

The 23rd JELCW · Newsletter

No. 155 October 15, 2017

Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church Women

1-14-14 Okubo, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-0072

Publisher: Yoshie Haga Editor: Etsuko Yanai

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

My path with the Lord



Rev. Fumiko Naitō

Pastor, Eikō Church

In my early twenties, I learned from Fusae Ichikawa, who was then a member of the Diet, and I read some of her books. She was born in Aichi Prefecture. She became a teacher, a journalist and then she began “The Women’s Voting Rights Movement” with Raichō Hiratsuka and Ochimi Kubushiro (KYŌFŪKAI, Japan Christian Women’s Organization). In those days, which coincided with the life of my grandmother who is now in heaven, women had no voting rights. Fusae Ichikawa was in the midst of the fight for “women’s liberation” during Meiji and Taisho periods when women were totally and legally discriminated against.

Ichikawa’s struggle originated from her sympathy to her mother when she was very young. She states “I can still form a visual image of my mother who tolerated being beaten by my father with his fist or a stick. My father was a tyrant.” She also states she has memories of her mother’s sadness as a woman.

Seventy two years have passed and I take women’s voting rights for granted. I can hear Ichikawa appealing “Women, don’t take your voting rights for granted.”

I have had a twenty-six year career encouraged by God and the federation since I joined the Church. I coped with many things until I was appointed as a pastor, and even after I became one. Thank the Lord for being with us. There were days until we were approved as a married clergy couple, days of doing pastoral work while I was raising children after giving birth, days when I was on leave of absence from work longer than I expected due to child care, days when it was not easy to get back to my old position, and now I continue to leave for my new post alone. As I begin each day with my prayers, the great and unchangeable words in the Bible encourage me, and the Lord warmly guides me. From now on, as well, I want to continue to work for the good, not taking things for granted. Since I was born as a woman, I want to make the most of it, for I think women have the ability to understand other people’s feelings and problems.

Bridging the gap between Victims and Society

Report of an interview: “**Kids Care Park Fukushima**”

Participants:

Kids Care Park Fukushima

Seiichirō Kurihara (Chairperson), Ayumi Satō (a member)

NRK Fukushima Izumi Lutheran Church

Rev. Osamu Nomura

Nihon Christ Kyōdan Hobara Church

Rev. Saburō Kurita

Interviewers:

Yoshie Haga (President of JELCW), Akiko Nemoto (Vice President/ Treasurer)

Date: August 3, 2017

Place: NRK Fukushima Izumi Lutheran Church

1 The present condition of Fukushima

Kurihara: We still have flexible containers (bags filled with removed radioactively contaminated soil and plants) at home. Six years have passed and people tend to forget the fact that we have the containers at home. Half of the mothers are worried about it but the rest aren't. People who don't care just got tired of worrying. The Government only says it is okay now. So, why do we care? People pick on those who care instead. Listening to the right kind of information, I'd like to tell them how to raise children avoiding risks.

As I think about how to accomplish this, I am searching for ways to reach that goal. At the moment, playgrounds are said to be very good, so I'd like to get an opportunity to offer more. I don't think I have such know-how yet, though, I'd like to get it done.

How much soil is contaminated? The government says getting rid of contamination has been completed, but in fact only 2% was cleaned. Fields, forests and mountain districts are not cleaned. The government cleaned roads, parks and playgrounds of schools first and then ordinary people's houses.

Kurita: In our town, Hobara, the government didn't remove the contaminated materials. The government got rid of almost none of it in our city, Date.

Nomura: In Kōriyama, the government buried the contamination in people's yards for a while, and will bring it to temporary storage facilities during August now.

Kurihara: I had been living in Tokyo until I retired at the age of 65. After retirement, I went back to my home town of Fukushima where I was asked to serve as a principal of a private high school for five years (until 2013). The disaster struck while I was in charge.

Nomura: During the summer of that year, my wife and I left futon mats as they were and we usually slept in them when we got home. It was not tidy and I felt it strange.

Nomura: Nuclear power plants use a terrible amount of nuclear energy. Each day they use the same as the amount for an A-bomb. So, there is a huge amount of ash at the cores of nuclear power plants.

Kurihara: It's an outrageous amount, isn't it? 20 milligram Sievert equals a year's dose. By staying here for 2 years, you get 40 mg SI, for 10 years, you get close to 200 mg SI. The government only says you get 20 mg SI, that's all. Its nuance is that you just get 20 mg SI starting from zero for another year. Being exposed to radiation was an accident, so a person needs to avoid extra exposure, but the government doesn't want to talk about that. I think it is important for mothers to take these things into account so that they can make their own decisions on how to avoid risks and choose the best environment for raising their children. To make it possible, I'd like to inform mothers of this data and give them the correct information, but it is difficult.

