

News Letter No. 1

Issued September 1 2011

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Editor: The Revd. Jun Nakamura, Office Director



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake



We will walk together with those who are bearing up under adversity because of the Eastern Japan Earthquake, treating them with respect.

We will walk together with people in the afflicted regions, moving toward the re-creation of their lives and their regions.

We will walk alongside them with the encouragement that the Lord Jesus Christ is also walking with us.

Our Aspirations for the “Let’s Walk Together!” project

The “Let’s Walk Together!” Project
The Rvd. Kiyoshi Nomura (Steering Cmte. Member)

On April 29th, after nearly two months had passed since the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, the Nippon Sei Ko Kai established its “Let’s Walk Together!” Project and commenced its operations. Since the beginning of the project, in a continuing state of emergency, our staff and volunteers along with many others have continued to be selflessly on the move. As a result, we have been graced with encounters with many victims, and have widened our relationship with many different people. We are truly thankful for the abundance of grace we have received through the richness of these encounters and our warm relationships with people.

For the approximately 3 months’ span that this project has been running, we have not had much success in providing information in a timely fashion. This is due in part, of course, to the fact that it’s been as much as we could do simply to respond to the situations coming at us each day, due to the enormity of the damage produced by this disaster. Also, we found ourselves overwhelmed that practically everything we were doing was a first time experience. But this was not all there was to this; the main reason has been that, due to the very conscientious approach we adopted in relating with people for this project, we had to spend a good deal of time before we could be able to provide information.

Project activities are being conducted based on the Mission Statement which has already been distributed to the various churches; we have also always kept the following additional points in mind as we thought through and carried out aid activities. I really want to share this with all of you, as I hope that our activities can constitute a meaningful segment of the mission of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai.

The “Let’s Walk Together!” Project

- 1. Aspires to place great value on relationships with those in vulnerable social positions, particularly the elderly, children, the handicapped and foreigners.**
- 2. Aspires to always remember those who are yet to be reached by the aid of administrative bodies and other groups.**
- 3. We want to value our ties with people, and the necessities and stories which are imbedded in our encounters. In order that the work of this project may gain deeper understanding from others, we aim for activities which are compelling by their very nature.**
- 4. We will move forward together with the victims, in particular giving heed to the thoughts of the people of the diocese of Tohoku. These activities are proceeding as an undertaking of the whole Nippon Sei Ko Kai, but we are always aspiring to give proper attention to the thinking of the people of the diocese of Tohoku, as well as the social background and history experienced in the Tohoku area.**

I suspect that those who would visit Sendai now would be surprised how the city looks as if nothing had ever happened. And yet, the office for this project which opened at the end of May only got its internet connection in mid-July. Again, full maintenance on the toilets and showers at the Aoba Retreat House, now being used as lodging for volunteers, was finally completed just recently. This is more than two months after ordering this work. There was only one landline phone in the office until the beginning of August. Aftershocks are also continuing. Each one of these facts, I think, tell us that we are still not in a normal situation, that we are still suffering from the earthquake. Also, the problem of radioactive contamination due to the nuclear plant accident is a constant stress-inducer. Every day we continue to be at the mercy of radioactivity readings.

Facing a disaster like this which no one has ever experienced before, how can we walk together with people who are now tormented with unease over a future that is unclear? I believe what is demanded of us is to give consideration to, not the needs and logic of us who give aid, but just as much as is possible to the complex and delicate feelings and position of those who were victimized, and then walk forward as we do our best to work carefully to weave relationships with them. Looking into the future, we intend to be inform you about this process as best we can through news items, this webpage and so forth. We ask sincerely for your understanding and support.

The Diocese of Tohoku and the Project, as seen by the Camera



March 11, 2011 Gamoh, Miyagino-ku, Sendai, Miyagi Pref. picture taken by parishioner of Christ Church, Sendai

March 11 (Friday)

At 2:46 p.m. on this day, a violent earthquake registering 9.0 on the Richter scale ripped through eastern Japan. The tremors continued for over five minutes, and the whole of northeastern Japan was deprived of electric power at that time. For two days, telephones were out of service, and people had only the radio to depend on. People affected by the quake did not know clearly what was happening, and had to spend two dark, anxiety-filled nights.



