



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake



Once again, the cold winter has come. The seasons turn, and again it is the season for the snowflakes to fly.

Night falls, dawn breaks, and we live in a ceaseless round of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Time goes on relentlessly, and no matter how we might wish, we can neither slow down nor speed its pace by a single step. We spend our lives burdened by the flow of time, repeating questions to which there are no answers.

Our hearts and souls are afflicted. Loneliness and despair cast us into the depths of darkness as if they were living things. In order to escape, we throw ourselves into 'today.'

And then, God became man. The Eternal One, the one whose existence is always Now, in the present moment, came incarnate into this world where we mortals can live only in the midst of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

God deigned to enter this world as a newborn child, in the most ordinary, unremarkable of circumstances. He went on to live without thought for food or shelter, exposing his powerless self to the violence of the world, only to be cut down by an irrational and senseless death. Yet even so, God became man.




He became man in order to experience our suffering and to share our sorrow and pain. He became man in order to stand beside the lonely, to answer those in doubt, to give us the power to live. In order that the individual narrative of each one of us may not be forgotten but continue to be told. He came to show us how precious human life, just the very fact of living our lives, is.

Once again, the time to celebrate Christmas has come. It is the season for the snowflakes to fly.


Revd. Maria Grace Tazu Sasamori

'Let Us Walk Together!' Project Management Committee

The Second Christmas

-  Katarina Hitomi Takahashi (Kamaishi Shin-ai Church)
-  Patricia Yui Akasaka (Sendai Christ Church)
-  Teruko Muto (Wakamatsu All Saints Church)

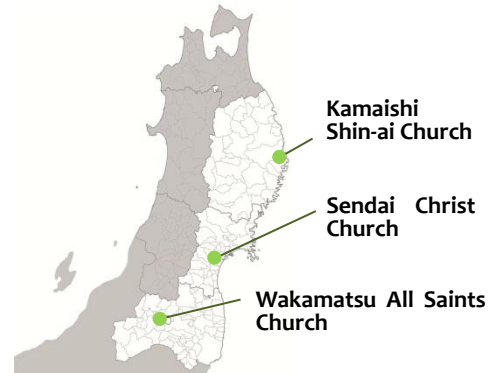
From the NSKK Mission Consultation

-  Revd. Kiyoshi Nomura
'Life and its unlimited dignity'

Christmas 2012

Demolition of buildings damaged but still left standing after the earthquake, has continued well into this year. We were told that this was because demolition of buildings in immediate danger of collapse had to take priority. Three NSKK churches in the Tohoku region were badly damaged in the quake, but remained standing, and continued to be used, however this summer the buildings were finally deconsecrated and their demolition and the construction of new church buildings began.

This year, as you celebrate Christmas in your various churches, we ask you to think of those in the disaster areas who will be spending Christmas in a very different environment this time from the one in which they spent it a year ago.



▲ Christmas Service 2011, Kamaishi Shin-ai Church



▲ Wakamatsu All Saints Church and Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten



▲ Interior of Sendai Christ Church



Long-awaited Christmas

Katarina Hitomi Takahashi (Parishioner of Kamaishi Shin-ai Church and Head of Kamaishi Shinai Kindergarten)

As you all know, Kamaishi Shin-ai Church and Kindergarten are now being rebuilt. In July, when the previous church building had to be deconsecrated, we all felt a knot in our hearts at the thought that this was 'farewell.' By the end of August, when the demolition work was over, and our place of worship completely gone, there was a deep feeling of sadness, as though part of ourselves had been lost.

Both our church and our kindergarten had been in the same building, and as a result, not only we, as parishioners, but also the parents of many of the children in our kindergarten expressed feelings of sadness that the building was gone.

The kindergarten is now operating in a temporary facility, where we are also holding our weekly Eucharist. Somehow I can't feel at home in this temporary site, and find it difficult to offer quiet prayers there. To be perfectly honest, I find myself thinking "Somehow I want to be back at our place again! I want to be there right now!"

Already at the kindergarten we have begun preparing for our Christmas service and celebrations. But the hall in our temporary facility is too small, so

for the actual service and celebrations we have arranged to use an indoor gym in the building next door. It has no curtains or piano, and only a tiny, very high stage, so it will be a Christmas in very different circumstances from anything we have experienced before, but we are very happy, as a church, to be able to celebrate Christmas again with the children. I'm sure that with the devoted efforts of our fine staff at Shi-nai Kindergarten we will be able to hold a Christmas party that will forever be in our memories. I am looking forward to the festivities very much.



