

The 23rd JELCW · Newsletter

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Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church Women
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Overall theme: “Trusting in Our Lord Being with Us”, subtheme: Faith, Hope and Love

Scriptural Theme:

There are three things that remain: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love. – 1 Corinthians 13:13

To you

Hope



Rev. Yūta Iwakiri

Pastor, Yawata Church
Moji Church

Two months have passed since the JELCW asked me to write about “hope” and questions like “What is hope?” have flitted through my mind when I have had time. For I feel I cannot really understand the word. Of course, however, I know the word by definition in the dictionary (a feeling of wanting something to happen or expectations for the future).

When I read Paul’s letter, he uses the word “hope” repeatedly and the word seems different from the definition in the dictionary. For example, such as “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Paul’s letter to the Romans chapter 15, verse 13).

Alain, the author of “On Happiness” states as follows: “I assume that faith comes before happiness be born, and love be born after happiness” (“Collection of quotes”, Japanese translation by Mikio Kamiya, Iwanami).

“Hope,” when we say that “My hope has been fulfilled” or “Things became as I hoped”, means “My hope has been fulfilled” or “Things became as I hoped”, therefore, the existence of the hope bearer is clear. On the contrary, “hope” depicted by Paul is different in that the existence of the bearer is not clear. Perhaps we need to be a little apart from “hope” based only on “Things I hope for.” For “hope” based only on “things I hope” would result in intruding our ideas upon others, thus, we would be away from “faith” and “love.”

In order to create “hope” that decreases the *I* in “things I hope,” I think while we are trusting in God and others, we need to have the ability to enjoy what is given to us, as is. Yes, it is like putting “*I*” in parentheses, and opening ourselves to letting others play the lead “love.”

Bridging the gap between Victims and Society

Fukushima and Kumamoto YWCA

Keiko Ezaki, Kumamoto YWCA President, Kumamoto Church

An event planned by the Kumamoto YWCA and the Fukushima “Fukushima & Kumamoto Kids’ Spring Exciting Camp” began in 2014 and it is held every spring.

The YWCA of Japan has a project named **com7300** (which is the number of days in the lives of children who were born on March 11, 2011 until they become age 20). We have Ms. Y from the Kumamoto YWCA on the committee. So, in August, 2014, the theme of the “Peace Study Group” cohosted by Murozono Church was “Learning About the Present Situation of Fukushima.” In that session, we learned about radiation damage caused by TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in detail.

Affected by invisible, tasteless radiation, children cannot play outside. We knew they could not take gym class outside which was an indispensable part of their curriculum, essential for the healthy development of school children. Right after this session, we talked about a way to help them in Kumamoto. We started planning to invite children from Fukushima to “recreation camps.”

College students began to gather around Ms. Y and to schedule camp preparation committee meetings between their class periods. Senior members have also joined bringing food to feed them. We have had recreation camps three times at various sites in Kumamoto until now.

Right after the second camp held at Shinwa-machi, Amakusa-shi, the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes struck in April. We thanked God that they were not during our camp for we didn’t want the kids to have flashbacks of their experiences in Fukushima.

In 2017, we planned to hold the third camp at Lutheran Aso Cottage. However, we were not able to go there due to damage caused by the earthquakes. The damage was so heavy that roads, bridges, and JR lines were closed because of sudden collapse. Luckily, a bypass for Aso city was open after several months, so we could hold the third camp too, using Kumamoto YWCA Aso Camp which was not severely damaged.

Right now, we are in the midst of preparing for the 4th recreation camp. This time, we are going to hold it at Tategamiyō camp site in Yashiro-gun. To carry out the camps, we need money (air fare for the kids from Fukushima and their leaders, payment for their accommodations during the five-day stay, food budget, fees for the program) and people (volunteers, a cooking crew, and drivers). Children spend time in groups of five with college student leaders. Seniors fix meals as a cooking crew.

This year again, we began not only looking for cooking volunteers but also began fund raising to achieve the budget, 2,300,000 yen. We are receiving camp program applications from February 1st. The Kumamoto YWCA is ready for the coming camp. We are looking forward to carrying it out.

We hope your concern is always with the people of Fukushima.



We could play outside in a natural environment!

Bridging the gap between Inside and Outside of Japan

Abroad

Sabah Theological Seminary Graduation Ceremony: Messages from four graduates

Ms. Elphy Sikana

I would like to express my gratitude for supporting me through the JELCW Scholarship during my study in the Sabah Theological Seminary (STS). My study in STS really helped me to be more mature, and equipped me for spiritual life and service management in the Church. Appointed full-time to BCCM, Sri Muda, Kuala Lumpur, I started working there on January 2, 2018.



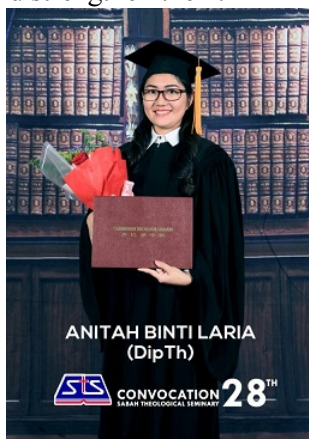
Ms. Wong Lee Tzu

I majored in Divinity at the Sabah Theological Seminary and graduated in 2017. Currently, I'm serving at Tamparuli, Sabah as a preacher. I hope that you will continue to remember me in your prayers. Once again, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to you. May the Lord's grace and blessings be with you!



Ms. Anitah Laria

Thank you for your generous four-year support for me to complete my Diploma of Theology in Sabah Theological Seminary. I will start my full-time ministry in January, 2018. I really hope that I can use all that I learned in Sabah Theological Seminary to build up the faith of the church members and strengthen them.



