



# Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

News Letter

No.20

Issued  
May 1, 2013



▲ Meeting at the Kamaishi Victims Support Center



▲ A scene from the chat room program at temporary housing



▲ Students volunteering at temporary housing



▲ Volunteers and temporary housing residents at "Hokkori (Comfy) Café"



▲ People are still not allowed to live in their radiation-polluted homes



▼ An ostrich walking through restricted zone in Tomioka



The "Let Us Walk Together! Project" began in May 2011, with the aim of conducting activities for two years. Now two years have passed, and recently those involved in the project have met several times to consider how the Nippon Sei Ko Kai's involvement should continue from now on. We have decided that we will not simply go on in the same way as we have over the past two years, but that, while continuing to "walk together," in a sense we need to "shift gears," and we are now developing our concept in new ways, as "Part II."

## Let Us Walk Together! Heading toward Part II

### What we have learned from Kamaishi and Onahama bases

✎ **Yuji Ebihara**  
(Head of Kamaishi Victims' Support Center)

✎ **Yuzo Miyata**  
(Assistant secretary, St. Timothy's Onahama Volunteer Center)

## Let Us Walk Together! Heading toward **Part II**

The current “Let Us Walk Together! Project” will terminate as of the end of May, 2013, and move on to a new phase, as “Let Us Walk Together! Part II.” From that point onward, our activities will be divided into two major areas of activity:

### ◆ “Let Us Walk Together! Tohoku” (tentative name)

The first will be to continue our work as an activity of the Diocese of Tohoku. Under the provisional title “Let Us Walk Together! Tohoku,” we will maintain our activities at Shinchi Center, as one of our bases. We aim to do this work at a local level and is appropriate for the Diocese, praying and working in a steady and sustainable way. We will assign dedicated staffers, and hope to continue conducting trips and pilgrimages to the affected areas, and widen opportunities for prayer.

### ◆ Special Project on the Issue of Nuclear Plants and Radiation

The other focus will be to deepen our understanding of nuclear radiation, based on the resolution “Aiming for a Nuclear-free World,” passed by the 2012 General Synod, while at the same time keeping the world informed of the current state of the Fukushima nuclear power situation, and supporting those who are still suffering evacuation and hardship.

We can implement children’s refreshment programs and other such support activities. We are also aiming once again for major involvement by the Nippon Sei Ko Kai in both the existing Special Project on the Issue of Nuclear Plants and Radiation, and in supporting the disaster victims, through our church in Onahama and other churches in Fukushima Prefecture as bases.

From June to September, the original “Let Us Walk Together! Project” will be gradually phased out. August will mark the third summer since the earthquake, and also the second anniversary of the Kamaishi Victims Support Center, which will continue to operate up until that point.

Head Office Director Bishop Hiromichi Katoh (Diocese of Tohoku)

## What We have Learned from **Kamaishi** and **Onahama** Bases

St. Timothy’s Onahama Volunteer Center at Onahama in Iwaki and the Kamaishi Victims Support Center in Kamaishi were established as bases for the “Let Us Walk Together ! Project” in May and August 2011 respectively, and have continued activities deeply rooted in these communities. The Kamaishi base has worked closely with more than 10 temporary housing complexes in the Kamaishi area, and has had exercise programs, cooking events and so on. In those complexes there are people who were forced to evacuate from Okuma and Tomioka in Fukushima Prefecture, which were within the 20 kilometer zone around Tokyo Electric’s Fukushima No. 1 Power Plant. The following is the nature of the relationships that have developed in those areas.

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### Support that comes in the name of hope

Yuji Ebihara  
(Head of Kamaishi Victims Support Center)

Two years have passed since the great earthquake, but reconstruction is still not moving forward in the distressed area of Kamaishi. Even after two years, the victims of the disaster are filled with anxiety over not being able to discern future prospects, and

being forced to live with various forms of stress. What these victims desire above all is hope.