Mothers had Geiger counters (radiation counters) here in Fukushima.

2. The three fundamental objectives of “Kids Care Park Fukushima”

(1) Making an environment for children where they can freely play inside or outside without worrying about the radiation, the same as before the nuclear power plant accident.

Pastors in northern Fukushima developed a churches' network to support reconstruction of Fukushima in July, 2011. After working together on this for 2 years, since they didn't let children play outside, the children have gained weight and lost their strength. We began a project trying to give them fun things to do. I've been involved in it since then.

(2) Making the correct information about the radioactive damage and useful/ specific information available.

We want to do this especially for parents. The aim of this is to show them specific possible examples of renewable energy. We hope the parents will have courage to face the facts and the will to protect their children.

(3) To meet the needs of children and their parents, we offer a steady long-term, 10 to 20-year program.

In 2013, we wanted to do what we could do by ourselves, so we looked for volunteers, rented a playroom, borrowed playground equipment, and started our program. We have continued to practice it since then. Until now, we carried out our program 34 times changing playrooms and venues.

3. Procedures

Kurihara: At first, the Japan Bible Society donated 5 hundred thousand yen to us, and it was very helpful, but its aim was to create a Christian center, so it terminated its donation in the next year. The NRK kindly donates a million yen to us each year when we put in a request (up until 2022). It is an appropriated fund. We also ask VELKD (Federation of Evangelical-Lutheran Church Germany) for help. They have donated a million yen to us each year to the present.

EMS (a group in Germany) did not respond to our request, saying that it was the responsibility of the government first, but after negotiations, they donated 2 million yen to us. We are also supported by churches and individuals.

The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association also funds us so that we can rent the place for our program. It costs 2 to 3 hundred thousand yen a year. We rented the previous house as our office since the number of toys to keep increased. The association told us that it would pay the increase as well.

The prefecture and the city lend their names to our program. We write yearly reports and when we ask for another year, we can rent the same place about one-third cheaper.

4. Our future plan

Kurihara: Ways not to make children victimized of being cancer are: reducing further exposure, slowing the multiplication of cancer cells, continuation of intensifying immunity. We need to reduce carcinogens for the future of the children. We need to encourage them not to smoke in the future and maintain high immunity. We'd like to help the children develop good habits: eating a balanced diet and exercising regularly throughout their lives. It seems to me that continuing our program talking to mothers who have exposed children works.

Interviewers: Children in Belarus were exposed to radiation long before the Fukushima disaster. When they became junior and senior high school students, they wrote compositions. "Snowman Melted by our Tears" is the collection of their essays. Children there lived their lives not being well informed. As their fathers or brothers died from cancer, they started thinking about the situation by themselves. I think that kind of thing is important. Not only parents but also the children should have the right kind of information, knowing the possibilities of getting cancer in their lives. I think it is crucial for them to survive.

Kurihara: We are planning to make our project an NPO. We have carried out it in a way so that it might become an NPO. For example, we report our annual budget in newsletters. By making it an NPO, having a good reputation, we'd like to start new things to get people involved. As it is now, we'll continue to appeal to the whole world. Supported by Germany, everything has been right until now.

Kurihara: Nuclear power plants cannot survive the economy. Even if renewable energy be the

mainstream, vested interests in nuclear power plants will be against renewable energy. The Japanese Government surely will make a group who are for nuclear energy to fight with a group who are against it.

Interviewers: What can we, as the JELCW, do? Funding seems to be difficult for us.

Kurihara: I hope for you to deeply understand about the high levels of radioactivity and to have a warm attitude to the victims. When children become adolescents, they may have worries. I hope you will understand them when they have problems. At this point, we ourselves don't really know how much they are affected. Will you be their friends? Will you pray for them?

Thank you for today.



Pastor Nomura (next to the left) and Chairperson Kurihara (next to the right)

Kids playing with high school and college student volunteers



Piles of flexible containers covered with green sheets which have a chimney to let out the air.



Bridging the gap Between Generations:

Encouraging Children in Religious Feelings—Faith

Live this faith

Haruko Rakumitsu, Lutheran Church Amagi, Kūshū Diocese

When I thought about the expression “succession of faith”, I wondered “Who inherits faith from whom?” “Do parents have their children inherit it?” “If the succession is between parents and children, do parents force their children to have faith?”

Where does “faith” come from in the first place? From one’s heart? When one “wants to believe”, does it naturally become faith?

