



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

News Letter

No.18

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Last October, Archbishop Fred Hiltz and Archdeacon Paul Feheley from the Anglican Church of Canada came to visit the devastated areas in Tohoku region. Their visit was short, but they met with the young people working in the Sendai office, and also visited Shinchu. Below are some of their impressions of their visit.



“ Let me speak to you, strong youth, to you, clergy, with your feet firmly on the ground, working sacrificially, and to you, lay staff. Also to the people of Shinchu, who even after that awesome terror and disaster, still never fail to show a calm smile. To Junko Grace Nakaso. Looking at the inexpressible hush and stillness of the old Fuji Kindergarten building, and then at the rebirth and hope of the new building, adorned by the joyous cries of the children, the contrast here seems particularly striking, but also truly full of theological insights. We visitors, and the people of the world must bend our ears to this story and realize the deep meaning it holds.

——Archbishop Fred Hiltz ”

“ On Sunday Oct 21st I celebrated the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Eucharist and told the congregation about Grace Nakaso Junko and her care of the children that she was able to save and how exhausted by her efforts lost her life along with the eleven children. The gospel that Sunday was about greatness (Mark10:35-45) and I described her as a great Christian and how you never know where your baptism as a Christian will lead you. The congregation was spellbound and wept as I told her story.

——Archdeacon Paul Feheley ”

Recently we celebrated the second anniversary of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. All the efforts the victims have made from the day of the catastrophe to today continue to move people's hearts in this way. We need to look again at what happened on March 11 of 2011, and how it has impacted the present.



Listening to the Voice of “The Present Hour”



[Questionnaire]

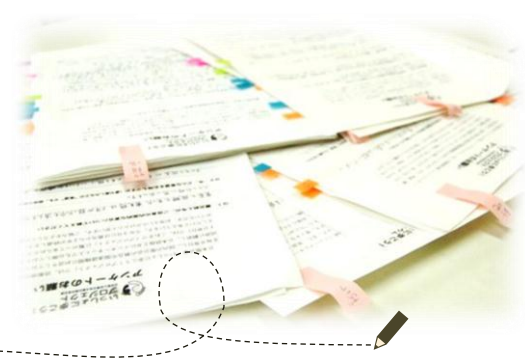
The present as seen by individual people this project has encountered.

Helping non-Japanese win a “Class II Home Helper” license

Getting over the disaster, they are soon to start new lives!

We have listened to “the present voice”

of people we have encountered up to today.



As we pass the two year anniversary, let us convey some of the thoughts from those we encountered through the various works of this project. We also had staff members working as volunteers answer this questionnaire.

Question 1 : Please tell us about any inner changes in yourself from before the earthquake till now.

Sendai I came to know the preciousness of normal everyday life. On top of that, I became more conscious of my links and bonds with other people.

Ishinomaki Before the earthquake, I was proud of the region in which I lived, and also had dreams and hopes for the future. After the earthquake, it was painful to see the wretched spectacle of this area and I sometimes wanted to escape from all this. But I also realized I didn't want to make this area, from which I wanted to escape, a region with no dreams left in it.

Kamaishii I developed a strange and wonderful sense of comradeship with fellow victims in this disaster, and I'm surprised to see this in myself. I sense that we did not have this sort of heart for helping one another before.



Sendai, non-Japanese person

I arrived in Sendai 6 months before the great earthquake and tsunami. I didn't know the place well, and felt confusion and stress. A year after the earthquake, I have made lots of friends.

Natori I am getting anxious over the fact that the establishment of the Yuriage Redevelopment Program is becoming later by the day. Related to that, since I'm already quite old, I feel my hope for the future is vanishing away. I'm afraid my own actions will become reckless.

Shinchi I feel unnerved every time there is an aftershock, so I can't go back to a stable life.

Natori Before the disaster there were 6 people in my family... Now I really want to see the day when I get into my own house and we enjoy every day together. I'm beginning to make some progress.

Kesennuma My feeling of loss over losing my parental home and my native place has not disappeared even now, 2 years after. It comes surging up at unexpected moments.

Kesennuma I have been thinking a lot about how I should be living as a person and what I should leave behind me. Because I want to leave something behind for my children and following generations, I have begun going to college so as to learn various things.

Shinchi I now feel, not just that I'm living, but that I have been given life. I am considering once more the preciousness of life.

Kesennuma Having lost my family, I cannot simply go on grieving. So as my life goes forward, in various ways I am becoming stronger.

Yamamoto I became a kindergarten employee because I love kids, and kept alive in me an awareness that I was entrusted with the care of precious children. But after this disaster I have a very strong sense of the gravity of life and the weight of my responsibility and feel a great unease over whether I can remain doing this work.



