

Kizuna December 2020
Pastor Sarah Wilson

For more than sixty years now, Christian women in Japan have gathered together for an annual Japan Women's Conference (WoCon). It was started in 1957 by missionaries' wives but since then has come to include not only missionaries but all kinds of Japanese women and also women who are foreign residents in Japan.

I attended WoCon for the first time in February 2020. It was a wonderful experience. I met both Christian women who live all across Japan and belong to all different churches. We prayed, studied, ate, and had fun together. The main speaker was a former missionary in Gunma. I also participated by offering a workshop and leading evening prayer one night. The conference took place at the Asia Rural Institute, which was my first time outside of the Tokyo area! ARI is a farm that invites rural leaders from around the world to study agriculture in a cooperative setting. They make their own soy sauce (it is very delicious!) and grow crops. Although it was a very cold place to be in February, I have a happy memory of my time there.

The Japan Women's Conference will take place again in 2021, but not in person, because of the pandemic. Instead it will be online. I will be one of the main speakers, along with my friend Ikuko Williams. Ikuko is a Japanese woman who spent many years living in England with her English husband, who is a professor of Japanese language and literature. They recently moved to Japan so he could work at ICU. While in England, Ikuko became a priest in the Anglican church and spent time working in hospice and chaplaincy ministry.

The theme for this year's conference is "A Time to Heal." Ikuko and I chose this theme because of the pandemic and how it has focused so much attention on health care. But also chose it because we see so much sadness, loneliness, and spiritual pain in people. Our talks will focus on the Christian ministry of healing, and what God's word has to say to us in our hurt and pains. Healing was a central part of Jesus' ministry. Healing is something everybody needs, Christians and non-Christians alike.

The conference will feature both recorded talks and live conversations through Zoom. They will take place over three Saturdays during Lent, on February 20, February 27, and March 6, starting at 9 o'clock in the morning.

Since the conference is entirely online, you can attend without traveling! Please visit the website to learn more about the conference. You can register already now if you'd like to participate

<https://woconjapan.wordpress.com/>