

News Letter No. 7

Issued 1 February, 2012

Issuer: Bishop Hiromichi Kato Director-general

Editor: The Revd. Jun Nakamura, Office Director



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake



Supporting disaster victims who remained in their own homes, in Ishinomaki



Santa sneaks up with gifts for the children of non-Japanese residents (Ishinomaki)

Encounters Expand the Circle of Support Work in the Sendai Base Area (1)

Sendai serves as both the operations headquarters for the entire relief effort and as a support base. Most of its direct support activities are focused in Miyagi Prefecture, and our contacts began with help for church members who suffered in the disaster, but this quickly spread to their neighbors and their friends. In special features, we previously reported on the work of the Sendai base in Shizugawa and Isoyama. This time we report on Ishinomaki and Murone.



A view of Nakase, Ishinomaki City, formerly part of the middle sandbar of the Kitakami River. The round white building (upper left) is the Ishinomori Mangattan Museum [including his famed manga like Kamen Rider – trans]. The second building to its right, a little hard to distinguish, is the former St. John the Apostle Orthodox Church of Ishinomaki.



Repairs underway at St Nathaniel's church, Murone.

In this project, in the midst of the tsunami damage, we are working to help fishermen in their efforts to rebuild the industry on which their whole livelihood depends. The fishermen of Jusanhama port in Kitakami-cho, Ishinomaki, lost not only their homes and loved ones in the tsunami, but also almost all their fishing boats, their



Planting seaweed, last December. We thought of helping but it takes expert skill, so we agreed to later help gather the crop. (Editor's comment)

equipment, their processing facilities, and the building that housed their cooperative as well.

In about May last year, we were approached by the staff of "Lutheran Tonaribito" (Japan Lutheran Emergency Relief), a group supporting the Ishinomaki City Social Welfare Council, saying that disaster victims still in their own homes in the Ozashi area of the Jusanhama port were not receiving relief supplies, and asking if we could help. From then until August, we visited the home of a certain survivor on a weekly basis, delivering supplies for a number of families in the area.

Also taking refuge in the home we visited was a relative of the family, Seigo Sato, who by June had taken up work again as head of



Flooding at Ozashi fishing port, due to land subsidence (taken last November)

the operations committee of the Jusanhama branch of the Miyagi Prefectural Fishing Cooperative. We held weekly discussions with him on ways to provide assistance that would go beyond supply deliveries, and learned that in the Jusanhama area, although there was the Fishing Cooperative, and a flourishing independent self-support body known as "Keiyaku Ko" (Contract Club), the fishermen's working hours and program, and their boats and gear differed from family to family. Following the unprecedented disaster, the fishermen introduced a system of "Joint Operations," working together on the vessels that remained to each Contract Club and agreeing to share their yield until the seaweed crop of Spring 2013. They are now making every effort to restore their livelihood. (The tsunami in 2011 happened just before the crop was to be gathered, leaving them without earnings).

In the present project, we are introducing the "System to Support Seaweed Industry Recovery" initiative (sponsored by the Fishing Cooperative's Jusanhama branch) to the NSKK and related groups, as a means to raise capital for the restoration of their livelihood. We sincerely thank those of you who have already given us your support.

We are now making preparations to send volunteers to help with the harvesting of the seaweed crop, from February to April 2012. Seaweed gathering is something even beginners can do, and it requires a lot of hands to carry out. Seigo Sato says "When we were amidst the shock of losing everything,

the NSKK and other groups came to our aid time and time again and inspired in the fishermen the resolve to get going again. We are really grateful to the 'Let Us Walk Together!' Project."

The 'giant can' (a fish oil tank in Ishinomaki). Opinion is divided as to whether it should be preserved as a monument or removed.



Work in ishinomaki ②

I have been relating with many different people, such as foreign wives now living in Japan and their children and families, as well as people who were at the evacuation centers and other people who could not get into an evacuation center and stayed at home. Each one of these people has their own thoughts, reactions and stories, so it is not possible to simply group them all together.

Around last April, both the people at the evacuation centers and those being aided at home had various problems of a pressing nature, but that time has now passed, and I feel that to a certain degree, things seem to have settled down. This is evidenced by the reopening of stores in the affected towns and ample supplies of emergency provisions. However, while there are people that have received help, there are others who have not received much support, or put more accurately, have not been able to receive support. One typical example has been

Support for Foreigners Living in Japan
Staffer Shota Iwamoto (Kyoto Diocese)

foreign nationals. Naturally, some foreign nationals have been able to get help, but the number is extremely small. It is hard enough to survive in a country whose language and customs are totally different from one's own. Even tougher is reestablishing your life after such a major disaster.

Currently I am working on relationships with people from various countries. Having heard their stories, there are indeed many cases where people have not known how to go about getting help. I also believe that support involves not just material support; emotional support, always being able to provide help and be there for people, is also important. That makes it important to always be visiting and talking with people. I believe that in these discussions, you can realize the type of help for which victims are really looking to ask. That is the kind of support that I am endeavoring to give.

Murone-based work

(Murone St. Nathaniel's Church, Orikabe,
Muronecho, Iwate Prefecture)
Staffer Hisao Yamamoto (Kyushu Diocese)

Murone St Nathaniel's Church is on the east side of Ichnoseki Town, next to Kesennuma. Due to the earthquake, a large portion of its earth walls came unstuck, but after working with carpenters to re-cover the walls, the

building's interior feels very much like a splendid mountain cabin. The bath in the annex also has a wonderful northern European style finish that you would not expect from the outside.

In the summer, people from the Dioceses of Yokohama and Kobe, the Central Theological College [in Tokyo] and others from schools and youth camps used Murone as a base to help in Kesennuma. From the autumn, in order to go and help “Workshop Himawari”

Major activities in December (Sendai Area Base)

●Being together with the children of Fukushima

We invited children that were unable to play outside after the nuclear accident to Sendai to play outside just as much as they wanted. We went apple picking in Higashine City, Yamagata, and also attended Sunday school in St. Francis' Church, Sendai.

●Shizugawa Program

The Shizugawa Program is going well. If things continue at the current pace, participants should be able to obtain Level 2 Helper qualifications by around March.

●Shinchi Project

We have moved the altar and other furnishings from the church in Isoyama. We have also brought the stained glass to the Diocesan facilities in January to protect the glass.



(organized by a welfare organization called “Senshinkai”) I have been traveling out to the workshop, making overnight stays.

Memorial Service for the Unidentified Dead

9 months after the disaster, on Sunday, 11th March at 2.30 pm, in the office of the Kuzuoka Memorial Park in Sendai City, the Miyagi Liaison Council for Religious Corporations held a service of remembrance over the remains of unidentified victims of the disaster. This month the Buddhist contingent led the ceremony, which was conducted according to the Sodo Buddhist service. Staffer Hiroshi Matsumoto from the Let's Walk Together Project and Fr. Hiromi Kageyama from Sendai St Francis' Church took part in the service.

●Hairdresser volunteer comes to Sendai Office

A congregation member (and a hairdresser) living in temporary accommodation in Sendai City came offering to cut people's hair. This was perfect timing, as we were just coming up on Christmas and wanting to get spruced up.



“Let Us Walk Together!” Project Office

(Open) Mon – Fri 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM (Closed) Sat/Sun/Holidays
2nd Fl. Kreis Bldg., 3-4-5 Kokubun-cho, Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi Pref.
980-0803

Phone: (in Japan) +81-22-265-5221 Fax: (in Japan) +81-22-748-5321 (from overseas)