Tagajo, non-Japanese person

Because I experienced the earthquake and tsunami, I am always preparing emergency goods - just in case another tsunami comes. I worry about my children.

Kesennuma

I find I am quicker to tire mentally.

Kamaishi It may be because I am not in my own house, but even when I get back home from my part-time job, I can't settle down.

Kesennuma I have a sense of unease because I have no firm footing for my life, since my parental home was washed away

Volunteer No longer can I honestly feel "I'm happy" from the bottom of my heart. Do I deserve to be alive? People much worthier than I am were lost in the 2011 disaster! Now I'm still here, what does the Good Lord want me to do? I find myself not working as much as I wish to, and feel sorry for that. And every time someone feels pain, it hurts me as well.



Volunteer I've learned to pray. Now I pray really hard, just like holding on to God's feet. The reason is simple – all I can do is to pray for God's help! My prayers sometimes take the form of words, sometimes actions. The rebuilding work after the disaster must NOT simply put things back to what they used to be, I am convinced. Things must change for the better. This is a time to set out in a new direction.

Volunteer Visiting hard-hit areas and listening directly to the affected, I've learned what I should do. Also, I've learned to pray harder.

Volunteer Now "death" is a lot more real to me. Every single day counts. What we do each and every day builds our future. One serious problem is that we have yet to see Japan's future vision.

Question 2 : What do you hope for, currently?

For example your ambition, or pleasure, or something you specially desire or need

Kesennuma I wish to fill my days full of laughter.

Tagajo, non-Japanese person

I look forward to my first daughter graduating from Junior high school and entering high school. The earthquake has taken my husband away, and now I live with my two children. My hope is to see them grow to be adults.

Natori My wish is to regain "the peace of the ordinary" here in this temporary housing. I still think of the 2011 disaster as a terrible nightmare. Yet whenever I visit Yuriage, one of the devastated districts, I see it was a reality. Then I come back here admitting I have to live with this reality.

Natori I want to go home, together with all the people living in temporary housing, and live as we used to before the earthquake. I hope the rest of life will be happy for all of us.

Sendai I'm convinced we will get over this disaster. I hope everyone will see us getting over it.

Kamaishi I'm not sure what my life will be a year from now. Anxiety and hope well up together, when I think of that.

Shinchi I've got used to living in temporary housing, and have good relations with my neighbors. Still, I would like to have my own house soon.

Natori I hope to see "real housing" restored. But in reality it will take some years.

Ishinomaki I hope the local community will get back on its feet again soon - its livelihood, its character and its tradition. Many are striving for that, and I experience great joy talking with them.

Shinchi I'd like to have a happy day every day, for instance traveling around, my favorite way of having a good time.

Kesennuma My house was hit, but now my relatives, one after another, visit me almost every day. I hope people whose sense of community was destroyed by the tragedy will steadily regain their ordinary life.



Sendai, non-Japanese person

If possible, I hope to keep learning many more things, not just language.

Sendai, non-Japanese person

I've been living in Sendai only seven months now, and I want to learn a lot of Japanese. Also, I want to work hard and have a good life. Moreover, I hope to carry out many projects with others from the Philippines to help many people.



Sendai, non-Japanese person

I hope to find a job. Also, I want to join in some groups of non-Japanese residents in Tohoku, from the Philippines and elsewhere.

Kesennuma I wish for the rebuilding of Kesennuma, as soon as possible.

Volunteer I hope each and every one affected will get to live the life he or she wants to live.

Question 3 : What has been your happiest experience since the earthquake tragedy?

Natori Group activities I've had with my neighbors here in this temporary housing, and things we've done together that we had never done before

Natori The worship I joined. I was able to join in a Christmas Eve vigil, something that, for many reasons, I had long been unable to do. At long last, I made it, and will never forget.

Natori Children's lively activities and laughs cheered me up. Now I believe that "laughter is the source of restoration and rebuilding."



Sendai, non-Japanese person

I have experienced and learned many things, including both English and Japanese. I'm very happy about that.

Natori Countless things – for instance, someone gave me a ride on a Harley Davidson, there was a "mini" concert where singers sang wonderful songs, and many more. Each time, what made me so happy was the consideration and warmth that spoke to my mind and heart in those experiences.

Kamaishi Following the disaster, I have strengthened ties with my friends (including those who live far away.)

Kesennuma The birth of my child. This child encouraged my whole family, including myself, to face reality after the catastrophe, giving us all a hope we could hold on to. The support and messages of encouragement from our friends living far away made us really happy.



Ishinomaki The harvest of "wakame" (edible seaweed). We went out on boats and collected a lot of "wakame" and came back to the beach – it made us very happy! I will never forget how we were all smiling the whole time. We worked so hard to let the seaweed grow, and it paid off!