Children's service in the temporary facility for Kamaishi Shinai Kindergarten, 14 Nov. 2012

God's House – My Church

Patricia Yui Akasaka (Parishioner at Sendai Christ Church)



Sendai Christ Church of Sendai is where I was raised. When I was very little, I would stand in the middle of the cathedral every week singing the Agnus Dei with a loud voice, but now, that Christ Church Sendai that I remember is no more. Even before the March 11 great earthquake, it had deteriorated considerably, and there was already discussion about rebuilding it. Now, due to the great earthquake, we are prohibited to make use of the sanctuary. Its many years of service came to an abrupt end, without being able to provide advance notice regarding which day would be the “final service.”

Last year was my 21st Christmas Eve vigil. Unlike a normal year, in which we would have had the warm light of candles being lit in a darkened sanctuary, for the first time in my life, I attended a worship service held in the diocesan hall under fluorescent-lights. Even so, many people gathered for the service.



Temporary worship space for Sendai Christ Church

Yet, entering into this year, we began the long-awaited rebuilding of my church; we are currently renting one room of a building and holding Sunday worship there.

I know that “the place doesn’t matter, as long as we can pray together.” Still, I miss the church building more than I expected. Every year, I enjoyed shopping at the church bazaar, and we all had a good time eating “agape” lunches together every Sunday. Now we cannot have either of these. What’s more, on Christmas, when we normally would have a party with goodies – now, the building which we rent prohibits eating and drinking. For me it’s very important to sit at the same table with everyone. In the service, we do offer up many prayers, but afterwards we don’t talk to each other as much as we did before. I think that our hearts are knit together as we share in a delicious “agape” lunch and spend time in conversations. I believe this togetherness is part of the fun of going to church.

Yet not everything about the current situation is negative in nature. Many, many people have been visiting us in Sendai, so we can worship together with people we’ve never met before. We are experiencing many things that we had never felt before..

I hope that we can build a wonderful new church as quickly as possible, so that we can hold worship with as many people as possible.

Coming to the second Christmas after March 11

Anna Teruko Muto (Parishioner, Wakamatsu All Saints Church)



Soon, we will be celebrating the second Christmas after the March 11 earthquake. Because of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the All Saints Church’s building (already more than 100 years old) suffered further damage. Last year, our Christmas worship took place in that building. I offered to God my celebration of this birthday, together with my gratitude for his coming. Also, I made many, many pleas for God’s protection for all those many people affected by the Earthquake.

With the working of God’s abundant grace, as well as support and prayers from the people of the Tohoku Diocese, the “Let Us Walk Together!” project, and the involvement of numerous other people, our long cherished dream of rebuilding All Saints Church, Wakamatsu has begun to materialize. The old church building was a two-floor wooden house, hosting Wakamatsu Seiai Kindergarten on the 1st floor and our worship space on the 2nd, but since we wanted to give first attention to protecting the lives of kindergarteners, the work in progress now is to build a new kindergarten. Currently, we worship in a small portion of the old building spared by the disaster,

which we are now calling the “Information Center.” Occupying an area of only 20 square meters or so, a mere 15 worshipers assembling will fill up the space. Through this Center’s windows, we see the new building now under construction, and sounds from the carpenters at work enter our ears. The carpenters willingly work on Sundays as well. We are expecting a lot of people for Christmas worship, which will soon be upon us. We are all thinking about how best to use this small worship space. We are thankful for this rather delightful problem. Thanks be to God!



Entrance for Wakamatsu All Saints Church's current worship space

Life and its unlimited dignity (from the NSKK Mission Consultation)

Rev. Kiyoshi Nomura 'Let Us Walk Together!' Project Management Committee

From September 14th to 17th, this year, some 140 attendees, including both laypeople and clergy, got together at “Curreac,” a seminar facility standing on the shore of Lake Hamana. There, they held the “NSKK Mission Consultation 2012,” under the banner of “Life and its unlimited dignity.”

Originally, this whole Consultation was meant to be an occasion to share about the issues the NSKK is now facing, such as a decline in the numbers of both lay people and clergy and its current financial crisis-, and then gain a vision for the future of the NSKK. However, the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and the Tepco Fukushima No. 1 Unit’s meltdown which accompanied it made it inevitable that we should reconsider the whole mission and direction of the gathering.

Television showed us, one after another, scenes of the massive tsunami washing away houses, communities turned into heaps of debris, people unable to put their sadness and their sense of loss into words, and also, the reactors of Fukushima I exploding. Innumerable times, what leapt to our eyes were events that were hard to accept as reality.

After this horrible disaster, no small number of Christians had to consider difficult questions of faith – why did God allow something like this? Faced with this tragic situation, how should we continue to believe in God? And what is the mission of Church in a world like this? What in fact does it mean to be doing mission and pastoral ministry? Inevitably, many people must be sensing such questions..

