

News Letter No. 2

Issued October 1, 2011

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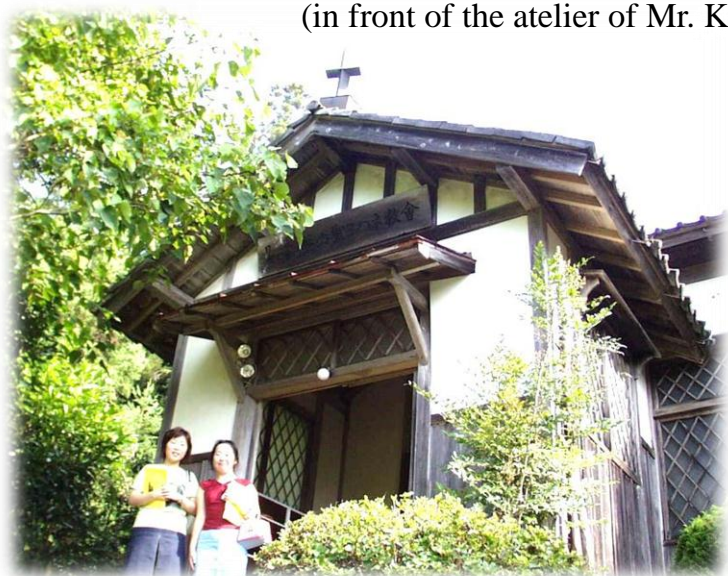
Let Us Walk Together
Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

This Month's Feature : Shinchi-machi



After the Sunday Service of St. John's church in Isoyama, August 28, 2011
(in front of the atelier of Mr. Ken Saito)



In front of the entrance to St. John's church in Isoyama, prior to the earthquake



The altar, prior to the earthquake

Praying that our three brothers and sisters are at peace in the Lord



Funeral Service for Yoshimi Suzannah Miyake, Minoru Isaac Miyake and Junko Grace Nakaso
On July 22, four and a half months after the earthquake, two hundred and fifty people attended funeral and burial services at the Soma City Funeral Hall for three members of St. John's Church, Isoyama who perished in the disaster. Thirty-five persons connected with the church, including members of the "Let's Walk Together Project," participated in the service. The three persons who died were Isaac Miyake Minoru (?) and Susannah Yoshimi, who were husband and wife, and their daughter, Grace Nakaso Junko, who had lived at the Tokiwa Inn (Ryokan) in Isoyama, Shinchichi-machi, Soma District, Fukushima Pref., about fifty meters from the sea. It had been the site of many church school camps and other activities of the Diocese of Tohoku (Northeastern Japan) prior to the earthquake. The word is that Mr. and Mrs. Miyake were swept away by the tsunami, together with the entire inn. Their daughter Junko also lost her life, exhausted by her efforts to save the children at the kindergarten in the neighboring town, where she was employed. Bishop Hiromichi Kato and Father Jun Nakamura (Deputy Director of the Let's Walk Together Project) joined in the Service, which symbolized the NSKK's stance of support toward Shinchichi-cho. Please pray for the souls of the three departed, that they may rest in the light and peace of the Lord.

Priest-in-charge, St. John's Church, Isoyama Fr. Kunihide Jacob Hayashi



Short history of St. John's Church, Isoyama

Tokiwa Inn the way it used to be due to the tsunami, only the foundation and the remains of the bath are left...

1920 In the summer of this year, Deaconess Anna L. Ranson, the headmistress of the Aoba Girls' School, came to Isoyama (now Shinchichi-machi) to convalesce after an illness. The work of the Sunday school begun at that time became the foundation for the evangelization of Isoyama.

1933 Ms. Ranson settles in Isoyama together with the evangelist Ms. Yuko Nagayama.

1936 Construction of a church and hall (the present building) — consecrated as St. John's, Isoyama. 56 persons who had formerly been on the rolls of the Sendai church became parishioners of St. John's, Isoyama.

1938 Deaconess Ranson retires and returns to the United States. Janet Harvard is appointed to succeed her.

1940 Ms. Harvard returns to the United States as relations between Japan and the United States worsen. Ms. Nagayama resigns as evangelist. Fr. Rokuro Takuma comes to reside permanently and work here. During this period, Ms. Ranson makes great efforts on behalf of the area, raising funds from the Episcopal Church in the U.S. for the construction of floodgates in the Rachiama area.

For the past fifty years, since Fr. Takuma's retirement, there has been no resident clergyman at Isoyama, but the church has been preserved by the hands of its parishioners.

