



# Let Us Walk Together Project

NSKK Support for Victims of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake

News Letter

No. 21

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## Ending Our Second Year of Activities : On to Part II

*'Let Us Walk Together'  
Up to Today (1)*

### Thanks to You for All Your Prayer and Efforts

**Bishop Makoto Nathaniel Uematsu**

Project Director-General, Let Us Walk Together! Project  
Bishop of Hokkaido & Primate of Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK)



The huge earthquake that struck an area ranging from Tohoku and Hokkaido in northern Japan to Kanto (around Tokyo) at 2:46 pm on March 11, 2011, and the massive tsunami that was brought about by this created a major disaster that went far beyond our imagination or understanding.

In the NSKK, various types of emergency support and other aid activities began right after the earthquake occurred. At the beginning, we had no means of transportation or of making contact with the stricken areas, and no ability to grasp the full nature of the disaster. Individual dioceses brought foodstuffs, daily necessities, blankets and the like to the disaster regions, finding their own routes into the area. We received many offers of aid teams and emergency supplies from the Anglican Communion throughout the world, but above all we asked for their prayers for the victims and for the aid activities, and indeed, the churches throughout the world did pray for these things.

In May 2011, the emergency and other aid efforts that the various dioceses and other organizations had been carrying out individually or together were coordinated into the 'Let Us Walk Together! Project.' This led to the development of support centers at various locations in the distressed area and of new activities such as support for non-Japanese victims. Truly massive donations came in for this work from churches in Japan and overseas, including large amounts of emergency goods and other aid supplies, and many volunteers went out to the distressed areas. We also had visits from lay people and clergy from many places overseas, including the presiding bishop of the Anglican Church of Korea, among others. The fact that such a small denomination as the NSKK could accomplish the activities it did in the Let Us Walk Together! Project was wholly due to the prayers and support offered by all of you overseas, and I want to acknowledge this and thank you all once more from the bottom of my heart.

From its inception, the Let Us Walk Together! Project was conceived and has gone forward on the basis of a 2 year time-frame. This was necessary in order to conduct a responsible effort given our limited budget and manpower. As of May this year, we have come to the two-year mark. However, many victims in the distressed areas still need aid. Also, for those afflicted by the damage to the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, prospects for the future are still completely unclear, and they are being forced to live as refugees or in unpleasant circumstances in the midst of fear and uncertainty. The NSKK still wishes to walk together with these victims, and even as the activities of the current Let Us Walk Together! Project come to an end, we are preparing to establish a new framework. We want to join in the work of the Diocese of Tohoku, and in terms of nuclear-related issues, we will be beginning activities at the provincial level. We ask for your continuing prayers, support and understanding.

## On 'Let Us Walk Together' – Showing Respect From the Project's Head Office Director and the Bishop of Tohoku

**Bishop Hiromichi John Kato**

Head Office Director , Let Us Walk Together! Project  
Bishop of Tohoku



Let me first offer thanks from the bottom of my heart for the enormous support in terms of aid and prayers offered after the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and since the beginning of the Let Us Walk Together! Project by the churches of the NSKK throughout Japan, and the various related facilities and related schools.

Immediately after the earthquake occurred, 'Crisis Response' groups established in the various dioceses came together to meet at the summons of the Presiding Bishop, and determined to take on the challenge of responding to the situation as an undertaking of the whole NSKK. With the approval of the provincial executive council, a first meeting of the steering committee held in Sendai on April 29 was the starting point for this project. It was also determined at this time that our efforts would be called, not something like 'recovery aid,' but 'Let Us Walk Together.' Our somewhat strange slogan, expressing our will to 'walk together with those bearing up under difficulty, offering them respect,' came out of the discussions of this period.

With the modernization and economic development of Japanese society, disparities between the major cities and local areas developed. Now, this doesn't apply only to Tohoku, but Tohoku is region with a history of being peripheral to the center. The effect of the tsunami was staggering, but even before then, Tohoku's towns were known for their shuttered shops on main streets. When one speaks of 'recovery,' what should it be a recovery to? Every region has its own unique customs, culture, and proud history. We determined that this was not just about 'helping some poor, suffering person'; no, this work would have something to say to our own way of life and values. The same could be said about nuclear plants and the whole radioactivity question.