Hope can mean various things, but a small support group like ours can offer some small inklings of it. I believe we can say that our job over this one year and seven months has been to offer some small ray of hope. For example, the programs we have had in the chat rooms in temporary housing. There are five temporary complexes that we visit every week or every other week, and another ten that we visit about once a month on an irregular basis. The people in the temporary housing wait with anticipation for these activities, and I feel how strongly we are supporting each other through these gatherings. The residents can gain a real sense that they are not alone, that they have friends around them, volunteers who remember them and will try to support them. As this builds further, it grows into a small ray of hope. Also, we are very careful to develop our programs through joint action. When residents come together to

do something, or do something together with volunteers, this builds up ties between them, producing a modest ray of hope. This becomes a foundation for community.

The essence of our support is to help people live their own lives, as close as possible to the life they lived before the disaster. I pray that there will be people in each area who will work for these victims, that there will be a place like our center where people can come freely, and that the new values emerging in the distressed towns can continue as part of the work of the church.

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**Rejoice with them that rejoice,  
and weep with them that weep**  
Yuzo Miyata  
(Assistant Secretary General, St.  
Timothy's Onahama Volunteer Center)

“Loss,” an experience of actual loss of something can, as time goes by, help the victim move onwards into the next phase. Now, in radiation-hit Okuma and Tomioka, Fukushima Prefecture, everything stopped moving on March 11, 2011. “My happy family,” “my happy neighborhood,” “happiness” itself – everything ceased on that day of the disaster.

This “loss” was not the fault of those that suffered it. It was pushed to them. We, at St. Timothy's, have been walking together with them over the last two years. Some of the victims used to live in big country houses. Now they are forced to spend their days in a single-room, prefabricated apartment, only 7 square meters in size. These disaster victims are not allowed to return to their own houses for good. When they are allowed to visit their houses, the houses are now somewhere they enter and examine with their shoes on, contrary to Japanese practice. Moreover, left unattended for over two years, these houses and communities are decaying day by day. Some of the houses are now even barricaded. Many of the evacuees are now leading a life without hope – their dreams are “lost.”

We, at St. Timothy's Onahama Volunteer Center, have simply been “walking together” with those suffering from loss. This principle has proven to be right – we have been able to maintain a kind of relationship between equals with those we serve. They and we are helping each other, yet never falling into codependence.

While time stopped on March 11, 2011 in the hard-hit areas, it is slowly proceeding in the surroundings. Still, the former residents of Okuma will not be allowed to return to their little hometown for 30 years to come. And for those of Tomioka it will be 5 years or more.

Those victims must not be abandoned. They are suffering in the midst of this radiation catastrophe. So are we, St. Timothy's. Though our abilities are limited, we, as a church, have a mission we have to hold on to – to rejoice with them and to weep with them. We hope this relationship will last forever.



We want you to know where our project is going, with whom we're working! Here's a picture of how our current activities are proceeding, including further developments in programs already made known to you.

### ■Meeting of Non-Japanese Representatives

On January 26 and 27, we invited to Sendai the non-Japanese community representatives that we have helped over the past two years. More specifically, most of those present were non-Japanese women married to Japanese men and living as a member of the local community in the hard-hit areas.

Throughout the meeting following topics were discussed:

- These women come across problems with the Japanese procedures relating to divorce papers, applications for allowances for single-mother families and children, etc.
- Due to their insufficient proficiency in Japanese, some of them did not fully understand their labor contracts.
- The 2011 catastrophe caused everyone they knew to move to various different places. Now living in temporary housing, many of the meeting attendants have so far been unable to make new

friends.

- The women would like an immigrants' center built in each of the districts relevant to them.

This meeting also created an opportunity for participants from the Iwate Prefecture to talk to the staff of the project. This meeting then led to a visit to the Iwate International Association, to talk with the prefectural government about how they can help foreign residents affected by the disaster. Now that they have made this connection they are able to access all that the local government can provide.