Letter from Shin'ichi Samuel Miyake, a Parishioner of St John's Church, Isoyama

On March 11, a huge earthquake of magnitude 9 and intensity of more than 6 gave rise to a giant tsunami far beyond anything we could ever have imagined – one friend said it was 'as if the horizon had become a black wall of water bearing down on us' – and as the water hit the breakwater and sprayed in all directions, it rose up higher than the pine trees planted to protect against the tides, so that the prefectural highway that ran along the coast was swept away along with the trucks that were on it.

Neither the railway nor the port were spared, and a train that was stopped at the station was carried away, broken like matchsticks broken between one's fingers. Shinichi station, such a familiar landmark for over 110 years, also disappeared, and the railway tracks were left scattered in disorder among the ricefields.

The breakwater that was supposed to protect the safety of the port was turned to rubble, and the concrete blocks intended to lessen the force of waves were thrown up on shore and sent rolling forward by the torrent; what was more – had they been attached firmly to the pier by hawsers, or had their hawsers been released because they had been about to go out to sea? – fishing boats with no crew in sight were carried far inland and boats with nobody at the helm were left scattered all over the place, overturned, some tipped sideways, some standing bolt upright. Even those that had somehow managed to float in upright were left stranded in mud. Those boats swept in and simply deposited by the water as it receded could be counted on one hand.

In the ricefields, where normally spring labor would have been about to start, there was no sound of tractors, only a vast sea of salt water. Driving everything in its path, the tsunami crossed the national highway, two kilometers from the coast, carrying the wreckage of houses, and even as it drew back, it was like a dam wall had burst, spilling all it contained, and the huge swell had a kind

of drive that was terrifying to see. As the wave receded, all it left behind was a wasteland of mud and rubble, a scene of terrible destruction, with vehicles and debris scattered everywhere. Looking back on it now, it all seemed to take place in an instant.

Everything but what we had on us was swept away, and looking back as we fled, we saw the wave bearing down almost immediately upon us. If we had been delayed by even a count of (one, two, three... up to) twenty, I shudder to think what the result would have been.

Fortunately we managed to escape, but the destructive power of the tsunami was overwhelming and in the two villages near the coast, over 200 homes were swept away, including ours, and the ground was ripped up and cleared of all trace of anything that had lived there till only seconds before, to the point that not even a shadow of that remained. Looking at the traces the wave left on the mountains behind where we lived, it seems quite clear that the tsunami struck with such force that it easily reached over 30 meters in height.

I felt we had been shown quite graphically the immensity of the power of nature and the vanity and feebleness of human beings.

Seeing all this before our very eyes, we were emotionally devastated. Now that two months have passed, though, we have moved from the refugee shelter to temporary housing, and our feelings are beginning to settle down. We sincerely thank everyone who throughout this period gave us words of encouragement and the strength to keep going, and for the very generous donations, cooperation and relief supplies we received. Our lives are now returning to normal, and we are now able to see things in a more forward-looking way.

We thank you all very deeply.

The rich foliage of summer is with us again.

We urge you to take good care of your health.

Yours sincerely,
Shin'ichi Samuel Miyake,

The Future of St John's Church Isoyama

As you all know, St John's Church, Isoyama, located in Shinchu, Fukushima Prefecture, was badly damaged by the quake and tsunami due to the March 11 Tohoku disaster. Of its small congregation of 11 communicants, three lost their precious lives when they were swept away by the tsunami, and all lost their homes. Under normal circumstances, as spring was about to come, agricultural work in the ricefields should also begin, but that work also became impossible. Every year the parishioners of Isoyama sold part of their delicious 'Isoyama rice' through Christ Church, Sendai, and

contributed their gains to the church as an offering; a few years ago this money was used for repair work to the church building, but now, this is prevented by a sea of salt water covering the ricefields.



Clock at St John's Church Isoyama, which stopped at the time of the March 11 earthquake

Two months after

the disaster, in mid-May, temporary housing was finally constructed near refugee shelters, and all the refugees including St John's parishioners who were taking shelter at Fukuda Primary School were able to move into new accommodations and begin a new life. But to rebuild one's life starting from zero has been very difficult. It was at this time when the activities of Nippon Sei Ko Kai's 'Let's Walk Together' Project got underway, as staff and volunteers began to gather from all over Japan, and the level of support increased. About 500 families are living in temporary housing in Shinchu and each family was provided with a vacuum cleaner and a table, and those living in temporary housing in Hirohata were given colored storage boxes for storing shoes in their entranceway. These supplies were all provided from the emergency earthquake disaster relief funds collected by Nippon Sei Ko Kai's Provincial Office. We offer our very grateful thanks.

