



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

News Letter
No. 15

1 November, 2012



▲ 110th Anniversary of Evangelism at Wakamatsu All Saints' Church (27 May, 2012)

Mission in Aizu Wakamatsu



Rev. Tetsuya Koshiyama

“Construction of New Building at Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten

- Going ahead as a kindergarten in the name of Jesus - ”

Good news from Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten: work has begun on construction of a new kindergarten building! This is a message overflowing with dreams and hope. At the same time, children from families concerned about radiation pollution are beginning to transfer to Seiai Kindergarten from other kindergartens. While we are happy to welcome them, we can only imagine how sad and difficult it must be for the kindergartens and nurseries to see them go.

Despite the heavy stress and uncertainty of not knowing what the future holds, our teachers, are full of smiles. To give them a break from their daily routine, a “Refreshment Program” was held for them in Kyushu, at the suggestion of teachers doing similar work in Kyushu Diocese. Encouraged by the teachers’ comment that “What we had thought of as faraway Fukushima is now much closer,” the “Let Us Walk Together!” Project hopes in future to support further such exchange activities between teachers working with preschool children in different dioceses.

Kindergarten Teachers’ Refreshment Program



Rev. Masanao Hamao
(Kyushu Diocese)



Masumi Murakami
(Kindergarten Teacher, Fukushima City)

New Building Construction at Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten

Rev. Stephen Tetsuya Koshiyama

Rector of Wakamatsu All Saints Church and Chaplain of Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten

This year marks the 110th anniversary of missionary activities at Wakamatsu All Saints Church. It is also the 103rd anniversary of the establishment of Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten, which is tied to the church. The kindergarten and church were housed in a two-storey wooden building constructed over a century ago, with the kindergarten on the ground floor and the church on the second floor. We are delighted to be able to announce and express our gratitude that, thanks to your support, a new building is now being constructed.

This project has been under consideration for the past decade as part of the Wakamatsu Evangelism Project. During that time funds were being raised steadily through a combination of monthly pledges from parishioners, a separate building fund (Wakamatsu Evangelism Project Contribution Fund), as well as proceedings from the kindergarten's bazaars and annual summer festivals. In addition, memorial bequests to the church from the families of parishioners who died without seeing the new building have all been put toward the new kindergarten construction fund. In this sense the church's congregation, the kindergarten's office staff and teaching staff have all truly joined in working to see this project through.



Location of Aizu Wakamatsu City in Fukushima Prefecture (Nuclear power plant sites are shown along the coastline at right)

The old building's kindergarten facilities and chapel all suffered serious damage during the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. Although the building itself remained standing after the earthquake (which was of "Intensity 5+" in the Japanese scale of seismic intensity) and was not declared severely damaged by the Aizu Wakamatsu authorities, if a similar quake was to occur, it might well be destroyed as a result. Therefore, we had to give serious thought to the future of the kindergarten itself. But given the kindergarten's long history of service to the community as a Christian institution and our responsibility to the families who entrusted their children to us, it was decided to continue and to construct the proposed new building as soon as possible. Tohoku Diocese gave its support, designating the reconstruction of Seiai Kindergarten as a priority project, and

providing a major grant from the Tohoku Diocesan Evangelism Support Fund. We also received a large contribution from NSKK's "Let Us Walk Together!" Project. These precious contributions from you all will remain inscribed in our hearts and will never be forgotten.



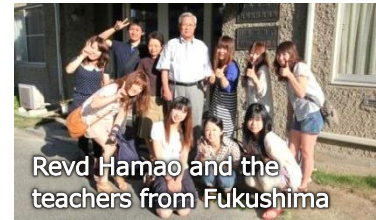
The building was demolished in August. For now, the Seiai Kindergarten is carrying on operations at a temporary location in the parish hall of Aizu Wakamatsu Catholic Church. Our worship currently takes place in another building on the site temporarily designated as "Wakamatsu All Saints Church". After completion of the new building in February, church services will initially take place in the children's playroom in the kindergarten building. We will then need to think about constructing a new church after construction of the kindergarten is complete. Our priority is "to protect children's lives."