Having posed the question as to what the NSKK could do regarding this situation, the one approach that we finally arrived at was, “let us walk together.” We had no idea what we could do in the situation., yet we could at least “walk together,” even if just for a little while, with those tossed out of their homes into difficult circumstances, those who were in deep sadness. Perhaps we couldn’t offer any real help to them; and yet, believing that the Lord Jesus Christ walks with us, we wanted to walk closely together with the victims. This was the basic direction the NSKK chose in helping the people who were affected.



A report from Rev. Kiyozumi Hasegawa

There is no way that this event would have no effect on the content of this Mission Consultation, as it attempted to depict a vision for the mission of the NSKK. On the contrary, many people felt that while discussing the future of the NSKK, they could not speak of the mission or pastoral care of the church while ignoring the March 11 experience.

At the Mission Consultation, we invited two priests, Rev. Kiyozumi Hasegawa and Rev. Kenzo Koshiyama, who were in charge of local activities for the “Let Us Walk Together!” project, to share their experiences. Rev. Hasegawa testified that his work to walk together with victims was truly led by our Lord Jesus. He described his own experience, that one day, when he visited some of the victims, he saw Jesus standing beside them, waiting for him to come. Rev. Koshiyama talked about sharing in feelings of bewilderment and psychological pain linked to radioactive contamination, and the agony found in human relationships and how these relationships often saw erosion due to this pain. In the midst of all these hardships, we feel our own helplessness. Still, we should try to stand together with each and every one who has been affected, and try to walk together with him or her. This surely is what is demanded of the church today, in its mission and pastoral care – that is what we were able to hear and absorb from the Consultation



Rev. Kenzo Koshiyama reporting, using slide pictures

This same message was communicated in the keynote speech by Rev. Renta Nishihara as well. Making use of many, many materials to bolster his message, he told us that the very life of the Lord Jesus was clearly “walking together” with those who were belittled, and so, we should once again engrave upon our hearts the very “preciousness of life”, and realize how vital it is that we make use of this principle in the work of the church, as the starting point for mission.

The Mission Consultation compiled these discussions into its “Proposals for NSKK’s Mission and Pastoral Work over the next decade” and entrusted them to the various dioceses and parishes. Someday, the “Let Us Walk Together!” project will come to an end. However, I eagerly hope that various localities will carry the spirit of this “project” from here on out, through making good use of the “Proposals.”

▪ **Shinchi-machi, Fukushima Pref. – Performance of folk music**

Some volunteers visited Shinchi-machi all the way from Nagoya, to perform some Japanese folk music with singers, “shamisen” (a three-stringed instrument), an classical Ryukyu [i.e. Okinawan] drums, at Shinchi Base and at the meeting halls of three temporary housing blocks. Some began to dance to the music, while others were shedding tears out of joy. The musicians shook hands with everyone in the audience after the performance, making a promise to hold another event with the people in temporary housing.



▪ **Sendai, Miyagi Pref. – “Refreshment” program for foreign residents**

There have been stress management programs in Ofunato, Sendai, Iwaki, and Morioka, for foreign residents affected by the March 11 disaster. In January, representatives from the four programs will meet to share the problems that non-Japanese residents face in their local communities and propose policies for adoption by national, prefectural, and municipal governments, as well as toward organizations for international exchange.



▪ **Sendai, Miyagi Pref. – Japanese language class**

Sendai Office is holding a Japanese language class for non-Japanese women. The students' goal is to get level 4 in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. After suffering the earthquake, they went looking for new jobs, but their inability to write and read Japanese stood in their way. The class met 12 times during the approximately two months prior to the testing date. All the students are quite happy to have this opportunity to study.



**Archbishop Fred Hiltz and Archdeacon Paul Feheley visit,
from the Anglican Church of Canada**



The two have been anxiously hoping to visit us for a long time. On the first day of their visit, the two talked with some volunteers of the “Let Us Walk Together!” project, while watching a report on the project recorded on a DVD. On Day 2, they had a visit to “Support Center Shinchi” and the hard-hit areas around it, guided by a victim of the disaster. Though their visit was very short, taking place on the way to joining in the centennial celebration of the Chubu Diocese, since they actually got out to the affected areas and spoke with the victims, the two were able to put a few of their various experiences into words.



“We saw little flowers blooming in some coastal areas ravaged by the tsunami. We were moved that new life was being born here. It was a sign of hope.”



“At Fuji Kindergarten, the kids cheered us up with their lovely, happy smiles.”



“We heard about the call by NSKK to protect all forms of life from the dangers of nuclear power and demanding a world without nuclear programs, and it really impressed us!”

