

Three Matters of Need for West Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (WJELC)

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Introduction

Praise to the name of the Lord.

From our hearts we thank the mission friends of NLM (Norwegian Lutheran Mission) for their support and prayers. NLM and WJELC have been cooperating for almost 70 years, and we are very happy for this fellowship in our work. We also wish to continue to work together in the time to come.

I will write about three present matters of need for WJELC.

To maintain the pietism of Northern Europe and the principle of laity

WJELC have received “The Northern European pietism” as a wonderful inheritance from NLM. We were taught, not a liberal faith that interprets the Bible in its own self-centered way, but to read the Bible with a meek heart and the importance of praying like children.

We express our heartfelt (sincere) gratitude for this. I think that to maintain (keep) this pietistic faith, will be a most important matter also in the future.

WJELC was also born through NLMs “Lay (men) principle”. We therefore hold that “Church work by lay believers” is important for us. Last year our church got 8 new elders. If the number of elders and other lay leaders continue to grow, supporting the employees of the churches (pastors and evangelists), WJELC will be able to grow in an even stronger way.

In order to maintain this “Pietism of Northern Europe” and the “Laity principle”, WJELC wish to continue the good fellowship with NLM. For this purpose, we would be glad to see several opportunities for people from WJELC to go to Norway for fellowship and interaction with mission friends.

To raise new workers for the church.

The number of employed workers in WJELC (pastors and evangelists) meets the present need. However, from about 2020 the number will decrease rapidly because workers on special commission contracts (70 years +) will retire. The number of local church pastors as well as workers assigned to special institutions will also decrease. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to raise new workers.

One way to achieve this is to revive “dedication” camps for youth. In the past we used to have camps aiming for “dedication”. I myself made my decision to become a pastor at such a camp. The youth camps nowadays are more “evangelistic camps” aiming to make Jesus known to nonbelieving young people. This kind is also needed, but at the same time there is a need for camps for “dedication”. Therefore, we want to reopen such “dedication camps” for our youth.

Regarding the financial aspect, WJELC, at its recent annual meeting, approved the establishment of a new “account for training of personnel”. This account may for instance be used as a fund for supporting studies abroad for candidates for teaching positions at the theological seminary.

As we see, there are needs both in the area of program and in the area of financing for the purpose of raising new workers for the church.

To engage a “Child and youth director” (an evangelist with responsibility for the work among children and youth)

At present there is no worker in WJELC similar to NLMs Youth leader (Ung leder). We have committee members for youth work and for children’s work, but these are not paid positions. Also, because many are so busy with regular church work, they don’t have much energy to put into youth and children’s work.

However, as mentioned in the second point, it will be very important to nurture the faith from young age, in order to bring forward new church workers.

In this situation, if possible we want to establish a new position as “Child and youth director” by the year 2020. This Child and youth director will usually be associated with a local church and its pastor and will at times preach there. However, 80 – 90% of the job will be the work for children and youth. As for the contents of the job, it may for instance include planning of a “dedication camp” mentioned in point two, holding special gatherings for youth and children in the different districts, to engage in counselling with young people from different churches by using SMS, coaching and bringing up local youth leaders in the churches. In this way, the Child and youth director will not have to directly coach youth in every church by himself for ever.

Furthermore, as both NLM and FLM are well aware of the importance of work for youth and children, we would also appreciate that NLM and FLM engage workers to take responsibility for this work. Then we might have a good team of three persons working together for the children and the youth, with one worker each from WJELC, NLM and FLM. That would make it possible to do a very good job in this area.

Greeting

The three points mentioned above, are the present needs of WJELC. We ask for NLMs prayer, support and cooperation towards these needs.

May the grace and blessing of the Lord Jesus richly be with all of NLMs mission friends!