Some of us were reminded of Margaret Powers' 'Footprints' ('The times when you were suffering, and saw only one set of footprints, were the times when I carried you'). It reminded me personally of Archbishop Rowan Williams' sermon on 'barefoot mission,' given during the 150th Anniversary celebrations for the NSKK. Whatever the case, the name for the project was chosen out of the desire of our various dioceses to walk together with the victims and with the Lord, step by step, while respecting the history and culture, circumstances and feelings of the distressed areas, and also giving thought to our own way of life. This certainly did not mean giving aid centered only around our churches, but rather using the churches and kindergartens and nurseries of the Diocese of Tohoku as bases for our operations and carefully building up a face-to-face relationship with people in the region – I believe this was the consistent posture of this project. One of our weakest points, as a Diocese in Tohoku, was in establishing contact with facilities for the handicapped and with non-Japanese living or staying in Japan. Rich experience in these areas throughout the NSKK as a whole helped to cover for us in this aspect of the work.

This was the first time for the NSKK, as a denomination, to embark on an undertaking of this magnitude, and while thanking you all for the strength, prayers and support you gave us, I feel I must also apologize if there were areas in which, because of our inexperience and lack of strength for the work, we were not able to measure up to people's expectations. It was a new experience for us.

From this point, as we change gears and move on into Let Us Walk Together Part II, we indeed want to keep using our local churches as bases for operations, for prayer and for work, in a step-by-step, sustainable way. Things to do with nuclear plants, radiation and the Fukushima situation will also now be dealt with as an undertaking of the NSKK. We continue to ask that you remember us in your prayers, and come to visit the affected areas.

Onward to "Let Us Walk Together Part II"  
**<1> Mission of the Tohoku Diocese**

**Rev. Kiyosumi Francis Hasegawa**

Program Director, Let Us Walk Together! Project  
Director, Shinchi Support Center

Chairperson, Committee for Rebuilding St. John's, Isoyama, Tohoku Diocese



Over the two years since the earthquake catastrophe, the Let Us Walk Together! Project's staffers and volunteers have been walking together with those hit by the disaster and their neighbors, sharing their ever-changing emotions, in Onahama, Shinchi, Natori, Sendai, Ishinomaki, Minamisanriku, Kesennuma, Ofunato, and Kamaishi. They have all shared a tremendous time of laughter and tears, of mutual respect and heart-felt communication, of talking, drinking tea, working on handcrafts, breaking the ground together, and so on. What is actually supporting them is the compassion and prayers of churches nationwide and overseas, as well as the aid supplies that have been sent in – this is something I have felt especially keenly.

At the same time, while the relevant prefectural and municipal governments are doing everything they can to rebuild their devastated areas, one can honestly not say that the rebuilding work is progressing well. Still, for instance, workers are busy preparing to build up collective housing estates in two mountainous areas east and west of our Shinchi support center. They are expected to finish construction later this year or sometime next year. Nevertheless, seeing these works in progress provides some encouragement to those still living in temporary housing.

Tohoku Diocese now plans to renew its assistance to people affected by the disaster, starting this June, under the banner of 'Let Us Walk Together! Tohoku,' though this name may be subject to change. Many of our small-in-number staffers will remain, as well as our current office, which will continue for the time. In the coming new phase, we will re-adjust the project to the form most appropriate for our size and specific activities. It is my hope that the support activities at Onahama, Shinchi, Kamaishi, etc., will become even more closely knit with those of people affected by the disaster. In more specific terms, our Kamaishi support center should shut down at the end of this coming August, completing its two years of service. Then Shin'ai Church (Church of Divine Love), Kamaishi, and its kindergarten should function as the bases for our Part 2 activities there. They have already built up their history and gained the trust of many neighbors. In Shinchi, our support center will keep up its work for at least another year, serving the neighboring communities. In Onahama, St. Timothy's Church and kindergarten will continue to 'walk together' with those escaping from radioactivity in their former hometowns. Encouraged by Lord Jesus, our members will spend every single day living together with their local neighbors, in mutual help and respect, and in cooperation with other aid activities in Fukushima.

Speaking of Shinchi, our support base there has been organizing, as important events, pilgrimages to Shinchi town, St. John's Church, Isoyama, and former Fuji Kindergarten. Also, the center offers prayers for those killed or lost in the 2011 disaster on the 11th day of each month, and this has become a monthly event of great importance. Pilgrims get together and visit the stricken areas, praying for the deceased. This practice is extremely meaningful not just to those affected but to visitors, volunteers, and church people as well.