“It was highly inspiring and moving to find that all the dioceses, parishes, ministers and laypeople are acting as one to ‘walk together’ with those affected, to bring some healing to them and grant them hope. We feel this is truly the church’s mission. We are proud of their efforts, as part of the Anglican Communion.”

These words gave us much strength and encouragement. Also, once again, we realized that our daily efforts are blessed by God as something that is “good.”

Photos : 1) Archbishop Fred Hiltz (center) and Archdeacon Paul Feheley (left), gazing at the ocean from a hill
2) The two listening to a parishioner who was affected, at Support Center Shinchi 3) At St. John's Church, Isoyama
4) Meeting with children at Fuji Kindergarten, Yamamoto-cho

Help to temporary house residents

- Let's-sing-together parties, Cooking parties, Gym class program, Enjoying floral art: Kamaishi City
- ▲ Shopping bus tours: Natori City
- ◆ **"Hokkori" ("Comfy") Café: Iwaki City**
 "Hokkori café" opens regularly in Onahama. It provides temporary housing residents some precious time of peace and relaxation, in collaboration with the Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe Dioceses of the NSKK, which supply coffee beans, handmade cookies prepared by women's groups, and other items. The residents have launched two voluntary groups, which take care of the café's setup and guest services, respectively. Parishioners from St Timothy's Church, Onahama, and St. Andrew's Church, Hitachi, are also working together with them.
- ◆ "Hotto (Relaxing) Corner" (tea time), Hair cuts, "shiatsu" massaging, and "Shinchi Yose" [traditional comedy show]: Shinchi-machi

In addition: Home visits; "zabuton" (floor cushion) distribution; salon chat programs; "Hotto Cinema" (movie shows), planting tulip bulbs, etc.



Help to non-Japanese residents

- ▲ Individual assistance: Ishinomaki City, Tagajo City, Sendai City

- ▲ Helping to start up conversational English classes: Natori City
- ▲ Hand-made goods program: Minamisanriku-cho
- ▲ Japanese language class: Sendai City
- ▲ Course for "Home Helper" license: Kesenuma City
- ▲ "Refreshment" program: Sendai City

Help for the disabled

- ▲ Purchase of products and help in selling: Sendai City (Madoka)
- ▲ Visits to these facilities: Sendai City (Madoka), Kesenuma City (Himawari)

Other items

- ◆ Improving the Base: Shinchi-machi
- ◆ Helping the building work of St. Paul's Hall, St. Paul's Church, Koriyama: Koriyama
- ◆ Helping Wakamatsu Seiai and St. Paul's Kindergartens in their athletic meetings and other events: Aizuwakamatsu, Koriyama
- ◆ Egg polishing and distribution: Shinchi-machi

The colors for the bullet points indicate activities in:

- Iwate Pref. ▲ Miyagi Pref. ◆ Fukushima Pref.

There are other activities not listed here, due to space limitations. For more information, visit each base's blog. [only in Japanese] The project's website <http://www.nskk.org/walk/>

Column On that occasion, with that person

(5) Let's speak Japanese!

We are conducting a hand-made goods program for Filipinas living in Shizugawa, Miyagi Prefecture. Its aim is twofold: to make some little objects by hand, and practice speaking Japanese with Japanese volunteers from the Sendai Area. One day, in this program, we heard from a Filipina about a personal experience dealing with the Japanese language.

A Japanese once asked her, "Where is the o-tearai?" (where "te o arau" means to wash one's hands) She thought the Japanese wanted literally to wash his hands, and took him to the kitchen sink. The man looked very perplexed. Later, she learned "o-tearai" is a Japanese word for "restroom." Yet now, when a child says "I'm going to wash my hands" ("Te, arai ni ittekuru"), she may get the mistaken idea that "oh, the child's going to the restroom". In this case, "Te, arai" actually referred to "washing my hands (or gargling)."

She also learned "kawayu," an old-time Japanese word for "restroom," from a dictionary, without knowing it was old-fashioned. When she used the word, some Japanese around her were surprised. Also, some Japanese taught her that, in their language, many might say "monyonyo" ("yadda, yadda, yadda") when they cannot find the words to express what is in their heart. Once again, she took this rather literally, and at a funeral, she said, "Kono tabi wa monyonyo ---" (attempting to get across the feeling that "this must be so horrible for you," and so on, to a member of the family of the deceased. Now, she can laugh about this, although she will continue to have good and bad experiences while learning Japanese. Through all these non-Japanese learning the language, we can learn the more surprising elements of our own language. (Sendai Base, October 2012)



The "Let Us Walk Together!" Project NEWS LETTER No.16 Issued 1 December, 2012

The "Let Us Walk Together!" Project Office **OPEN** Mon-Fri 10:00AM-5:00PM **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)

E-mail: walk@nsk.org Website: <http://www.nskk.org/walk/>