Shinchi I thought my grandchild was swallowed by the tsunami, but later the child turned out to be alive and kicking! Also, I was never alone, because I sensed that people offering support were always with me.

Kamaishi A message written on dyed paper from the Japan Shogi Association. Also, a CD from Yoko Oginome, a Japanese singer. (Editor's note: This resident has long been a fan of the singer. The resident had gone to a library to read the singer's blog, when the earthquake hit. Luckily, the resident survived it.)

Shinchi The meals, clothes, and other support items offered to those of us affected by the catastrophe, in the freezing conditions prevailing then. They made me happy more than anything else.

Yamamoto My kindergarten reopened after the quake, and I met all the kids, radiant with smiles – something that will never leave my memory!

Kamaishi The people I have met at the Support Center, where we help and encourage each other, as we live out each day following the 2011 calamity. Some listened to my grief over tough experiences, and gave me warm words of consolation. These experiences are something I will treasure for the rest of my life.



Kesennuma

The birth of my second child.

Volunteer All the survivors I met in hard-hit areas. I found myself saying inwardly, "Dear you, thank you for being alive!" Working with this "Let's Walk Together!" project, I experienced with certainty that Lord Jesus is present with us as we help each other and pray for each other in our struggles against agony, grief, and hardship. Thus, I have witnessed many different and brilliant forms of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Meditation 2:46pm – Holy Communion and Prayers for Those Killed by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake – Two Years after the Catastrophe

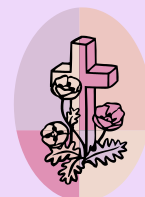
Beginning at 1pm, March 11, 2013, NSKK's Tohoku Diocese will host "Holy Communion and Prayers for Those Killed by the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake – Two years after the Catastrophe." Together we will pray for those killed in the disaster and those who lost their beloved people, places, and properties. We ask you all to pray with us on this occasion.

◆ Place: Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture

◆ MC: Right Revd. Hiromichi John Kato, Bishop of Tohoku Diocese

◆ Sermon: Revd. Kiyozumi Francis Hasegawa

◆ Organized by: Tohoku Diocese, NSKK, with the cooperation of the "Let's Walk Together!" Project



Question 4 : Free Comment

Anything you would like to add – whatever made you happy, or you found interesting, or that disturbed you – or that you would like to let others know



Shinchi All the people I met after the disaster. If this hadn't happened, I would never have met those people from both in and outside Japan. They came to me as wonderful surprises! I'm grateful for their kindness.

Sendai, non-Japanese person

The happiest thing I experienced was that I took the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, after all these years spent here in Japan. In the years to come, as I live here, I think I'll go through many things good and bad. But I'll get by with a tough spirit.

Shinchi My ambition: To build up a "Republic of Grandpas and Grandmas"

Kamaishi In the Talk Room, I met people from many districts of my city, or learned things never known to me about the city before this disaster happened. Many of the people I meet there are aged, with a lot of knowledge, and I learned so much from them.

Volunteer A month after the catastrophe, I visited one hard-hit area and found it much more devastated than I saw in media reports. No matter how long I drove, all I saw was devastation upon devastation. And the air I breathed contained a mixed smell of sea salt and mud. I never knew such miserable desolation until I stood there. Now, I want the coming generations to know how limited human abilities are. Never take too much pride in what humans can do. Never think that we can control Mother Nature. Nor ever allow yourself to think humans can use and control nuclear energy.

Ishinomaki I was living as a refugee, with only very limited belongings. Then I learned Japan had so many warm-hearted people offering help. I also learned that everything counts, no matter how small. I should be thankful for everything.

Natori Once a week, volunteers take us shopping, and I love it. We get to check and buy some food, clothing, and other items, walking around, and it gives us good exercise, and a chance to see things and have nice conversations. It's a lot of fun! I hope the car those volunteers drive will last a long time, though I'm a bit worried over its life. I am still troubled about how small my rooms are.



Kesennuma It was a happy experience for me that many who never knew of Kesennuma showed concern for the city after the earthquake disaster.

Volunteer I am convinced that most TV coverage failed to show how seriously the victims suffered in the hard-hit areas. As I work here as a volunteer, it is literally heart-breaking to hear how victims are feeling, especially those who lost family members and/or their houses to the tsunami. I intend to spread the "truth" of the devastated regions as far as I can, which I think will be helpful to the rebuilding work.

Volunteer I wish to see once again some noctilucae (sea sparkles) in the sea of Isoyama, under the moonlight. I think back to that worship we had, every time I hear the sound of waves.