March 15 (Tuesday)

The Tohoku Diocese Disaster Response HQ was set up at Christ Church, Sendai. Its first task was checking on the condition of the various churches and the safety of their members. However, since the phones weren't working well, and it was hard to get gas for travel by car, the information available was inadequate to ease anxiety about the immediate effects of the quake. Of particular concern were conditions in Kamaishi and Isoyama, where the effects of the quake were reported to be especially severe. It was determined, sadly, that one church-member had died and two were missing in Isoyama. There were also reports that people living on the coast were badly affected, and then news came that damage due to the Fukushima nuclear reactors was beginning to spread as far as Onahama.

March 18 (Friday)

It was difficult to enter the Northeast due to inadequate supplies of gas and the closure of expressways in the region, but emergency vehicles from the Chubu Diocese [of Central Honshu] brought much-needed supplies to Sendai via Niigata and Yamagata Prefectures. The provincial general secretary and the secretary of missions and ministry accompanied these shipments from Niigata. Gas for vehicles remained hard to obtain, but volunteering parishioners in Sendai used bicycles to deliver aid over a wide area to the homes of members and particularly the elderly who had been victims of the quake. Many areas were still without water or gas, and parishioners worked hard to deliver such heavy materials as rice and drinking water even as a light snowfall continued.



Arrival of first supplies



First delivery of supplies (1)



First delivery of supplies (2)

March 21 (Monday)

On the 19th an emergency vehicle arrived in Sendai from the Diocese of Kobe. It was determined that the vehicle would be lent for one week. Emergency vehicles have priority when it comes to obtaining gasoline, and they can use expressways that are closed to normal traffic. Fathers Hayashi and Lee and church-members in Sendai loaded the vehicle with aid-supplies and began to visit the homes of members and evacuation centers in Ishinomaki, Higashi Matsushima, Shichigahama, Shinchi, and Natori, areas which had been hard to go to due to their distance. During this process, the wide extent and terrible severity of the damage became apparent. As was reported in the media, the Shinchi area where St. John's Church, Isoyama is located, was almost completely destroyed: the land itself had been completely disfigured, with only a few houses managing to remain more or less intact. In the home of a Higashiatsushima parishioner, the tsunami punched a hole in the ground floor of their homes completely destroyed by the tsunami, and when they returned from their place of evacuation, they had secondary damage: the second floors had been severely damaged and all sorts of possessions lost. We sensed among ourselves a free-floating anxiety as to how much help we could actually provide to them. In the midst of this, Bishop Primate Uematsu arrived in Sendai, and more personnel and emergency aid came from other dioceses. Strengthened by the sense of support from around Japan, we began to grope toward a picture of our future activities.



Service at the Opening of the Sendai Office

April 29 (Friday) Launching the Project

May 6 (Friday) Service at the Opening of the Sendai Office

Most of the areas that were subject to heavy devastation were located in the Diocese of Tohoku. It was decided that the entire NSK throughout Japan would be involved in work on behalf of this extensive devastated area, and the "Let's Walk Together" Project was launched on that day. The Disaster Response HQ, now renamed "Tohoku Diocese Aid Desk" would be working in concert with the new unit. At this point, activities were all based on desks and materials located in one part of the Tohoku diocesan building, but Director of Missions and Ministry Nakamura arrived in Sendai to further organize activities, the project received many volunteers, and we saw increases of people who became connected through the work of parishioners and in activities in the region.

Service Three Months After the Disaster



June 11 (Saturday)

If the earthquake had not occurred, there was supposed to be the service commemorating the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the Diocese of Tohoku on this day, with Bishop Primate Uematsu preaching.

Before a congregation of one hundred and seventy-five persons, Bishop Uematsu expressed his own sorrow at what had happened but offered words of encouragement: "This is still the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the start of the Northeastern Diocese's mission. We must make a new beginning!" During the worship service, prayers were offered for all the casualties and other victims of the earthquake and for our sisters in Isoyama who died as they tried to save the children of the kindergarten at which they were working. The families and relatives of those who died participated in the service, as did the principal and office workers of the kindergarten.



