



Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

News Letter

No.19

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April 1, 2013



▲ Shinchi in the provisional sanctuary



▲ Sendai Prayer for non-Japanese victims



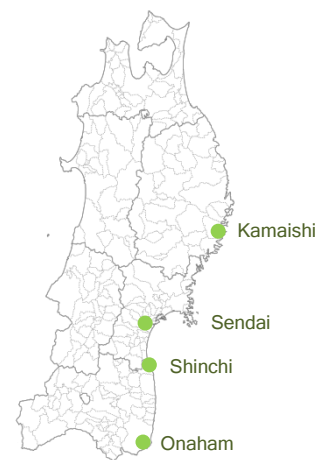
▲ Onahama Joint Spirit Consoling Service



▲ Kamaishi City temporary housing

We are now coming upon 2 years since the occurrence of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. On March 11th, at each of our bases in Kamaishi, Sendai, Shinchi and Onahama, we stood side by side with those who we have met, and remembered in prayer those who fell victim to the disaster, and those who still are in distress even now. At Sts Peter and Paul Church, Koriyama, some 80 people came together, and prayed in the 2nd Year Memorial Communion and Victim Memorial Service for the Great East Japan Earthquake.

St. John's Church, Isoyama, the only church with victims to the tsunami, is beginning a new chapter in its life.



Walk in the way that the Lord opens for us, step by step



Rev. Kiyosumi Francis Hasegawa

"Farewell to the Worship Hall of St. John's Church, Isoyama – A step onward!"

Farewell to the Worship Hall of St. John's Church, Isoyama – A step onward!

Rev. Kiyosumi Francis Hasegawa

Director, Shinchi Center; Chairperson, Committee for Rebuilding St. John's, Isoyama, Tohoku Diocese



History of St. John's Church, Isoyama – From March 11, 2011 till now

- 3/11 2011** When the East Japan Earthquake hit, 13 survivors spent the night in the church.



- 3/14** Tohoku Diocese set up its Disaster Relief Headquarters.

- 3/21** Revd Kunihide Hayashi, and two parishioners took relief supplies to refugees in Fukuda Elementary School.



- 4/24** Easter. Some laypeople from Sendai visited the shelter to pray those living there temporarily.



- 7/22** Funeral of the three church members killed in the tsunami.

- 7/24** The first Sunday worship held at a church member's house in Hirohata Temporary Housing.



- 8/28** Once-a-month Sunday worship in the studio owned by Ken Saito, a layperson of NSKK. The studio is still being used as our place of worship today.



- 9/11** Mr. Shigeru Nakaso was baptized and confirmed (at St. Peter & Paul's Church, Koriyama)

It was a sunny day, but without the warmth of the sun, on Saturday, February 16, 2013. At 1pm, we got together in the worship hall. We were there to deconsecrate our worship place. Seated in the pews were 23 attendants, including members of St. John's, members of the local town assembly, former residents of Isoyama, and believers visiting from Sendai, Yamagata, Yonezawa, and Tokyo. I delivered a sermon during the worship, followed by Mr. Tsuyoshi Miyake, a member of St. John's, who spoke after the service. Tsuyoshi and I spoke about our numerous recollections of this church building, our emotional reluctance to bid farewell to it, which we had to do, because of its damaged state, as well as our determination to rebuild it. Two contradicting feelings filled the hearts of everyone there – tears for the past and our hope for something new.

On the Monday and Tuesday of the next week, February 18 and 19, some elderly volunteers, together with younger ones and staffers of the "Let's Walk Together!" project, carried all the objects and furniture out of the worship hall. Following instructions from carpenters, those aged parishioners spared no effort in carrying pews, books, etc, out of the house of prayer into a barn owned by some of the members of St. John's. Those items and pieces of furniture are to rest there for a while, to be "reused, reduced, and recycled" as part of the new worship hall, together with the stained glass windows, altar, screens, etc. that were already removed last year. After 76 years of service, these objects are now taking a break – that will last only a year or two, probably.