Ms. Evelyn Yong Kah Khee

As I am celebrating the joy of graduation and the happiness of serving the Lord full-time, I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for supporting me for three years. Theological training throughout these few years was not an easy path for me, but with God's grace and guidance, I was able to go through all the ups and downs.



Having the young succeed

Faith : Wherever You Go

My Church Life: A Ninety-Year Chronicle

Kiyoshi Tamura, Matsumoto Church, Higashi Diocese

I was born on October 8, 1929. My birth place was 1-45, Tenma-Cho, Iida-Shi. The place was close to a nursery-kindergarten in Nakano-Cho, and it took children only 7-8 minutes to go there. From the time I was 2 years old or so, I went to the same nursery-kindergarten that my sister and brother went to. I was taken there on our maid's back. My mother fixed my lunch and our maid brought her own, of course. My mother always said to me "In the morning, I fixed seven lunches in all, for your sister, your brother and his middle school friend who was staying our home, for example." According to her, she was busy even though we had the help of a maid.

I can see myself aged 6 or around in the picture which was in "History of Iida Lutheran Kindergarten." Everyone was sitting on the straw mat, but Keiji, the director's son, and I were sitting in chairs. We graduated from the kindergarten in 1936 as the 13th group. After graduation, I continued to go to Sunday school every Sunday morning.

At Christmas, we used to dramatize the Christmas story. Sometimes we sang songs in our family, too. For that purpose, all members of my family visited Nakatani Sensei and learned to sing. Since my first name Kiyoshi is named after the Japanese translation of Silent from "Silent Night", I remember that we sang this hymn there.

As the war became severe, when I was in girls' school, it was OK for our pastor to have a part-time job now, so he started working. When I was a senior in girls' school, the war ended on August 15th and the third semester began in September, so we got back to normal life. I graduated from girls' school in March of the next year, and started working. After a year or so, on Sunday, April 20th, about 4,000 houses were destroyed by a fire in Iida City. My house was burnt down, too, so I fled from the area hand in hand with my father and mother to my elder brother's wife's home in the same prefecture. At that time, my sister-in-law's older daughter (age 6) was suffering from whooping cough, so she separated her daughters on the different floors. Because we moved to her home, the one-year old daughter was infected and died the next day.

After the funeral service, my parents and I went back to our place, making a hut using six burnt stakes, a burnt tin roof and walls, and a cheap wooden floor for three to sleep on. We found a window with glass, and put a hinge to it so that the window could swing open and closed. Using a lantern was not a good idea because of the unhealthy smoke, so we stopped using it and went to bed early at night. Instead, in the morning, we got up early as the sun rose.

Since a teacher of my girls' school planned and founded a day-care center using half of the gym at school and asked me for help, I was a nursery school teacher for three months there, then at a day-care center named "*Kodomo no Sono*," founded later. I had been a nursery school teacher for about two years. I went to Matsumoto staying overnight to take a test to be a nurse, passed the test and got a certificate by the name of the then Nagano Prefecture governor.

In 1948, I went to Matsumoto to help my sister and got married on April 9th, 1949, and have lived there since then. I gave birth to three boys and raised them.

Since we didn't have a church in Matsumoto, Pastor Shiobara and Missionary Laitinen from

Finland founded a mission church. Matsumoto Church originated from an annex of the Orii's in Shiraita, but with the help of the grandmother of Ozawa, we could buy the land for the church, and the church is a good one.

Now, I am 89 years old living in a nursing home. Care givers and church members support me and I am so grateful to them to be able to continue going to church.

From My Grandfather to His Great Grandchildren

Rei Nakano, Ōmori Church, Higashi Diocese



I was born to Christian parents whose parents were also Christians. Before I had ability to remember I was baptized in infancy, and when I was in the upper grades in elementary school, I was confirmed in a special ceremony to be a full member of the church. I think the reason I could grow up in a happy home environment feeling God beside me all the time was because my family always brought me to a service every week. When we live church life, sometimes, we cannot bear when we are tested, or we lose faith in our soul doubting God and ourselves.

This was true for me as well, for I, the third generation Christian, felt isolated, not having Christian friends my age at school and when I became an adolescent, my priority switched to hanging out with my friends not to going to church, so I gradually drifted away from church, making excuses and living an indifferent life.

When I grew up, got married, and had children, the need to choose my daughter's kindergarten reunited me with church. Even though I had been away from church more than ten years, when I thought about how I would like to have my children educated, Christian school education occurred to me. Luckily, the closest Lutheran church near me had a nursery-kindergarten and its director was a pastor of my mother church. I chose this Lutheran kindergarten hoping my daughter would "grow up feeling God close to her." Through saying grace and through the Christmas pageant, I hoped she would grow up blessed with God. I saw my grandparents and mother very glad that I made this decision.

My grandfather had his daughter and his granddaughter, me, succeed his faith, and of course I also hope that my children will continue in faith, too. But as I had the experience of drifting away from church, I'm careful not to force faith upon them. Surely, attending a service is a church member's duty, but I let my children decide whether they will go or not, and I respect their feelings. I think encouraging them to feel that church is a friendly place is the kind of "nurturing faith" that I can do. For I feel it in my life every day that if faith ceases, if God guides us again, everything is prepared by the Lord.

Due to having my daughter transfer to another kindergarten because we moved to a new place, we are now apart from Christian school education. But my grandfather tells his great grandchildren (my children) "God loves you Ms.--" when he sees them. Feeling "loved" or "needed" is an important essence of growing one's self-esteem. I believe this grandfather's important message and my telling them that "God is always with them" will lead to the succession of faith.

Dreaming of attending a service in a family of multiple generations like my grandfather and mother someday, I would like to live my life with the Lord from now on, as well.