Funeral for 3 parishioners (1)



Funeral for 3 parishioners (2)

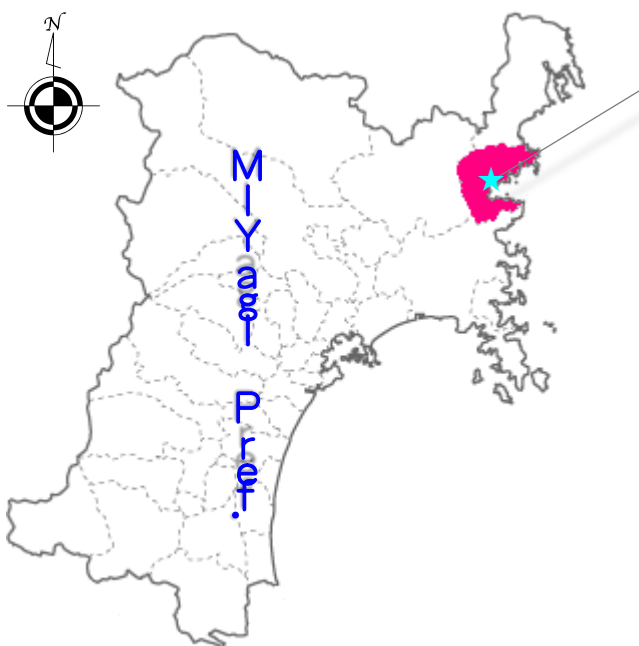
July 22 (Friday)

Two members of St. John's Church, Isoyama who had been missing were identified among the dead. A funeral service was held for them together with one member who was known to be dead on the day of the disaster (the three were family) at a mortuary hall in Soma City. Some 250 persons, including church members from Isoyama, Koriyama, and Sendai, attended the service. It was sad that the church the deceased had loved so much was damaged in the disaster and could not be used for the funerals.

Ongoing Programs

The area affected by the disaster, where our project is currently involved, stretches from Kamaishi City in Iwate Prefecture in the north to Onahama in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture in the south. On August 11, a new center for the work that had been based at the Divine Love Church and Kindergarten in Kamaishi was found, and preparations are underway for restarting activities in Onahama as well. In the Shizugawa district of Minamisanriku-cho, such activities as help for resident foreigners to learn Japanese, help for pupils with their studies during the summer vacation, and cooperation with the local "toy library" Isohiyo have begun. Activities for temporary residence facilities set up in the various localities (such as shopping-trips organized for the residents of the Natori City facility) are continuing steadily. We intend to continue these steady, long-term activities in future.

A Report on the Shizugawa Program for ~Foreign Victims Aid: Helping resident Filipinas with learning Japanese~



Place: Shizugawa, Minamisanriku-cho, Motoyoshi County, Miyagi Prefecture

Report: Minamisanriku-cho faces the Pacific Ocean and is surrounded on its three other sides by mountains. It is an area rich in natural beauty, with both sea and mountain scenery. The coastal area forms part of a designated national park.

In February of 2011 the population of Minamisanriku-cho was 17,666 persons, and the Shizugawa district within it has a population of 8,213, or about half the total. The number of confirmed deaths from the earthquake and tsunami in Minamisanriku-cho is over 540, while the number of those still missing is over 660. Over 2,400 persons have been evacuated from the area, as of August 2011.

The ocean off Minamisanriku has been famous for its very high quality marine produce, at the meeting point of Japan's major ocean currents, but the tsunami struck a huge blow at this basic industry for the area.



Blessing the prefab building



Introductions

The first Shizugawa program began with prayers, as the prefab building used as our meeting place was blessed by the accompanying clergy. The name given to the study group was 'Sanpaguita – the Fighting Ladies.' There's something quite resolute about this name, and says something about the determination with which these ladies set about learning Japanese. Incidentally, Sanpaguita is the national flower of the Philippines, a small white flower with a sweet perfume.

This was our first visit, so the emphasis was more on getting to know each other and orientation for future activities, rather than the actual study groups this time. As input for developing the subsequent curriculum, we began by conducting individual interviews to assess each person's ability to read and write Japanese, and practised writing in hiragana, katakana and kanji, including writing one's own name. However the real study groups will start next week.