In the summer of 1920, Deaconess Anna L. Lanson, then director of a school named Aoba Jogakuin, took a sick leave in Isoyama after medical treatment. This launched the NSKK's evangelization of the town. 1936 saw a new worship place built there, which was consecrated by Right Revd N. S. Binsted on December 27, the day of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist. Every single story I heard about history of this church community communicated to me the vivid memories of the storyteller. Children, neighbors, laypeople, families, missionaries, evangelists, priests, archbishops . . . they all contributed to this precious history, which arose out of their cherished memories.

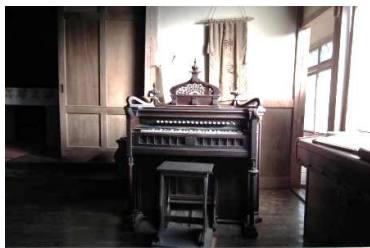
Over the years, this much-beloved church suffered badly from the ravages of the sea winds. Then, on March 11, 2011 one of the worst earthquake and tsunami disasters in history happened. St. John's stands in

the middle of a small coastal hill that commands a fine view of the Pacific, and it was lucky enough to be spared by the tsunami. In fact, as we have already mentioned before, the church building provided shelter to 13 residents of Isoyama who were badly hit by the disaster. Mercifully, they survived, but they burnt everything they found there to keep themselves warm during the night of the tragedy.

Shortly after, the authorities determined that the church building was damaged and potentially dangerous. But the surviving worship hall and its old organ spoke to and moved everyone who saw them. St John's was also the only church of the NSKK whose members lost their lives in the tsunami. Before we knew it, the church became a place of pilgrimage, visited by many from Japan as well as many leaders from the worldwide Anglican Communion. Thus, the church became a focus of tears and prayer.

The reed organ in the worship hall has been there since Deaconess Lanson started the community. Mr. Minoru Miyake, who died in the tsunami, used to play this organ every church service. Of course, the organ itself was tattered. Yet a parishioner from the Tokyo Diocese wanted to have it fixed. Mr. Michiyuki Katsuura, the head of Katsuura Orgelbau, an organ workshop which was also affected by the disaster in Ishinomaki, was asked to restore the organ to its former glory. On December 27, when a temporary worship hall for St. John's was consecrated, the fully restored organ was carried into the hall. It was a wonderful event to see and hear this time-honored organ coming back to life. Then on January 6, 2013, Epiphany Sunday, we celebrated Holy Communion in the temporary worship hall, the Ken Saito studio. I felt that the three church members killed in the tsunami were also there singing with us from above, and I had a vision of Mr. Minoru Miyake, sitting once again at his beloved organ, now fully renovated, smiling.

Now we had witnessed this "resurrection" of the organ, we were able to bid farewell to our old worship hall. We knew it was not an end, but a beginning. Currently, we are discussing what we, as a new church, should be doing and how, and how our new church building should be designed and constructed to support that. Today, we share a general concept of our new church as a memorial to the victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, where people pray for those who were lost. The Committee for Rebuilding St. John's, Isoyama, Tohoku Diocese, is now busy with discussions after discussions, trusting in our Lord's guidance, which will lead us into the future. We will walk in the way that the Lord opens for us, step by step.



Our old worship hall is to be demolished by the end of March. By the time you read this article, it will not be there anymore. Our thanks to you, house of prayer. Until we see you again, in a new shape!!

10/12 The reed organ was taken to the Orgelbau in Ishinomaki for repair.

12/4 The altar and instruments used in worship were taken into storage.



12/25 Ms. Kaoru Mori was baptized (at Christ Church, Sendai)

**1/22
2012** Ms. Kaoru Mori was confirmed (at the temporary worship hall, St. John's Church, Isoyama)

2/16 Visit by Most Revd. Schori, Presiding Bishop of the US Episcopal Church

3/11 Holy communion to commemorate the first anniversary of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake.



5/16 Visit by Most Revd Kim Geun Sang, Primate of the Anglican Church of Korea

6/9 Service to celebrate the opening of Shinchi Base (a support center for the victims of the disaster).