St John's Church, Isoyama was not able to hold Sunday services for some time, but on June 26, worship resumed in temporary housing occupied by one of the parishioners. The church is located on a hill in the disaster area where still no-one can live, and which lacks a protective wall, and there is still no indication when electricity and water supply can be

restored. It is a difficult situation, as restoration for the church can only take place in connection with restoration for the surrounding area. The church faces the same situation as all the people of the area, including parishioners, and will soon be faced with some really difficult decisions such as whether restoration can actually take place in the present location, or whether, if the residents decide to move to a new location, the church should be relocated as well.

In addition, unbelievable as it seems, crimes such as burglary of empty houses and arson are occurring frequently in the disaster areas, and the home of one parish family that had largely retained its shape was actually set on fire. Being in a now-deserted upland area, the church is also in danger, and although we have removed small religious



Reed organ, built 105 years ago

items for safe keeping, there is an urgent need to move, restore and preserve such larger items as the altar, the stained glass windows, and the organ, which has historic value (made in Chicago in 1906), and we are trying to move forward with this now. Through

the courtesy of parishioners in temporary housing, we are now conducting services in a small tatami room there,



Worship in temporary housing

but if even 10 people showed up, there would be an overflow, so we are also making preparations to build a temporary chapel in another location.

We thank you for your support and your prayers and at the same time ask you to continue to keep St John's Church, Isoyama and the people of Shinchu in your prayers and to give us your support.

St John's Church, Isoyama

Priest-in-charge

Rev. Kunihide Jacob Hayashi

Report on the disaster & condition of survivors in Shinchi-machi

—Current Conditions, and Going Forward Together from Here —

Shinchi Program director, Hiroshi Michael Matsumoto

	Earthquake	Tsunami
Completely Destroyed	6 buildings	457 buildings
Large-scale partial destruction	8 buildings	33 buildings
Partially Destroyed	38 buildings	38 building

■The Start■

Of the 8,172 people of Shinchi-cho, 100 people have died in the disaster, and 10 are still missing. The 24 foreigners are all safe. Housing damages are as shown in the chart to the right. St. John's Church, Isoyama was marked on the Shinchi-machi Hazard Map as an Emergency Evacuation Area during any disaster. On March 11, about 20 people in the neighborhood evacuated and were saved. However 4 persons including people related to the church lost their lives. Meanwhile, those who were confirmed as alive all lost their homes, and have been forced into living in temporary refugee housing.

■Refugee Life■

The number of households who moved from immediate post-disaster group evacuation centers in the Tomita Elementary School (gym) to individual household evacuation living in Shinchi-cho – Hirohata and other temporary housing areas are listed in the chart to the right. Of those, 169 households were evacuated from areas bordering on the nuclear plant.

■Specific Support Activities■

In our efforts to transition from the initial “Emergency Life Support” (food, blankets, hotpockets, winter clothing, etc) to mid- and long-term “Recovery Life Support,” the “Let’s Walk Together! Project” – Shinchi Program is now engaging in activities that will respond to the following demands:

◆Provision of Materials

- To all households living in temporary housing——dining tables, vacuum cleansers
- To all temporary housing assembly halls——Electric hot water pots, medium size hot water kettles, book shelves.

- All households in Hirohata Temporary Housing——Storage shelf boxes, coffee, bread, Second Harvest foods
- Hirohata Temporary Housing Community Center——Dish cabinet, shoebox, housing area map

◆Social Activities Program

- Tea (& Discussion) Salon
- Participation in Events (Participating in the Nii-Bon commemoration for the newly dead, booth/stall at the Shinchi-machi Summer Festival, sending observers to Shinchi-machi Recovery Planning Committee meetings, etc.)
- Visiting elderly and single-person households
- Joint/collaboratory ties with Town Hall, Temporary Housing Local Governance board, the Women’s Group

Temporary Housing	Households	Persons
Ogawa Park T.H. (1)	4 8 }	293 (total (1) +
Ogawa Park T.H. (2)	6 3 }	(2))
*1 Hirohata T.H.	8 4	2 2 1
Sakuta T.H.	4 6	1 1 8
Ogawa Kitahara T.H.	2 3	6 4
Shinbayashi T.H.	5 8	1 4 8
Maeda T.H.	6 8	1 6 5
Suzumezuka T.H.	5 7	1 5 6
Gangoya T.H.	1 2 6	3 3 1
Total 9 locations	573 households	1,496 persons

for the same, volunteer center, Japan YWCA, Life Issue Counselors, Social Services Board, Tomita Elementary School PTA, etc.

- Children’s Time (at the Hirohata temporary housing meeting hall)

◆Sharing Programs

Activities that can link together the afflicted areas, and their victims, with volunteers in the program, so that they may study the history of Shinchi-machi and the life of St. John’s Church, Isoyama, give thanks for blessings, and walk through these hard times together.

