

LWF • WICAS Asia Meeting Report

Mayuko Yasuda (Tonan)

“We are talking about justice” --- this is the phrase I often heard during the LWF/WICAS Network Meeting in Asia held in Kuala Lumpur on Aug. 8-13th. WICAS is the organization that works for the women of the world. It focuses on helping and protecting unprivileged women and realizing gender equality in society. Yet, by learning such information alone, it is difficult to understand what exactly is at issue or what goals are set by WICAS. As far as I am concerned, though I am ashamed to say this, I had little understanding about WICAS until I attended this meeting. Thanks to the participation, I gained first-hand experience of WICAS’ function, at least to some extent.

The theme of the meeting was “Gender Justice Policy, Women on the Move.” Every day, except Sunday, a variety of sessions continued from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. They included updates from Asian countries, Bible lectures from a female perspective, and small group or plenary discussions. The sessions, provided through a theological or practical perspective, were very rich and intense.

The reports on India, Malaysia and Nepal were shockingly awful, as I could not believe what I had heard. This made me realize how ignorant and indifferent I had been to those issues. In Malaysia, for example, human trafficking is rampant, and foreign migrant workers face harsh labor, without easy means to return to their homeland. In India, one woman is raped every three minutes and, to make matters worse, law enforcement agents or military personnel who abuse their power often commit such crimes. Moreover, these reported

cases are just the tip of an iceberg: there are so many unjust, unequal, and inhumane incidents. I was lost for words.

It is against this reality that the phrase, “We are talking about justice” was emphasized repeatedly during the conference. Participants agreed that WICAS does not strive for ‘gender equality’ in terms of social status or positions referred to in the developed countries including Japan, or power games played by women who have complaints against men. Rather, WICAS purposes to listen to the voice of people who suffer under injustice and bring about justice.

Faced with a very challenging issue such as justice, I now sincerely believe that we have to start from the awareness of issues, and making them known. Looking ahead to 500-year anniversary of the Reformation, the Lutheran Church should remember its mission to keep reforming itself for the sake of justice. Personally, I want to both have a reformer’s heart, and a desire to be reformed. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for giving me this opportunity to learn.

CV

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2010 : MA in Christian Studies, Japan Lutheran College and Seminary

Ms. Yasuda
at WICAS Asia
Conference
(far left)



The Second Home Country and the Second Family

Mrs. Yumiko Tokuhiro

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Japanese Congregation in Sao Paulo

Brazil --- having no idea about the country nor its language, I did have some fear. Accompanying Rev. Tokuhiro, I was to stay here for three years originally, but following the relocation of church, development of mission, membership growth, financial self-reliance and term-extension agreement, I am now in my 6th year in 'the strange land as pastor's wife.' Though I said 'strange,' Brazil and Japan have had a long and close relationship with each other. Here in Liberdade, the Japanese town in downtown Sao Paulo, you can buy any Japanese food, such as miso, soy sauce, tofu and even fried tofu; abura-age. You can use Japanese with the owner of the near-by papa-mama shop.

Recently our church attracts a variety of people, including migrants before and after WWII, expatriates, exchange students, tourists, or people from favela (poor community). The ground floor of the rectory has been reformed to house 15 guestrooms that accommodate students learning Portuguese language or Brazilian music, young Japanese tourists, doctors/dentists from Peru and Bolivia who came to Brazil for further study, Brazilians and young men of Japanese descent. After worship service, lunch mainly consisting of Japanese dishes is served. Now we have 30 to 40 people for the lunch, and the church patio seems small.

After the weekly Japanese PC class, I enjoy chatting with native- and Japanese-Brazilian ladies, who are around 60's. We have Church youth volunteers from Japan, and they play leading roles in the youth gatherings. Monthly churrasco (Brazilian BBQ) parties, live music events, and the World Cup viewing attract 30 to 70 people each time. We have invited a thirty-year-old Brazilian pastor to join us since this year. He is a cheerful person who used to major in music. As he eats too much, jokingly we say, "You need to be on a diet," and we all laugh. This is how I spend my days in this second homeland with this second family. I listen to the seniors, visit the sick, go for a chat, and when young people seek my husband's

advice on their job or love-life, he and I invite them to come for a meal or a drink.