Born and raised in a Christian family, I seem to have naturally learned Bible messages and grew up without obstacles. But as time has passed, because of my own weakness and the inconsistency of the society, I feel I only believe half of the Bible messages now. I’m living tossing my questions to God as I can’t understand why my friends and relatives died younger than others. Still, where does my feeling of “wanting to believe in God” come from?

And so, without God’s guidance, my feeling of “wanting to believe in God” may not have occurred to me. God gave me this “faith”, so I think God helps us inherit faith.

While I was pondering various questions while doing household chores, an answer came to me: the fact that “God gave us our lives, and those who went to heaven before me fully lived their lives.”

God gave me two children and the only thing I could do “to disseminate faith” was letting them go to a Christian kindergarten. I left God to guide them to have faith.

Through the Bible messages, God continues to give us consolation and hope. Receiving His messages, His love, hope to live and faith, I want to fully live my life.

God’s guidance

Tomoko Mizuno, Eikō Church, Tōkai Diocese

My parents used to live in Kumamoto prefecture and went to Kengun Church. As my father transferred to Komaki city in Aichi prefecture, I was born there. After a while, I began to go to church after I entered an elementary school. When I was in the second grade, we, all four in my family, were baptized by Pastor Yutaka Yamamoto.

The most influential event in my church life was an elementary school children’s camp in a diocese, which my mother recommended to me when I was in the sixth grade. I felt uneasy about going to Ume-ga-shima in Shizuoka Prefecture at first, but once I joined the camp, I could make friends with kids from other districts. It was very fun being with those friends, so I began to join gatherings of junior and senior high school students two times a year, spring and summer. I had no Christian friends at school. When I talked about church to my school friends, they only reacted like “Why do you go to church?” or “You are so serious, aren’t you?” But at camp, I could talk about God naturally with friends my age and speak freely that going to church is enjoyable, whether you believe in God or not.

When I was in the eighth grade or so, I began to take Confirmation classes to become a full member of the church with other junior and senior high school students. I was not sure that I truly understood and believed in Christianity, so I talked to a Polish missionary. She assured me that it was okay for me to be confirmed. She put my mind at ease and I decided to be confirmed in a special ceremony.

As I grew up in a Christian family and my husband is a Christian, going to church has been so common that I sometimes couldn't really tell why I belonged to church. But now, I feel that not "I" but "God" is guiding me. I feel I have difficulties that I am not able to overcome now, but the fact that He is with me lightens my burden.

My children are now in the seventh and the ninth grades. They have been participating in camps, starting with the Lutheran Kids' Camps, and now they enjoy Teens camp every year. I pray that they will meet many friends and teachers to talk with and grow up feeling existence of God.

Handing Faith On to the Younger Generation

Mariko Takehara, Director of Mebae Kindergarten, Hokkaidō Special Diocese

We safely held "Sapporo Church Kids' Camp" overnight from August 1st to 2nd. Last year, we changed the activity back from a one-day camp held the year before last to the original two-day camp model held by the diocese. Compared to the one-day camp, both the children and parents were much attracted with the two-day model, and the number of participants doubled.

This summer, our camp site was our church and kindergarten which were affordable, as opposed to a far-off campsite. This was made possible only through the assistance of not only the regular Sunday School teachers, but also church members and the women's group.

To the children, the kindergarten is the place where they spent two or three years, and the church is the place they attended services for years. We could spend these two days at ease. At an opening service, a candle service, prayers before meals or going to bed, children closed their eyes to pray in the same way they used to in the kindergarten. I think they rarely have this kind of time at school or at home these days. But I felt sprouts are growing in children's hearts.

When the time comes, the seeds we plant in spring and grow carefully surely come up and become flowers and crops. Of course, ability to come up or grow is given to younger children. Nurses prepare things that individual children need at kindergarten. We tell children that God is always with them, helping and protecting them as they grow, and we have taught them hoping that they grow up to be loved by God.

Well, I heard a good story about this year's graduate, N, from his mother. Somebody in N's class at school had stolen a friend's belonging. N said "The one who did this would be better to go to Mebae Kindergarten. He'll know God watches him." Listening to this, I was very thankful that N grew up in God's love. Of course, N actively joined this year's summer camp.

Our Scholarship Grantees

The year 2017

JELCW Scholarship Grantees at Sabah Theological Seminary

Four students became seniors.

Would you support the grantees for another year? Give your love to them.



Evelyn Yong Kah Khee
M, Divinity (3rd year)



Wong Lee Tzu
B, Divinity (4th year)



Elphy Sikana
B, Divinity (4th year)



Anitah Laria
B, Divinity/ Theology (4th year)