

April 11, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One month has passed since the earthquake hit Japan on March 11th. But the country is still experiencing sporadic aftershocks, and many people are living with fear of earthquake today. My grief grows more when I watch the continuing broadcasts about Japan's disastrous situation.

First of all, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude for the emotional support and monetary donations my Japanese congregation received from the English and Spanish congregations of Norcross First Baptist Church as well as from so many other people who learned of our donation activity through TV or their friends. With the generous donations literally in my hands, I flew to Japan on March 23rd and stayed until April 6th. It was the Japan Baptist Convention's Disaster Relief Headquarters who officially requested my trip, but it was also sincere prayers and thoughts by the Norcross First Baptist Church and the Georgia Baptist Convention who supported and drove me to this mission.



Wakabayashi -Ward, Arahama

The missions I was assigned by JBC were 1) To actually visit disaster-stricken areas and to report it and 2) To assess relief needed for the disaster victims on behalf of JCB. I was pleased to see that so many supplies and relief were already collected at the Headquarters. They were supplied not only from other Baptist churches in Japan, but also from overseas. I was impressed by the strong network the Baptist churches had established for emergency situation, such as this case.

My impression when I first saw the city of Sendai was that the damage condition was not as bad as what I imagined, but soon it was corrected. The lifeline is still cut off at many areas, and food supply is very slow and still limited. Gasoline was one hot item that everybody was searching for. So many people had to wait in lines for 4 to 5 hours to get gasoline. Many pastors I know told me they couldn't drive their vehicles to check their church members because of no gas. People in Sendai are suffering from shortage of daily commodities.

Besides the 4 JCB churches and 1 mission in Sendai, I also visited Wakabayashi and Miyagino Wards in Sendai, Tagajyo City, Shiogama City, Matsushima-cho, Higashi-mastushima City, Ishinomaki City, Tome City, Minami-sanriku-cho, Utatsu-cho, Motoyoshi-cho, Kesenuma City, Karakuwa-cho, Watari-cho, and Yamamoto-cho; that were often reported for the seriousness of destruction.

The condition was beyond what I expected. I was aghast and lost words every time I visited new locations. The force of tsunami was so devastating that buildings were shattered in pieces, which created heaps of rubble here and there. Some heaps had a destroyed vehicle on top. It was a strange view. All of those towns and cities along the pacific coast I visited in Miyagi prefecture received devastating damage. This means that all the cities, towns, and villages along the pacific coast of the whole North East Japan were destroyed.

One thing that stands out about the disaster this time is that the damage was doubled or tripled by the subsequent tsunami and fires. I witnessed a whole town was wiped out at some areas. The damage was simply immeasurable. The more I learned about the situation, the more I felt helpless. I was often at a loss because I couldn't tell where to begin help. The search for missing people still continues today. As one month has passed, the relief activity is gradually transitioning from medical and emergency support to living and emotional care support and reconstruction of the area.

When I visited the shelters and discussing the needs of supply with leaders of shelters or local government officers, I often heard this comment – “My situation is much better than some folks. Please take care of them before me.” I was very impressed by the unselfishness that many of them expressed instead of choosing to throw sadness, pain, distress, frustration, or agony that I am sure they all have. I feel I was more encouraged by them than I encouraged them.

They said Japan received triple disasters this time. The first disaster was earthquake, the second one was tsunami, and the third one was nuclear crisis caused by the explosion of Fukushima nuclear plant. The situation of nuclear plant has been growing increasingly complex, and many residents who once survived the earthquake and tsunami had to evacuate their hometown to avoid radiation. The whole world is paying a close attention to the development and wishing for cease of the crisis. My sincere prayer goes to those who are affected by the crisis and people who are working or volunteering to reinstate the country.



Miyagino-Ward, Gamou

Again, as the disaster is extensive and complex, many relief measures must be taken at the same time. Both the national and local governments will face many challenges for the reconstruction of this beautiful country. What JBC can do is to continue and extend its support to the recovery.

The March 11th disaster was beyond anybody's imagination. As I continue to see the devastating damages on TV and newspaper, I feel that a human being is powerless in front of such a disaster. I also couldn't help thinking about how human civilizations survived hardships in the past. Some may question their limited



Minami-sanriku-cho, Shizugawa

ability to overcome such difficulty. As a Christian, you may first ask God why this hardship had to happen. But through faith in Jesus Christ, we will be assured with and will witness God's omnipotence, deep mercy, and fatherly love.

I will continue my prayer to all people who had lost their beloved father or mother, brother or sister, children, relatives or friends, homes or belongings. My heart goes to them who spend many cold, dark nights at shelters, share limited food with other victims, and suffer distress for losing everything.

I will continue to pray for their quick recovery and peace to prevail in their heart soon.

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” I Corinthians 10: 13

Yours sincerely in Christ,

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