

2011.3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake

Local Aid Committee News Letter from Tohoku 14 September 2016 Issue #25

To all the churches throughout Japan, thank you for your daily support and encouragement. We are praying for not only the Tohoku area, but of all the areas in Japan that were affected by the Typhoon. In this issue we would like to report about the work of the Seinan Gakuin University Volunteer Team who have been working with us since right after the disaster.

Local Aid Committee Testimony (Isaiah 43:1~5)

The last day that the Seinan Gakuin University Volunteer Team were in Sendai, we heard Ms. Kinuko Kasamatsu, talk about the radiation contamination. After this we had time to share about what we experienced through our volunteer work.

Mr. Taketo Uno, a member from Nagazumi Church, shared that he continually questions himself about why he takes part in volunteer work. This is exactly the question that I wanted to ask each member of the volunteer team. This is something that I myself have continued to ask myself as I took part in aid work since the disaster occurred.

Though I cannot come up with a definite answer. I believe the root of the answer is that I myself am loved. My wife passed away the year before the disaster. When the disaster happened, a colleague of mine faced a lot of damages. Because of this I took part in mud out and got involved with the Oshika aid work as a Miyagi team member. Despite being in the middle of sorrow and suffering, when I look back I realise that God continues to send his love. This knowledge brings me peace. It is because I am empowered through this love that I have been able to continue volunteering.

Amazingly, Pastor Mamoru Oda chose to speak about Isaiah 42:1~5. He spoke about how we are all loved by God. Mr. Uno, who had heard the pastor's message and my thoughts shared about how he also thought the same way.

I hope that as the university students think about the meaning of volunteering, they too start to realise that they themselves are loved. I continue to pray that the students meet God through this work.

(Taitomi Christ Church Shinkichi Ito)

2016 Seinan Gakuin University Volunteering in Miyagi

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Miyagi team have been accepting volunteers from Seinan Gakuin University Volunteer team. This year we accepted 9 students and 2 staff. A total of 11 volunteers came to Miyagi prefecture's disaster area from August 25 (Thurs) to August 29 (Mon).

On the first day, Pastor Isaku Arai took the team around Sendai airport, Iwanuma city, Natori city, and Yuriage district of Natori city that faces the Pacific Ocean. Yuriage district suffered significantly due to the disaster. Pastor Arai was inaugurated to the Natori church of the Japan United Christ Church soon after the disaster.

Though the harbor has been reconstructed, the residential area is still under construction for a new 6 meter embankment. At Natori Church we saw how the church treasured the importance of "life". At the church there was a piano that was named the "Piano of Life". This piano was donated by a church member. She passed away when the tsunami hit. We also visited Arahama district that suffered the most disaster in Sendai city. We stood at the newly built tide embankment and looked at the Pacific Ocean where the tsunami came crashing in. The land that was swept over by the tsunami used to house 1000 households.

Now wild grass covers where the houses once stood. In the evening we heard about the aid work



Photo with Pastor Arai
Back row second from left



Hand made dinner at the
Magihama Community Hall

carried out at Watari from Pastor Makoto Kanamaru. On the second day we visited the disaster areas of Matsushima city and Ishinomaki city of Miyagi prefecture. In Higashi Matsushima City, the preparation of the new high ground residential areas have been completed and now homes, schools, and businesses are starting to be built. The Japan Rail Nobiru station has been moved to high ground. The old station building has now been turned into a memorial



Oyster Harvest at Magihama

place. To tell the story of the disaster. There you can see a film about the disaster and the reconstruction of Matsushima.

Ishinomaki city was the municipal that faced the most damage from the disaster. There we visited the Hiyoriyama park where many people evacuated to, the urban areas where reconstruction has flourished, and the Kadowaki district where a disaster memorial park is being built.

In the evening we heard from Mr. Fumishi Toyoshima, the mayor of Magihama ward of Oshika peninsula where the Miyagi team carried out aid work. Standing in front of the former disaster relief head quarters, that worked as an evacuation centre after the disaster, the mayor talked about the disaster and the how life was afterward. After this we took part in oyster harvesting. In the evening we gathered at a community hall where we enjoyed Mayor Toyoshima's hand cooking and had a time to exchange with people. In the evening we were allowed to spend the night there.



Nobiru station
infront of a sign that shows
where the tsunami came up to

Mayor Toyoshima will speak at Seinan Gakuin University in January about experiences from the disaster. I believe the exchange that took place deepened the relationship between Mayor Toyoshima and Seinan Gakuin University.

On the third day, we took part in the Miyagi team Oshika aid work that we have been carrying out every month. We mingled with the residents of Kyubunhama and Magihama over some tea. We also handed out vegetables to the residents of Ayukawa and Kurosaki district who were affected by



Discussion at Taitomi church

the disaster. We also handed out vegetables at Oginohama and Tsukiura. At Oginohama we visited the area that was newly prepared as the high ground residency. We listened to Mayor Miyuki Esashi with the bay in the background. At Tsukiura they heard from District Mayor Eiji Aizawa where the new embankment had been completed, and had some time to exchange.

On the fourth day our group separated to two. One group went to Taitomi church, and the other to Sendai church where we attended Sunday service and had time to mingle. In the afternoon we heard from Chief fire fighter Mr. Masayuki Yamaki (Sendai Church member) who was in charge of coordinating the disaster relief work of Sendai city Wakabayashi district during the earthquake and tsunami. In the evening we had time for discussion with Ms. Kinuko Kasamatsu (Nankodai Church member), a member of the Tohoku Help Radiation Measuring Committee about how radiation issues still continue 5 years after the Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plant accident.

The last day, we left Taitomi church and took part in a gathering held by Shokei Gakuin University, and safely got on to our evening flight back despite the looming Taiphon #10.

It has been 5 and a half years since the Great East Japan earthquake. Now we often hear people discussing that we should start changing the title "disaster area". However these "disaster areas" have a lot of recovering yet to do. We are grateful for Seinan Gakuin University who send out

volunteer teams every year. We also pray that the the Toyoshima mayor will be protected, as he will come to Seinan Gakuin University next year. (Sendai Curch Yoshinobu Ogawa)

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