Walking Together with Shinchi-machi

Program Director -- Rev. Francis Kiyosumi Hasegawa

Our activities in Shinchi-machi, which we have continued day by day, starting with the Diocese of Tohoku Disaster Response Center, later the Diocese of Tohoku Support Office, and developing into the “Let’s Walk Together! Project” have shifted over from the initial emergency material distribution efforts to support for the people hit by the disaster, and we are now carrying out various forms of lifestyle support for all those who evacuated and moved into temporary housing, or have evacuated to new areas. The substance of all of this is as Mr. Matsumoto has written in previous pages; the fact of the matter was that at first, at some level we had special feelings and a particular attachment toward Shinchi-machi, which had church members who were lost in this disaster.

And yet, our approach to involvement with this town has been to respond to the needs of each of the disaster victims, as we kept in contact with the town office from early days and did our fact-finding through the good offices of the town.



Discussions with the Temporary Housing Local Governance

In these circumstances, just over 2 months after the disaster on May 18, direct talks were held in the 2nd floor Disaster Response HQ in the Shinchi-cho Town Office between Mayor Norio Kato, and Rt Rev. Hiromichi Kato, diocesan Bishop. Attending the meeting were 3 lay members of St. John’s Church, Isoyama; the Priest-in-Charge of St. John’s, Isoyama, Rev. Kunihide Hayashi; head of the “Walk Together! Project” office Rev Jun Nakamura; and myself. At this meeting Mayor Kato expressed his thanks and appreciation, saying how moved he was with how local citizens had been aiding each other and with the ways in which various volunteer groups were out there serving, beginning immediately after the disaster and further developing to that day. Bishop Kato described the history of

the church, while declaring his hope that the relationship that has existed between us might continue as a treasured bond, that we could move together toward the future revival of this town, and its rebuilding, and the two firmly shook hands at this point.



Talks with Mayor Kato

The Shinchi-machi Recovery Plan Establishment Committee has met twice, on July 13 and August 8, and a rough plan is taking shape. In that rough plan, the basic elements are establishing a 6-7 meter high breakwater along the stricken coast, and on the land side of that breakwater, preparing parks and flood retarding basins on the land side of this breakwater, and further to the west, in the area close to the present JR Joban line, putting the national road and prefectural roads on an embankment. Housing and the center of the town will be moved further inland. The area where houses were swept away by the tsunami will be designated as an Area Vulnerable to Disaster, and except for certain industries such as fisheries operations, building in that area will be restricted. 485 homes were lost in the tsunami. (as of August 8). In a survey of disaster victims, in terms of the points they would focus on when rebuilding their residence (multiple answer), 69% said (building in) “an elevated area”, 44% said “the current residential area”, and 6% replied “by the sea”.

The 3rd Recovery Plan Establishment Committee meeting was on September 6, and we were allowed to attend the meeting as observers. We will go forward in deliberations on our future relief efforts with one eye on these recovery plans. We anticipate coordinating the rebuilding of St. John’s Church, Isoyama with recovery plan developments. The Recovery Plan is scheduled to be established by December of this year.

News from the Project Office

August activities (in the Sendai area)

- Support to Natori City temporary housing (Hakozuka-sakura housing complex) providing aid materials, providing animal cages (for the children), driving shopping buses



(every Thursday), participating in local council's summer festival (ring toss game, with proceeds donated to local council), etc.

- Support to Ishinomaki home-dwellers who still need basic forms of assistance providing aid materials (using a flea market approach), lifestyle support, consulting on



daily life issues, etc. We visit every Wednesday, Thursday.

- Support for the disabled

Discussing the provision of aid through purchases of cocoon-shaped decorations which are the product of social welfare corporation Madoka of Sendai (a workshop



for the mentally challenged)

Discussing the provision of aid through purchases of cookies, the product of social welfare corporation Senshinkai – Himawari of Kesennuma (a workshop for the mentally challenged).

The above two facilities both lost their bases through tsunami damage, and are now



starting up operations once more in temporary quarters or their old quarters. We are supporting them because of the major



tasks and difficulties which now confront them..

- Support for foreigners
Beginning a "Read and Write Japanese" class every Saturday afternoon in Shizugawa,

Minamisanriku-cho. A children's program also established with the same schedule. On Monday and Wednesday through August, we held a "Let's do that summer homework together" program. 12 children participated in the program, which was held 6 times.