Many people are forced to battle with the unknown threat of radiation pollution that resulted from nuclear power plant damage caused by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. Therefore children are now coming to Seiai Kindergarten from a number of families who relocated to Aizu Wakamatsu City within Fukushima Prefecture. We believe the number of such families will continue to rise. People's response to the threat of radiation is varied. At Seiai Kindergarten, we are doing everything we can to sincerely and painstakingly accept and understand the anxiety and concern that the children's parents and guardians cannot express. We believe that is the ongoing mission of our Christian kindergarten, which has been rooted deeply in Aizu Wakamatsu soil for over 100 years. Going forward, we will ensure that it continues to be a place where the children in our care – who hold the future in their hands – can sense they are enfolded in Christ's love.

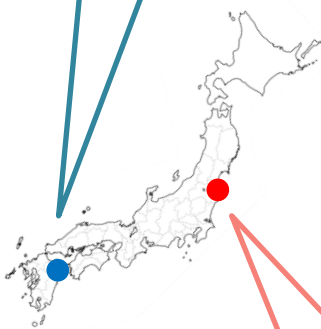
“During this summer vacation season, why don’t we invite kids from Fukushima, who can’t play outdoors as the result of the radiation out there, over to Kyushu? We know it would be a short-time stay, but they can still run around outdoors and be relieved of their daily stress here in Kyushu.” This is the idea that hit us, the NSKK Kyushu Diocese’s Support Office for East Japan Earthquake Victims.

At Kusagae Kindergarten (in Fukuoka City), they had been discussing this summer plan proposed by the Support Office during “Learning from the Bible”. Then, teachers pointed out a remaining issue: “True, kids are suffering under great stress. They have to be relieved. Yet you have to figure that their kindergarten teachers are suffering too.” As the plan developed and materialized, more and more groups within the Kyushu Diocese joined in it – five kindergartens of the Diocese (supervised by the Nursery Council of the Kyushu Diocese), the NSKK Nursery League, and other volunteers from the Diocese.

So began a five-day fellowship event from Monday, August 6th through Friday, 10th with teachers from Fukushima and nine teachers from the prefecture came to Kyushu. They toured around Fukuoka City, Yufuin [a famous hot spa resort], Kuju (Oita Pref.), and Mt. Aso. We held “fellowship parties” on the nights of Days 1 and 4, when the teachers reported on their kindergartens and children back in Fukushima. These serious, touching stories were followed by amateur performances, that left us laughing. Until this fellowship time, many of us in Kyushu thought of Fukushima as somewhere far away, but now we sense it as quite close, and feeling how we need to think seriously about the matter of Fukushima.



Revd Hamao and the teachers from Fukushima



“Refreshment Program” held in Yufuin for Fukushima’s kindergarten teachers



They enjoyed the Kuju highlands.



The “fellowship parties”.

Let me describe my honest feelings after the Kyushu tour.

A year and a half has now passed since the devastating earthquake and the nuclear reactor meltdown. Still, even today, radioactivity is a serious headache at sites of education in Fukushima. While this matter was on my mind, I found out about the “Refreshment Program” designed for kindergarten teachers of the Prefecture. It made me very thankful, and happy.

I was greatly looking forward to the tour, I even read up on my guidebooks about Kyushu. Finally, it was time to go.

The tour’s organizer took us by many famous sightseeing spots, as well as to some nice sites not listed in guidebooks. During our five days there, we had a great time experiencing and enjoying nature and gourmet foods. Both our bodies and minds forgot about our radioactivity headaches. Mt. Aso was especially impressive– when I first saw its volcanic crater, I was really overjoyed!

Also, we had very meaningful fellowship with people from the Kyushu Diocese, the “Let Us Walk Together!” project, as well as teachers from kindergartens in Kyushu. We exchanged information between ourselves, and shared in sympathy with each other. Fukushima is indeed a place far away from Kyushu, yet they all thought quite seriously about the Prefecture and us. They said “Let us get over this together!” and I got a lump in my throat.

