

“We need your prayers and support!”

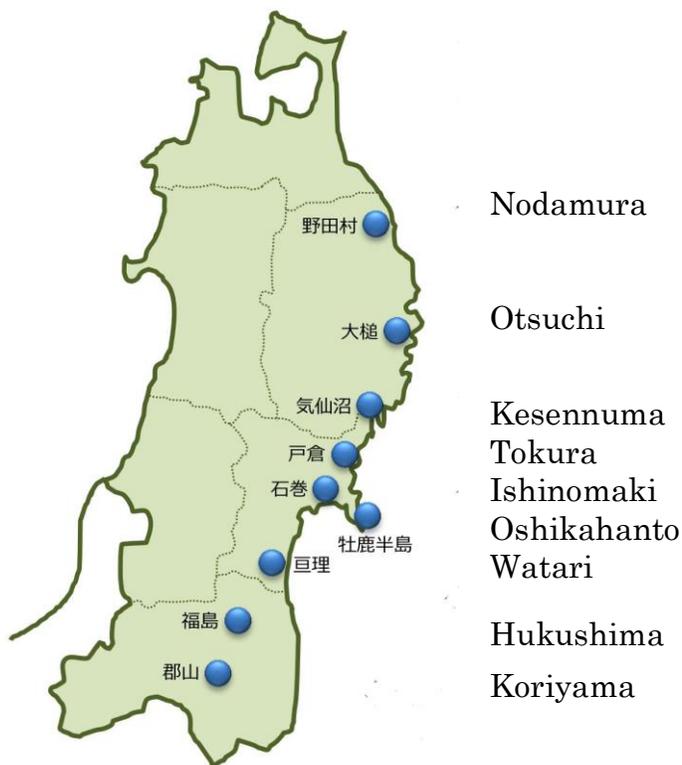
2011.3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake
Local Aid Committee News Letter From Tohoku
November, 2014

We praise the name of our Lord. We are grateful for your prayers and support for affected area of Higashi Nihon Great Earthquake, and the churches located in the northeast of Japan.

3 years and 8 month have passed since the earthquake, and the gap of the recovery is becoming more and more visible according to the seriousness of the situations all throughout the affected area. There are people who were able to move out from the temporary housing, and those who have not, some have re-started their farming, or fishing business, and those who do not have any possibilities. The speed of recovery depends on the locations, too. The contamination of radioactive material is an ongoing tragedy, and people need to focus their attention on an invisible enemy.

We keep our faith in Jesus our Lord, that He maketh everything good, and we will continue working with those who have been victimized. Please keep us in your prayers.

We have the article of the active relief work, and a testimony by brother Tsutomu Suzuki (Same church, Aomori).



Testimony (at JBC 60th General Meeting)

Tsutomu Suzuki
Same Church, Aomori.

Same is a town located at the southern tip of Aomori prefecture. It is a port town with a population of 10,000, people value and preserve traditions. Our Church was built about 300 meters away from the ocean, and we could look out from our second floor windows and have an ocean view all throughout the year.

On March 11, 2011 at 2:46pm, the Hachinohe area was hit by an earthquake, Magnitude 9, and a tsunami followed the quake, tides coming to the harbor were as high as 8 meters. With this Tsunami, breakwater collapsed, and countless numbers of cars, shipping containers, fishing boats were washed away. The buildings near the shoreline were damaged, many companies, storage units, houses were destroyed or suffered severe damage to the roof. Because of the Tsunami, there are many who went bankrupt, and the ruins, the broken facilities remain standing by the harbor. Up till now, Sept. 2014, it is reported only 20% of sales have been recovered within the fishing industry in this area. The members of Same church had their companies or factories damaged, or their relatives houses collapsed. Some companies or factories discontinued the business, as they were no longer able to keep their business afloat, some had moved away to other areas, and some have managed to re-started temporarily.

However, damages were not as severe compared to Iwate, Miyagi, or Fukushima area. The church members discussed, and prayed, "What can we do? What should we do?" and thus the relief/recovery support for Noda area have started.

With the cooperation of brothers and sisters from Hachinohe church, Misawa church, Aomori church, and Hokkaido association, we have been visiting Noda area on every 3rd Friday of the month. The 38th visit was in Oct. 2014.

Our support work start with service at church, and finish with service at church. Noda is about 1.5 hours away by car from Same. In good weather, from spring to fall, the drive is easy and safe, but once the snow starts to fall, driving on unfamiliar roads can become very dangerous. However, even in the hardest season of the year, the day for Noda always has a clear sky with beautiful weather. I see the blessing and the presence of the Lord our God.

We open a café in Noda, providing coffee and sweets sent from churches all over Japan. There was some awkwardness at the beginning, but as the time went by, we became very close, getting to know each others names, and faces. Now they are waiting for us to come, and when we leave, they always ask when we are coming back.

Now, we stop by 5 places in our visits. One place has 74 temporary housing units, and the another only 2. One is located on the secluded hilltop by the shore where no visitor would come by accident. In such a place, people are eager for company, and look forward to our visit, waiting to have a chat with us. We are filled with gratitude to meet with them, and once again, we acknowledge the severe damage of the disaster.

From this year, several people started to leave the temporary housing. They made the painful decisions, to move and relocate outside of their hometown, not to wait to live in the permanent housing government will provide for the victims, or rebuilt their own house on their own land. It was not an easy decision. . However, due to the increased demands within the construction business with the Olympics and countless buildings in affected area have been destroyed, completion date for the permanent houses has been delayed, and the cost is rising sky high. With all these factors, some people had to give up of their plans or forced to make new plans.

Today, we need to care for people with in trouble. There are emotional gaps between people who moved to new permanent houses provided by the government, and those who have reasons not to be able to move. There are people whose houses qualified as only partially damaged, as opposed to fully damaged, which leads emotional discomfort between victims who gets full support and rights to live in temporary housing and who do not get as much. Some people were able to be settled in to new housings, but have hard time relating with their new neighbors. The needs of mental care are increasing. As for the temporary housing, government provided temporary housing, were made to stand for three years, so as that amount of time has passed, some have started to deteriorate, ceiling and walls are coming apart, which may cause more troubles in the upcoming winter.

In Fukushima, the anxiety is heavily set. All the worries aroused by the explosion of Fukushima 1st power plant, the processing operation for contaminated water, delay in the extraction of the used fuel rods, health issues due to the exposure to the radioactive materials. In addition, a fear that there maybe another accidents or explosions in the remaining nuclear power plant, which may cause people to have to run away again, moving away from the places they resettled.

The recovery is slow in all affected areas, including Iwate and Miyagi, and the other places, that people see the area that used to be their homes, or working places deteriorating. With this non recovery, people are losing hope and are getting irritated because they cannot plan for the future.

We, the churches in these victimized area, will never be able to stand back strong again, unless the town, the people of our own surrounding area, our community fully recover. There will be no healing until then.

Please keep us in your prayers, and remember us, help us with our recovery and support for Higashi Nihon Great Earthquake Disaster.

(November, 2014)