10/3 Visit by Archbishop Fred Hiltz and Archdeacon Paul Fehleley of the Anglican Church of Canada

**1/6
2013** The reed organ, fully repaired, was carried into the church's temporary worship place.



2/16 Service to deconsecrate St. John's church (See the left photo within the body of the text on P.2.)

2/18 People carried items from the old worship hall to be stored.



3/10 A prayer service to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake.

3/12 Demolition of St. John's church.

■ Shinchi, Fukushima Pref. - Memorial prayer for the victims

On March 10th, at the temporary sanctuary of St. John's Church, Isoyama, we buried the remains of the 3 believers who were lost due to the tsunami, and offered prayers for them. Also, a family who had lost family members in Ohtohama came for the first time and prayed with us. On this day, the head of the kindergarten where the late Junko Nakaso had worked offered an instrumental.

■ Iwaki, Fukushima Pref. - A hand-made joint Spirit-Consoling Service

On March 11th, at the Tomioka Town Izumi-Tamatsuyu Stopgap Temporary Meeting Hall, a joint Spirit-Consoling Service was held by the residents' association just as was done last year. The people of Tomioka town, cannot live in their homes due to radioactive damage so they are now living in this temporary housing. All aspects of the Spirit Consoling service were accomplished with the work of the local residents and Buddhist monks (who have also taken refuge here) officiating. From the Sei Ko Kai, Fr. Kimura of the Osaka Diocese took part, and before the service, the Hokkori ("Comfy") Café was opened so people could time of fellowship with participants in the service.

■ Sendai, Miyagi Pref. - Another memorial service

On March 11th, we held a worship service together with non-Japanese victims of the disaster at the Sendai Office of the Let Us Walk Together! Project. Celebrated by Fr. Shoichi Saitoh, we read off the names of each family member or friend of participants who had died in the disaster and prayed for the peace of their souls.



■ Kamaishi, Iwate Pref. - Coming alongside, quite naturally

At the Kamaishi Victim Support Center on March 11, we aimed to come alongside people in a familiar fashion, so we had no special event. The staff took part in the children's prayers at Kamaishi Shin'ai Kindergarten, participated in the prayer circle hosted by the Kami-nakajima Temporary Housing Residents' Committee, and at night attended the Spirit Consoling service at Noda Chuo Temporary Housing. We felt it quite precious to quite naturally take part in these events and pray together with the victims.

Record of Activities 2/6 - 3/5

Help to temporary housing residents

- Knife-sharpening salon, Cooking circle, Rice cake pounding, Distributing sitting cushions, Group for enjoying flower arrangement / Kamaishi
 - ▲ Bus tours for shopping / Natori
 - ◆ Hotto ("Relaxing") Corner (a tea event), Hotto ("Relaxing") Cinema / Shinchi
 - ◆ Hokkori ("Cozy") Café / Iwaki
- And also - snow shoveling, shiatsu massages, children's programs, after 5 programs, etc.

Help to non-Japanese residents

- ▲ Class 2 Home Helper Certificate Training/ Ishimaki
- ▲ Individual support (supporting children's study,

explanation of government publications, going along to Public Employment Security Offices, etc.) / Ishinomaki, Tagajoh, Sendai

- ▲ Japanese Classes, English teacher education sessions / Sendai

Help for the challenged

- ▲ Helping with events, etc / Sendai (Madoka)
- ▲ Aiding with work / Kesenuma (Himawari)

Other items

- ◆ Helping with kindergartens / a number of kindergartens in Fukushima Pref.
- ★ Visits through the affected areas / Miyagi Pref., Shinchi, and others

The colors for the bullet points indicate activities in: ● Iwate Pref. ▲ Miyagi Pref. ◆ Fukushima Pref. ★ Others There are other activities not listed here, due to space limitations. For more information, please read the blogs for each of our bases.

Project website: <http://www.nskk.org/walk/>



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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@nskk.org Website: <http://www.nskk.org/walk/>