There are such wonderful friends supporting us in a place so far away from Fukushima!

Thus, all in all, the refreshment program proved to be a precious time of healing and encouragement to us.

We owe many, many thanks to all of you who made this wonderful tour possible.

■ Okinawa Pref. – Planning a home stay program

NSKK's Okinawa Diocese is now planning a home stay program, inviting some people from the hard-hit areas of the March 11 disaster and letting them stay in Okinawa for some time to get refreshed. The Diocese will host families as a whole throughout the year. The "Let Us Walk Together!" project is considering financial and other aid to this program.



Meet a new staffer!

Katie Young, from the US Episcopal Church. She works at our Sendai Office with our help to non-Japanese residents, as a one-year trainee.

■ Shinchi-machi (Fukushima Pref.) – Chickens in the yard

Shinchi Base raises 19 chickens. The residents of the Hirohata temporary housing made an order for baby chicks intending to build a hen house. Until the house was done, according to the original agreement, Center Shinchi was to take care of the chicks. Due to some unexpected conditions out of the residents' control, however, their temporary housing proved to be incapable of keeping the chicks. So, Center Shinchi decided to continue to keep the chicks in its own yard.



Many thanks for your support for Workshop "Himawari"

Keiko Murai / chairperson, Women's Association of the NSKK



The East Japan Earthquake devastated the Himawari workshop, for disabled people. They were in need of great help. When I first heard this, I asked many parties related to the women's association of the NSKK to buy Himawari's cookies. Now more than a year has passed. We had cooperation from every women's associations in all the NSKK Dioceses. The Tokyo Diocese's aid headquarters also asked for cooperation from each and every church's women group. Thanks to all these efforts, messages came to me from churches and kindergartens nationwide. I was so happy with their enthusiasm to help. As a result, many all over Japan have tasted and appreciated the cookies from Himawari over this year through into August. Many, many thanks! I ask you all to keep supporting Himawari – continue to pray and buy their products.

Record of Activities 9/6 – 10/5

Help to temporary house residents

- Gym class program: Kamaishi
- Cooking parties: Kamaishi
- ▲ Shopping bus tours: Natori
- ◆ "Hotto Corner" (tea time): Shinchi-machi
- ◆ "Hokkori" ("Comfy") Café: Iwaki City

In addition: Patchwork; nail art; "zabuton" (floor cushion) distribution; salon chat programs; Haiku gatherings; cooking knife sharpening; flower arrangement, etc.

Help for the disabled

- ▲ Purchase of products: "Madoka" of Sendai City
- ▲ Assisting work: "Himawari" of Kesenuma

Help to non-Japanese residents

- ▲ Individual assistance (Helping school children's learning, explaining what publications say, accompanying to employment offices, etc.): Ishinomaki, Tagajo, Sendai
- ▲ Helping to start up English classes: Natori, Sendai
- ▲ Hand-made goods program: Minamisanriku
- ▲ Japanese language class: Sendai
- ▲ "Refresh" program: Sendai, Iwaki, Morioka

- ◆ Asked Emmaus (a facility of the United Church of Christ in Japan) to conduct examinations on internal exposure to radiation: Sendai

Help for the disabled

◆ Removal of "Super Houses®": Sendai

"Let Us Walk Together" project has been providing financial assistance to rent "Super Houses® *." At Iwakiri, Sendai City, which was hit by the earthquake, some people lived or kept their belongings in these prefabricated houses while their destroyed house were being rebuilt. Now, the households that received our assistance have gotten their new houses built or have moved elsewhere. Therefore, we have removed all the temporary prefabricated houses.

(*A prefabricated component house that can be carried from one place to another)

The colors for the bullet points indicate activities in: ◆ Iwate Pref. ◆ Miyagi Pref. ◆ Fukushima Pref. There are other activities not listed here. For more information, visit each base's blog. [only in Japanese]

The project's website <http://www.nskk.org/walk/>



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