The highlight of the day, taking place while the mothers were studying, was the presentation by the children of felt pen cases they had sewed carefully stitch by stitch. Many of the mothers teared up as they received these surprise presents together with the words 'Keep working at it, Mum!'

Through this visit, we were made aware that these women really want pastoral care. In the Philippines, 83% of the population is Catholic, and these ladies are no exception. But because there are no Catholic churches nearby, and because they are married to people of other religions, these women are not in a position to go to church regularly. So on the occasion of our teaching visits each Saturday, we want to start and end with prayer, and hold a Communion service whenever a priest accompanies us.

After the Eucharist, many people told us they felt emotionally relieved, and I can't forget the satisfaction on the mothers' faces as they watched Revd. Jun Nakamura blessing their little ones during the Eucharist.

First Visit Saturday July 9 Time Schedule

- 09:20 Depart from Sendai Office, after loading into the vehicles
- 250 loaves of bread
 - Relief supplies (clothing, detergents, sanitary goods, sweets etc)
 - 4 tables, 12 chairs
- 11:30 Arrive at Shizugawa
- 12:30 Goods unloaded into the prefab building at the site
- 13:00 Blessing of the building, staff introductions etc.
- 13:30 Explanation of the groups' purpose and the day's course of events, selection of group names
- 14:00 【Mothers' Group】 Checking Japanese age ability, practising names langu 【Children's Group】 Making pen cases
- 15:10 Short break
- 15:30 Counseling session with Filipino medical team
- 16:20 Presentation of pen cases (both groups)
- 16:30 Holy Communion
- 17:00 Close of proceedings, tidying up
- <Participants 6 adults, 4 children, 9 staff members >



Learning Japanese



Making pen cases



Receiving a blessing (at Communion)



Q1 How did we come to help the Filipina women of Shizugawa and their families?

A1 As found on the next page, one of the main objectives of our relief efforts under this project is ‘to show our active concern for those who are especially afflicted among the earthquake victims (i.e. the elderly, children, the handicapped, resident foreign nationals, the poor and those evacuated . . .).’ In accordance with this, when we began looking into what we could do to help foreign nationals, we discovered that right after the quake (as of March 15th, that is) there were 6,077, 15,620 and 11,085 registered foreign residents in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures respectively, the main groups being Chinese, Korean and Filipino, in that order (Justice Ministry webpage, March 15), and a large number of them were ladies brought to farming and fishing communities in this region to be brides (through the offices of local authorities and introduction agencies), since these communities are faced by a shortage of marriageable women. Through our survey, we met with people of various nationalities in various areas, and decided as our first activity to provide support to Filipinas and their families in the Shizugawa district of Minamisanriku-cho. Their houses, fishing boats and box lunch shop businesses were swept away; they are now being accommodated with their husband’s family or with friends.

Another reason for making Shizugawa our first choice is that the ‘Isohiyo Toy Library,’ which Tohoku Diocese had been supporting since long before the quake, and whose recovery it is now supporting, is also in this area.



Q2 Why help them learn Japanese?

A2 On June 25, when we asked the four Filipinas heading the group what help we could provide, the first thing they said was help with their Japanese, since all of them could speak it fluently, but had difficulty reading and writing. They have a specific goal, which is to reach a level where they can pass the test to become qualified elderly care workers. Another driving factor was the anxiety they experienced after the earthquake when the language barrier prevented them from getting access to appropriate news. As a result of our discussion, we agreed to provide Japanese language training every Saturday from 1 to 5 pm, to bring them to a level where they could qualify as elderly care workers.



Q3 What other support is being provided?

A3 Along with Japanese language training, we decided to offer a program for the women’s’ children. We were asked to help with primary and junior high school students’ studies, not just on Saturdays, so we agreed to offer support on Monday and Wednesday mornings, concentrating on help with their summer homework.

In addition, we discovered that many of the victims were not at temporary accommodation or evacuation centers, and therefore weren’t receiving supplies, so we decided to distribute aid supplies to them.