Rebuilding St. John's Church, Isoyama, a number of whose members died in the tragedy, is a mission we have to accomplish at any price. The new building will be a memorial place of requiems and prayers. We are determined to carry out this mission, praying and striving for it. The progress of all the plans and missions mentioned will be reported on regularly, to the extent that we can do so. At the same time, we plan to build up a library of the East Japan Earthquake at the Diocesan Hall, Sendai Christ Church.

I hereby ask all of you to cooperate with our missions in the years to come.

Onward to "Let Us Walk Together Part II"

## **<2> Special Project on the Issue of Nuclear Plants and Radiation**

**Rev. Kiyoshi Timothy Nomura,**

Member of the Committee for Special Project on the Issue of Nuclear  
Plants and Radiation



Following the monstrous earthquake and tsunami of 2011, which hit and devastated Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, the radioactivity let loose by the disaster knows no boundary and has been, and still is, contaminating the atmosphere, soil and ocean over a gigantic area both inside and outside Japan. More than two years have passed since the devastation, yet the radioactivity is still tragically affecting people's lives, and even their course of their lives, in countless ways.

The announcement of the new, second phase of activities of the Let Us Walk Together! Project states, 'We will show serious concern over the nuclear power plant's meltdown and its outcomes, collecting and spreading information on them and taking other responsible actions both in and out of Japan.' Back then, God alone knew what would happen in the coming years. Still, all of us at Let Us Walk Together! shared the conviction that the meltdown and radioactive contamination were a deadly issue we were not allowed to ignore. Today, after more than two years, the situation of those affected grows ever more tragic. On the other hand, people living far from the affected areas are showing little concern over this deadly tragedy. The plain fact, however, is that all the plant's dangers and radioactive contamination are still there. The NSKK today has the mission and responsibility to keep spreading to the whole world information on what nuclear power plants and radioactivity are doing to Fukushima and Japan.

For long, many have pointed out the dangers of nuclear power. Especially with its experience of the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan has the responsibility to speak to the world of such dangers, including how deadly radioactive contamination is. Yet in this very nation of Japan, 54 nuclear reactors have been installed without any known way of disposing of the radioactive wastes from them. This simply means that we in Japan have failed to learn the lessons of the nuclear tragedies of the past, in allowing all those plants to be built at the price of such radioactivity danger. At the 59th Regular General Synod of the NSKK, convened in May 2012, a bill submitted by the College of Bishops and titled 'A World without Nuclear Power Plants –The Anglican/Episcopal Church in Japan is Opposed to Nuclear Power Generation–' was adopted by the Synod. The resolution concludes 'In solidarity with all religions and denominations opposed to nuclear power, we, the NSKK, demand immediate abolition of all nuclear plants and a change in the Japanese government's national energy policy towards alternative energies. To facilitate these changes, we are committed to change our own lifestyles, which so far have been driven by convenience and comfort, and to strive to build a world in which we share the pain of those in suffering and hardship, learning together and helping each other.'

NSKK's Board of Executives then decided to launch a 'Special Project on the Issue of Nuclear Plants and Radiation' to work towards the realization in concrete terms of the General Synod's resolution above.

We have yet to determine the specific activities of this Special Project. However, as a start, in cooperation with many other organizations both religious and secular, we are already working to organize 'refresh programs' for affected children, to provide assistance to people who have fled from radiation polluted areas, to inform the general public on radioactivity, to survey severely affected areas, to spread correct information, and so on. We know that we will have to carry on these activities for many years to come, but we are determined to do so, educating more workers for these activities. We, the NSKK, have a mission to carry on, and we intend to fulfill our responsibilities to the extent of our ability.



### ■ Having a wonderful spring vacation in Murone

On May 3 and 4, a spring camp named 'Murone Land II' was held for children have a non-Japanese parent. One intention of this camp was to help mothers who were unable take their kids somewhere far away for fun, whether for financial or other reasons. (For more information on 'Murone Land I,' held last summer, see Newsletter No.14.) Twenty kids, from elementary to high school level, gathered at St. Nathaniel's Church, Murone, in Ichinoseki, Iwate Prefecture. They came from Sendai, Tagajo, Ishinomaki and Higashi-matsushima. The kids enjoyed themselves to their heart's content, having a barbecue and making souvenirs for their families, while earnestly praying at morning and evening prayers. Though some of the kids were meeting for the first time, they quickly became friends. Some even asked 'How soon is the next Murone Land?' Though the holiday was short – only two days – the children livened up the church and its neighborhood with their voices.