Though my husband and I were not blessed with a child, we take care of young people just about the age of our child if we had one. We go out and spend time together with the elderly of our parents' or uncle/aunt's age, weeping or laughing. I feel the congregation is just like a big family with the Lord in the center. To explain my feeling, I need no reference to any biblical passage. The Brazilians are optimistic and they openly talk about their mistakes and troubles with laughter. They neither pretend to be big nor hide their weaknesses. I used to believe I had to do everything right as a pastor's wife, but such aggressiveness is already gone. Instead, I feel that we are supporting one another as an extended family.

We had a 19-year-old girl visit us from Japan in August. She went to the kindergarten run by Omori Church, where my husband served as pastor and kindergarten director while I worked as an inexperienced kindergarten teacher. Now she came to see us as a university student. I felt happy that the congregation welcomed her with open arms and the youth took care of her just like their new sister. I do have hard times but I enjoy myself. I do my best so that the congregation will further grow and continue to be the mainstay for each one of them. I pray that one day, a Brazilian pastor of Japanese ancestry will be called and that someone nice will come from Japan to succeed us.



The young people staying in the Church guestrooms threw a surprise birthday party for me. Rev. and Mrs. Tokuhiro (front row, to the right)

ACWCJ

ACWC (Asian Church Women's Conference)

Nineteen Asian countries have joined the conference. They are Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Japan.

ACWC is an ecumenical fellowship among churchwomen. It has continued to meet every four years. The 15th Assembly will be held this year in the Philippines on October 3-10.

ACWC Japan is an ecumenical organization consisting of seven denominations of churchwomen who share our common faith to serve the Lord as well as people in society. Our seven denominations are: the Salvation Army Women's Organization, the National Federation of Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan) Women's societies, the National Women's Association Korean Christian Church in Japan, the Episcopal Church Women of Japan, the Japan Baptist Women's Convention, the Japan Baptist Women's Union, and the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church Women.

We have been active as an ecumenical organization of these seven denominations for the last 30 years. We have a committee meeting every month. The main activities of ACWC-Japan are convening of ACWC Day seminar, promotion of ICFLC* and Signature Campaign**. ACWC Day seminar is a gathering of over 800 churchwomen, which is held every fall, with 500 participants in Tokyo branch and 300 participants in Kansai branch. We promote the ICFLC* Signature Campaign** in this seminar also. The theme for this year's seminar is "Please make me as a Peacemaker."

Our fellow ACWwoC members in different countries live far apart, but we can get in touch through e-mail and pray for each other. ACWC-J would like to keep praying for all the participating countries of the ACWC.

*International Committee for Fellowship of the Least Coin

**One coin is donated with a signature to support ACWC



Representatives to ACWC

Naomi Tajima, (Yukigaya)/ Keiko Renge, (Tonan)
Kansai branch: Nami Matsumoto (Kobe)/ Yasuko Yamakawa (Toyonaka)

NCCJ Woman Committee

Representative: Noriko Ishitani

1. The total amount of "World Day of Prayer 2014" donation is ¥ 8,416,398.

Thanks for ¥ 300,000 outgone from it to Shuko Gakuen (Kyoto city)

The country for next year is the Bahamas.

2. The second half of plan

*This autumn "Reading the Bible from a Woman's' Perspective" by Ms. Satoko Yamaguchi.

*This December we will attend "The fourth Global inter-Religions Conference"

LWF/WICAS

Representative: Kyoko Tawara

Asia WICAS Meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur for four days from August 9, which Mayuko Yasuda, a young woman theologian and Tonan Lutheran Church member attended. Analyzing the result of 2012 gender questionnaire, she gave a speech on Japanese present situation around gender issue. Next April, Korean and Japanese Women Leadership Training will be held in Japan.

Itsukushimi Committee Report

Representative: Hisako Ishitobi (Kanto area), Akie Momiyama (Kansai area)

The Kanto Committee held a seminar on gender at Tokyo Ikebukuro Church on April 26 (Sat.), starting at 10:30 a.m. The theme was, "Is each of us valued?" The guest speaker was Rev. Sayoko Ooka, of the Anglican-Episcopal Church in Japan. The discussion of where Jesus stood and who He walked with was particularly memorable. The Kansai Committee is planning a workshop for next year. (Hisako Ishitobi)