lutheran-san*,” and for that we are thankful to Pastor Noguchi for planting the seeds of friendship. What the disaster brought was very sad, but when they called us “*Lutheran-san*,” we felt a sense of closeness that we were brothers and sisters. Overcoming the sorrow that words cannot describe is not easy. However, the bond and connection in which people help and support each other gave them the power to persevere.

Being treated with delicious local kelp and hearing their thoughts accumulated in the past five years, I was the one who received more grace that day.

(Masako Kondo, Hokkaido District)

Contemplating the Affected Areas’ 5 Years and 4 Months

The day after we prayed for the Lord’s guidance and protection in the very quiet Sendai Church, quite different from the time right after the disaster, we met an elderly gentleman in Hiwayama Park on the top of the 60-meter-hill in the central part of Ishinomaki. He pointed to the town below and described how people fled as the tsunami rolled in. His family evacuated and were safe except for his eldest son, who was killed by the tsunami when he went back to check on his house. Since that day, this man has climbed the 3000 stairs every day and told the story of “that day” to the people who visited the park. It is unimaginable how the

people felt that day, evacuating in the snow to the higher grounds as the *torii* of the Hiwasan Shrine towered against the sky above the blue, shining Ishinomaki Bay. The rubble will be cleaned and the streets and buildings will be reconstructed again, but we sensed the importance and challenges of psychological recovery that cannot be seen by the eyes.

After we prayed for the Lord’s peace on the man who became the storyteller, our local supporters took us to the Oppagawa Kasen



Danchi Temporary Housing, where we were welcomed by the people from “Nunozori Nagominokai” and “Ochakkokai.” It was wonderful to finally meet those with whom we had been communicating via phone calls and emails. After listening to a person who talked for the first time in five years about losing her grandchild to the tsunami, Pastor Noguchi who was leading the group presented a stained glass artwork of a dove (made by a member of Matsumoto Church). Our wish is that our sisters who currently live in the temporary housing can someday come back to this dove after they move to the recovery residences or other areas. We had many more encounters, visits and reunions,

When I stood in the Affected Area

When I stood there, I could not say a word looking at the sight in front of my eyes. Because the Kumamoto earthquake was so terrible, my memory of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami had faded. However, what I saw were: the ground and trees damaged by salt, people still living in the temporary housing, tall embankments under construction that completely block the view of the ocean, a person who lost his family member and climbs a hill every day to see where he used to live, a person who is too afraid to go to the place where she used to live, an elementary school building that shows the devastating power of a tsunami, and so many names of those who lost their lives on the memorial monument. It has already been five years, but it has *only* been five years. It was clear that the people who lived in the area were still hurting a great deal. When we thought about how we could continue the support, we remembered the words of Saito-san who spent the whole day with us as our guide: “You, *Lutheran-san* told us to let you know if we needed anything, and you brought us kitchen knives and cutting boards. We were thankful that many large organizations gave us a lot of support, but we really appreciated that you listened to

but instead of writing a summary, I will save the whole story for the next time.

Our senses and memories wither with time, but our thoughts and wishes cannot be forgotten. I pray that these unseen, important things stay with me in my heart, so that I can keep telling the stories without losing hope, and that I continue to be one with those people. (Kumi Yagi, East District)



our small needs directly and took an action immediately.”

I also took to my heart the words of a member of Kahoku Tomono Kai, a group that supports Nagomikai making *nunozori* and hanging dolls, “Since we all live far apart from one another now, this is the first time we got together after a few years.” A vast number of people were affected by the disaster and they have a wide range of needs. What I came to realize was that our Christian sisters here let God lead them to meet those who were in pain and understand their needs.

We currently provide support to the affected areas by a fundraising project of selling *wakame*, *nunozori* and hanging dolls. However, there are people still hurting beyond where our support could reach. These people think about others who are also in pain and cannot express their own pain. But when we visited them, they welcomed us with delicious *tsukemono* and fruits. They taught me how to make good *tsukemono* and I have since made it at home. I strongly hope that we can continue the support that involves psychological interaction.

(Mari Hara, Kyushu District)