Ishinomaki One happy memory is that of working on "wakame" seaweed together with volunteers of NSKK. I met many people and had a great time.

Kesennuma I see an invisible wall separating those affected by the disaster and those unaffected. Every once in a while, some of the latter say merciless things like, "We see no damage around here!" Whether accompanied by physical damage or not, many were seriously hurt mentally! And I see no way to demolish this tough, invisible wall.

Kamaishi After the disaster, some staff from the Self-Defense Forces set up bath tents. I broke a loaf of bread into halves and shared them with a stranger. At the tent bath, they gave me a big towel to wipe my feet after washing. I was exceedingly grateful for the bath, and found it better than the bath of any luxury hotel.



Kesennuma I ask you all to listen to the needs of many different people, including those who are especially oppressed and have few opportunities to speak up. I wish those oppressed people too will become well.

Volunteer Many living in temporary housing are very cheerful and kind enough to share their cheer with us. Still, some people are indignant over the nuclear power issues, showing their anger by punching on the floor. I truly share their anger and agony. The chickens at Shinchi bring us a lot of consolation. Also, I enjoy fellowship with many locals and volunteers.

■ Kesennuma, Miyagi – “Home Helper” License

The learning course for the “Class II Home Helper” license of Kesennuma, for foreign residents, was completed and a commencement ceremony held on January 25 at St. Nathanael's Church, Iwate Prefecture. Each graduate was given a license certificate, and the graduates received blessings from the people present, including those from Sanko Welfare College and officials from Kesennuma City Hall, who taught the graduates Japanese. Also noteworthy were the kind efforts of Sanko's people, who provided beds, temporary lavatories, etc. to the license course site in Kesennuma. Ordinarily, to obtain this license, an examinee must attend classes at the College. Since the candidates in this case were victims of the 2011 disaster, however, the College took these exceptional measures. Without all this help, the license granting would have been unimaginable. Many, many thanks to them all! This time, seven graduates obtained the license, and two were already offered work by welfare facilities even before the commencement.



■ Shinchi, Fukushima – Organ Restored

A century old reed organ used to play music at St. John's Church. Though damaged by the earthquake, it has now been repaired and is back in the worship place. After the earthquake, people took seriously the wish for the organ to be repaired, in memory of the church members who lost their lives. Moreover, the church building and the organ survived the tsunami that hit the area. This very survival spoke something to the survivors at the church. Thanks to substantial help, the church commissioned the repair work to Katsuura Orgelbau, an organ workshop that also was hit hard by the disaster. On January 6 this year, the fine-tuned organ was delivered to the church's temporary worship place. The congregation celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord Jesus with singing accompanied by their treasured, fully restored organ.



■ Shinchi, Fukushima – Prayer on the 11th of Every Month

Our Shinchi Base holds a “Pilgrimage of Prayer” on the 11th of every month. Its “pilgrims,” visit devastated sites— for instance, the building of St. John's Church, which is currently out of use, the former building of Fuji Kindergarten, where the tsunami claimed the lives of children and nurses. The pilgrims visit these sites and pray together there.

Record of Activities 1/6 – 2/5

Help to temporary housing residents

- Rice-cake pounding party, Cooking parties, Sing-together gatherings: Kamaishi
- ▲ Shopping bus tours: Natori
- ◆ “Hotto” relaxation corner (tea time), “Hotto” cinema, “Shiatsu” massage: Shinchi
- ◆ “Hokkori” comfy café: Iwaki

In addition: visits by musicians from outside Japan; visits to temporary housing; exercise classes etc.

Help for the challenged

- ▲ Purchase of products and help in selling: Sendai
- ▲ Help in their work: Kesennuma

Help to non-Japanese residents

- ▲ Helping to start up conversational English classes: Natori, Sendai

- ▲ Individual assistance (helping kids with their school work, explaining what publications say, etc.): Ishinomaki, Tagajo, Sendai
- ▲ “Home Helper Class II” license course: Minamisanriku
- ▲ Japanese language class, “Refreshment” programs: Sendai

Other items

- ◆ Request for radioactivity inspection of foods, etc. to be conducted by the Sendai Christian Alliance Disaster Relief Network (Tohoku Help): Sendai

The colors for the bullet points indicate activities in:
● Iwate Pref. ▲ Miyagi Pref. ◆ Fukushima Pref.
Please visit the project's new English blog. We will be posting weekly updates of the various activities happening in the Let Us Walk Together Project.
<http://letuswalktogether.blogspot.jp>



The “Let Us Walk Together!” Project NEWS LETTER No.11 Issued 1 July, 2012

The “Let Us Walk Together!” Project Office **OPEN** Mon– Fri 10:00AM–5:00PM **CLOSED** Sat/Sun/Holidays
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