- Shinchichi-machi program



Mainly made visits to Hirohata temporary housing and to town hall at least 3 times a week, did such things as determining our aid program, exchanging opinions about the reestablishment of church life, gathering information from meetings regarding restoration. Held a Eucharist on the fourth Sunday of every month (in a room at the temporary housing site)



- Receipt/organization of relief materials

Assembled materiel in the Kawakami house (a private home owned by the Diocese of Tohoku, next door to St. Francis Church, Sendai) as well as in one corner of a commercial warehouse being borrowed by the Lutheran Aid group "Tonaribito (Neighbor)" Receiving stored goods from Takinogawa School and a Korean school in Sendai.

- Aoba Retreat Center and St. Nathaniel's, Murone offer accomodations

We conducted summer volunteer camps and practical training exercises by NSKK-related schools at Aoba Retreat Center and St. Nathaniel's Church, Murone. 7 schools in total, gross total of 140 attendees. They also accepted youth committees and camps sponsored by various dioceses.

Notices

On August 11th, we opened the Kamaishi Aid Center in the Kamaishi base area. Activities at the new center began with a base opening worship service. We are located about 5 minutes from Kamaishi Station, in the center of town. We borrowed the store space of a former music store together with residential space, and set up operations.

5-4 Suzuko-cho Kamaishi City, Iwate Pref. 026-0031
Phone: 0193-55-4524

On August 23rd, opened the St. Timothy's Volunteer Center in the Onahama base area. (Established in St. Timothy's Church, Onahama as a successor to the Hitachi Volunteer Center.) Began activities with a base opening worship service. Run by the dioceses of Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and Kita Kanto.

Volunteer camps and practical training for Nippon Sei Ko Kai-related schools, the seminaries, various dioceses and provincial committees have been taking place over the summer in the disaster-stricken areas. (Listing groups in the order that they used Aoba Retreat Center or the church in Murone:) Yokohama diocese, Williams Theological Seminary, Rikkyo (St. Paul's) Middle/High School (Ikebukuro), Central Theological College (Sei Ko Kai Shingakuin). Kobe diocese, Kobe Shoin Women's University, Nippon Sei Ko Kai Youth Committee, St. Hilda's (Kohran) School, Poole Gakuin University, St. Mary's (Ryujo) College, Nagoya and the Kyushu diocese.

At the Sendai Office, we introduce those who want to volunteer individually to the Emao (Emmaus) Victim's Relief Center in the Tohoku District of the United

Staff Comments

Church of Christ in Japan. Basically, Emao is conducting programs that are well suited for individual volunteers. In the Let's Walk Together project, the Kamaishi base area and Onahama base area have prepared programs where individual participation is possible. Please wait for information as to requests for volunteers. There are also plans to establish programs in the Sendai base area in the future.

(For Emao's webpage [in Japanese]:

<http://www.uccj.jp>)

At project sites, people are commenting that we are low on volunteer workers ever since summer came to an end. We are worried that there will be a shortage of workers for all local efforts. We would be appreciative if you will give some consideration not only to the Let's Walk Together project, but also to the work of other groups. We are working hand in hand with the Emao (Emmaus) Victim's Relief Center of the Tohoku District of the United Church of Christ in Japan and the Tonaribito (Neighbor) Aid project of the Lutheran church.



I am Deacon Nozomu Barnabas

Kishimoto, dispatched to the Sendai Office by the diocese of Kita Kanto.

I came to Sendai in those dreadfully hot days of mid-July; by October when this issue is reaching your

hands, about 3 months will have passed and everything will be cooling down. My work mainly entails logistics, spending my days taking those aid materials which you send, and sending them on in a form that will fit the needs of the disaster victims. My duties also include traveling back to my church in Tochigi and carrying out the Sunday service.

I would like to let you know one thing I have sensed while working on this project.

Here it is: this project is not "a special task carried out by special people." Certainly, the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake has been a particularly major happening for this generation. However, coming into an awareness of the difficulty of life and of living when we meet with people and trying to build relationships where we pray and support each other is the way that Jesus acted, just as we see in the Bible, and is presumably what you are doing in your normal church life. I think that what is happening now is simply our attempt to live that out on a bigger scale with more care and caution.

Aid for the victims means taking up the victims' point of view from start to finish, and not pushing on them the thinking or convenience of those offering aid. In the damaged areas, we come across religious groups or companies that are taking the opportunity given by this great disaster with the intent to increase their sway, but we should not be like this, I believe. We would appreciate it if you could take one more look at the Mission Statement which has gone out to the various churches, deepen your understanding of "Let's Walk Together" and cooperate in these efforts.

I ask from my heart for your support and prayers.

"Let's Walk Together!" Project Office

(Open) Mon – Fri 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM (Closed) Sat/Sun/Holidays

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