### ■ 'Ohanami' parties under the cherry blossom trees in Kamaishi

Late April in Kamaishi, residents of the various temporary housing facilities enjoyed many different styles of 'ohanami' cherry blossom viewing parties. The staffers of our Kamaishi base helped organize the parties with resident associations and other local volunteer groups, helping the people affected by the 2011 earthquake.

In some of these parties, participants set up tables in a cherry-planted park and enjoyed 'obento' packed lunches. In others, they were unexpectedly showered with snow while the cherries were already in blossom, and had to hold their party indoors. Either way, the parties were all filled with happy people, singing 'karaoke,' pounding rice cakes, or enjoying a performance by a local group of folk music singers. Volunteers from the NSKK served home-cooked miso soup, which was greatly appreciated by the participants.



### ■ More volunteers making friends in Shinchi

Every month, we welcome large numbers of volunteers. Some of them have special skills, providing finger massages (rather resembling chiropractic), hair cuts, etc. Some teach a dance class. Many residents of Shinchi, Fukushima Prefecture, love these monthly events. Most volunteers do not come just once. They come over and over again, sometimes bringing their friends. And they all say 'Honestly, I'm so happy I'm here.' Every single visitor to Shinchi is first taken on the 'pilgrimage course.' Many people affected by the disaster willingly serve as a guide for the volunteers, telling them stories of what happened there on March 11, what they experienced and witnessed. Combined with the fellowship the volunteers and the victims share through the volunteer's activities, these 'pilgrimage talks' enhance the relationship that they have with each other even more. We are certain the two parties are then all the more determined to 'walk together' with each other!



**Help to temporary housing residents**

- ‘Ohanami’ cherry viewing parties, Chatting room programs, Sachet making for fun, ‘Utakko (singing) Salons’: Kamaishi

- **Cooking parties: Kamaishi**

Volunteers from the NSKK taught participants how to make ‘ichigo daifuku’ or rice cakes stuffed with a strawberry and some cream/bean paste. The end result was just as good as the ones you can buy! That day happened to be a school holiday, so they shared some of the daifuku with the kids there.



- ▲ Shopping bus tours: Natori

- ◆ **‘Hokkori’ (comfy) Café: Iwaki**

During the spring school holidays, some local kids came to help in the cafes. They gave massages and demonstrated cheerleading to entertain the café guests. Recently some guests have also been bringing in foods they have prepared themselves to eat in the cafes. The ‘Comfy Cafes’ are now serving locals, as places where they can relax and have a good time.



- ◆ ‘Hotto (relaxing) Corner’ (tea time), ‘Hotto Cinema’ (movie shows): Shinchi

In addition: gym classes; ‘haiku’ poetry writing get-togethers, cellphone strap making for fun, finger massaging, etc.

**Help to non-Japanese residents**

- ▲ Class II Home Helper license course (Ishinomaki)
- ▲ Individual assistance: helping kids with their school work, explaining what publications say, accompanying people to employment offices, etc. (Ishinomaki, Tagajo, Sendai)
- ▲ Japanese language class, English instructor education session (Sendai)
- Murone Land II kids’ camp (Ichinoseki)

**Help for the challenged**

- ▲ Visits: Madoka (Sendai), Himawari (Kesennuma)

**Other items**

- ◆ Helping kindergartens: multiple kindergartens within Fukushima Prefecture.
- ★ ‘Pilgrimages’ to the hard-hit areas with visitors and volunteers from throughout Japan (Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima Prefectures).

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>

**Seeds sown (7)**

In Shinchi, St. John’s Church, Isoyama, has been cherished by the locals for many years. People outside the church often share stories of the church members giving them treats when they were children. On the night of the earthquake, a number of townspeople found shelter in this church.

Elsewhere, at St. Nathaniel’s Church, in Murone, some local children come to play at the church while the staff are there. One day, a certain elementary schoolgirl asked the staff for a favor. Though she was not a Christian herself, she asked them to pray for her. So, they took the girl into the worship place and prayed together for her family and for the girl.

So far, many of the people that we in the Let Us Walk Together! Project have met are not members of the Anglican Communion. Still, as we talk with them, we find that many have had some contacts with it – ‘We used to get together at the church to do our homework, when we were kids,’ or ‘Every year, the church over there held a camp, and some college students would come, to play with local kids,’ and so on. Our Anglican ancestors’ evangelistic efforts in Tohoku have sown seeds, which have, as we see, sprouted and taken root in the region. (A staffer at Sendai Base, May 2013)



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

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