Report by: ‘Let’s Walk Together! Project’ Steering Committee member Kei Ikezumi

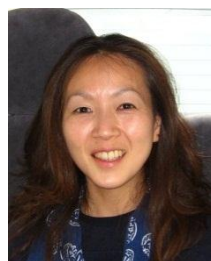
Introducing the Shizugawa Program Staff Team



Kei Ikezumi
Chubu Diocese
Foreign Nationals
Support



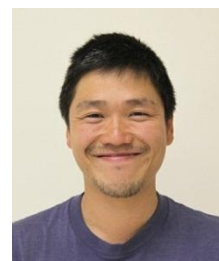
Reiko Chiba
Hikari Toy Library
Japanese Language
Training



Makiko Fukuzawa
Tokyo Diocese
Japanese Language
& Children’s Support



Izumi Takagi
Hokkaido Diocese
Coordinator



Hisao Yamamoto
Kyushu Diocese
Children’s Support

※This first edition of the ‘Let’s Walk Together! Project’ Newsletter comprises 8 pages, but from the second edition on we plan to publish it once a month with 4 pages, with a focus on special reports from each particular program.

Mission Statement for NSKK

Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims Support

Official Name

「The “Let Us Walk Together!” Project:」 ～NSKK Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims Support～

Our Watchwords

- ① We will walk together with those who are bearing up under adversity because of the Eastern Japan Earthquake, treating them with respect.
- ② We will walk together with people in the afflicted regions, moving toward the re-creation of their lives and their regions.
- ③ We will walk alongside them with the encouragement that the Lord Jesus Christ is also walking with us.

Our Action Program

- ① In going about our activities, we will give special attention to those who are especially afflicted among the earthquake victims.
- ② We have deep concerns regarding the nuclear accident and its impact, and will gather and disseminate information in this regard, taking responsible action both domestically and internationally.
- ③ We will go about our activities making use of donations coming together with prayer from all across Japan and from the worldwide Anglican church. Through getting out information in such forms as situation reports and activity reports, we give our response to these prayers and support.
- ④ We will move forward with our activities, establishing activity bases in the affected areas and setting up a support office in Sendai. We will also bring on dedicated staff as we recruit volunteers.
- ⑤ We will be acting in conjunction with Sei Ko Kai-related schools and facilities and with people from other churches.
- ⑥ We will be working to support parishioners who suffered from the earthquake and to rebuild churches and facilities that were harmed in the disaster.
- ⑦ We will carry out this effort as a joint effort of the whole Nippon Sei Ko Kai, as all the dioceses work together with the stricken dioceses.

Structure/Responsibilities

- ① We will institute the “Let Us Walk Together!” Project: NSKK Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims Support within the Nippon Sei Ko Kai. The project’s executive offices will be established in the Sendai Office.
 - ② We will establish a steering committee for the project, which will provide overall guidance for the project.
 - ③ We will appoint an office director along with a few staff members for this project, and carry out support activities, together with volunteers, at the Sendai Office and all disaster-stricken areas
 - ④ This project will carry out publicity, external relations, accounting and other such functions with support from staff of the provincial office.
 - ⑤ The project will keep watch over donations and funds given within the Anglican church to support work among earthquake victims; we will take responsibility for how these moneys are spent.
- The “Let Us Walk Together!” Project: NSKK Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims Support

Management Structure

Project Director-General: Presiding Bishop Makoto Uematsu (Diocese of Hokkaido)
Director: Revd. Jun Nakamura
Steering Cmte Members: Revd. Makito Aizawa (Gen Secretary, Provincial Office)
Ms. Kei Ikezumi (Diocese of Chubu) Revd. Shinya Omachi (Diocese of Hokkaido)
Bishop Hiromichi Kato (Diocese of Tohoku) Revd. Tazu Sasamori (Diocese of Tokyo)
Bishop Yutaka Nakamura (Diocese of Kobe) Revd. Kiyoshi Nomura (Diocese of Chubu)
Revd. Kiyosumi Hasegawa (Diocese of Tohoku) Ms. Keiko Murai (Diocese of Yokohama/
Chair of NSKK Women’s Association) plus, several local staffers

「Let’s Walk Together Project」 Office

【open】Mon～Fri 10:00～17:00 【close】Sat・Sun・Public holiday

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