Meanwhile, the “Let Us Walk Together! Project” is currently preparing a set of “proposed policies,” which incorporate, opinions from the representatives meeting. We hope our proposals will be adopted, so that many non-Japanese residents will be engaged in efforts to build up a society where many different ethnic groups can live together.



## ■Dedication and Groundbreaking Ceremonies

A kindergarten and a nursery, both seriously damaged by the earthquake of 2011, have been rebuilt.



Wakamatsu All Saints Church's Seiai Kindergarten, located in Aizuwakamatsu, held a dedication ceremony and a celebratory worship on March 20, attended by some 120 people. For the time being, the newly-rebuilt kindergarten's hall will serve as the worship place for Wakamatsu All Saints Church as well. (Photo 1) Elsewhere, in Kamaishi, the Kamaishi Shin-ai Kindergarten took care of its children in a temporary building from July 2012 onwards, but this April, when the Japanese school year began, the kindergarten started the year in a brand-new



building, fresh and clean right down to its shiny new floor. (Photo 2) In Sendai, on April 1, Sendai Christ Church, the Tohoku Diocese cathedral, whose use was prohibited because of damage done by the earthquake, celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony for construction of a new church building. Blessed by fine weather, believers and the construction people prayed for safe work together. (Photo 3)



## ■Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture - Class 2 Home Helper Certificate Training for Non-Japanese residents (Final round)

The third round of our Class 2 Home Helper Certificate Training Course is in progress in Ishinomaki. The course is being attended by six trainees, whose nationalities are Filipino, Indonesian, and Chinese. The trainees are learning relevant technical terms in Japanese, and practicing how to take care of a person in bed rest, among other things, with a view to obtaining the license. These training courses were started to help the non-Japanese residents support themselves and their families with a stable income, after losing their jobs in the 2011 disaster. The course ended last April.

### Communion service of thanksgiving and prayers for the two years of the "Let Us Walk Together! Project"



**Time and date:** 10am, Saturday, May 25, 2013  
**Place:** Temporary worship hall of Sendai Christ Church (2F Paseo Bldg., 7-32, Kasuga-machi, Aoba Ward, Sendai)  
**Priest:** Most Revd. Makoto Nathaniel Uematsu (Representative of the "Let Us Walk Together! Project", Primate of the NSKK)  
**Preacher:** Revd. Shin'ya Peter Ohmachi (Chairperson of the "Let Us Walk Together! Project" Executive Committee", Hokkaido Diocese)

## Record of Activities 3/6 - 4/5

### Help to temporary housing residents

- Handicraft group, Cooking circle, Chat programs, Distributing potatoes, Fun group making "karuta" picture cards / Kamaishi
- ▲ Bus tours for shopping / Natori
- ◆ Hotto ("Relaxing") Corner (a tea event) / Shinchi
- ◆ Hotto ("Relaxing") Cinema / Shinchi
- ◆ Hokkori ("Cozy") Café / Iwaki

Also finger massaging (chiropractic), children's programs, "after-5pm" programs, nail salons, etc.

### Help to non-Japanese residents

- ▲ Class 2 Home Helper Certificate Training / Ishinomaki
- ▲ Individual support (supporting children's study, explanation of government publications, etc.) / Ishinomaki, Tagajo, Sendai
- ▲ Japanese classes, English teacher education sessions /Sendai
- ▲ Worship service in commemoration of the two years following the earthquake, for non-Japanese

residents affected /Sendai

### Help for the challenged

- ▲ Visits /Sendai (Madoka)
- ▲ Aiding with work /Kesenuma (Himawari)

### Other items

- ★ Right Revd. David J. H. Lai of the Taiwan Episcopal Church visited the disaster areas in Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima Prefectures.
- ◆ Helping with a number of kindergartens in Fukushima Prefecture.
- ★ Visits to the affected areas by observers from many places /Miyagi Pref., Shinchi, and others

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.20 Issued 1 May, 2013

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