

Bond of Prayer Issue #41 December



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Japanese Baptist Convention *Great East Japan Earthquake Support Team*: <http://www.bapren.jp/>

22 November 2016, 17:59, off the shore of Fukushima prefecture, (epicentre roughly 70km ENE of Iwaki) there was an earthquake of magnitude 7.4. Due to this earthquake, a magnitude 5 earthquake was recorded in Fukushima prefecture, Ibaragi prefecture, and Tochigi prefecture. This earthquake was said to be an after shock of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.

What many of the Fukushima residents wondered when the earthquake struck was, "Is the nuclear power plant ok!?" In the midst of this worry there were reports on the news that the Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Plant's spent fuel rod cooling mechanism had stopped.

We will report about what Koriyama Kosumosu Dori Christ Church did during this event.

On that Day in Fukushima

An earthquake on 22 November, 17:59. I quickly put the news on and found that mid Fukushima, coastal Fukushima, northern Ibaragi, northern Tochigi experienced a magnitude 5 earthquake. The epicentre was 60km ENE of the shores of Iwaki, Fukushima prefecture, 10km deep. The magnitude there was 7.3. Immediately there was a tsunami alert for the Pacific coast. In my mind the words, Fukushima shore, and Tsunami alert whirled around in my mind. But since 11 March 2011, there have been many earthquakes ranging around magnitude 5. There were many times when there were tsunami alerts too. However this was the first time the epicentre was on the coast of Fukushima. There is no danger of tsunami in Koriyama, 58km from Fukushima. But, what about the nuclear power plant? Now the words, "What if? What if? What if?" whirled around in my mind. I sent out a Line (social media app) message to check the safety of all those in the church. People reported saying "We are safe.", "The high schools in town have been cancelled." "The trains have stopped running." I called and emailed those that I could not reach through Line. Though I was able to relax a little after hearing about everyone being safe, I was still worried about the nuclear power plant. As I searched the internet for further information I found that at 18:10 the cooling pump for the spent fuel rod pool of Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Plant, 3rd plant had stopped. The cooling had stopped. While worrying about increasing people's worry, I contacted people to fill their gas tanks and to change their tires to snow tires in case there were more earthquakes and in case something were to happen to the power plant. I told everyone to act calmly. I contacted the volunteers of the temporary housings and contacted those who had moved closer to the shore after leaving the temporary housing estates to check their safety. I got worried calls on the verge of tears saying that they were in the middle of evacuating. If something were to happen, there was a need to evacuate at least 250km from the plant. I tried to prepare for the unexpected, checked the wind direction, and shared to people that if it came to it, they should evacuate toward Niigata. I checked the monitoring posts placed near Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, Daini Power Plant, and Koriyama city and found that there was no change in the radiation levels. I contacted the president and office head of the Great North East Japan Earthquake Support team.

If the power plant were to explode, it would take 24 hours for the radiation to reach Koriyama. Even if we were to hurriedly evacuate, we would be caught in a traffic jam. I think of the elderly church members, the families with elderly members, church members with disabilities, of members with children. I pray harder. At 19:47, we got news that the pump used for cooling the spent fuel rod pool of plant 3 had started working again. The reason the pump had stopped was because the water level of the plant 3 skimmer sump tank had become low. At the time the plant had stopped, the temperature of the plant was 28.7 degrees Celsius. It was found that the rise in temperature of the fuel pool was 0.2 degrees per hour. To reach the temperature safety limit for running the plant (set at 65 degrees) would take 7 days. We were assured by the Nuclear Power Issues Column team that it was ok. These past 5 and a half years, I have always kept the possibility of evacuation in my mind. Even after 5 and a half years we must think of evacuation. Nothing has changed since that day. That day I experienced the reality of a "state of emergency".

Koriyama Kosumosu Dori Christ Church Pastor Chikayo Kaneko)

"Pastor Nonaka! There has been an earthquake and the cooling system for the used fuel rod pool at the Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power Plant has stopped. What should we do?" I woke up that morning with a phone call from Pastor Chikayo Kaneko of Koriyama Kosmos Dori Church. I hurriedly turned on the TV. "There was an earthquake, November 11, 2016, around 5:59am. The epicentre was the coast of Fukushima. 10km deep. The magnitude is calculated to be 7.3." This is what the meteorological agency was reporting. Furthermore, it was being reported that cooling system for the used fuel rod pool in plant three of the Fukushima Daini Nuclear Power plant had stopped. We called Koriyama straight away and informed them that everyone should first calm down. Compared to the troubles that occurred to the cooling system of the used fuel rod on "March 11", the heat expelled from the fuel rods was significantly lower. Also, because there was no water leaking from the pool, there was little immediate risk of the pool water evaporating and exposing the fuel rods to the air. We also told Koriyama that, judging from the direction of the wind, if there was a need to evacuate, it would be best to evacuate toward Niigata. Thankfully the cooling system was rebooted so there was no immediate danger and we were able to relax. I imagine that those in Fukushima were in a great deal of fear then.

Currently the government and those pushing for nuclear power are restarting nuclear power plants one after another. They are once again working toward "recycling nuclear power" in order to secure Plutonium for reasons unknown. It is hard to imagine that this is for anything other than the export business of nuclear plants, and the silent nuclear arming of Japan. The government and those rooting for nuclear power and also trying to erase the fact that "March 11" happened. However, as the November 22 earthquake revealed, that the Tokyo Electric Power Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant is still under a state of emergency. Moreover, this time, it was not the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, but the Daini Nuclear Power Plant that had troubles. This shows that the state that we are in has not changed, and what is more, it shows that an accident can happen anywhere, at any time. To continue praying and remember about "March 11", is to keep in our hearts the reality that those living in Fukushima, and all of East Japan are living in danger. I also believe that we cannot make "March 11" a thing of the past, as the government and the supporters of nuclear power are doing. We must also remember that as long as nuclear power exists, Japan will always be in a "state of emergency", and that no matter where it may be, nuclear power will be dangerous.

Tosu Christ Church Hiroki Nonaka (Pollution Issues Special Committee head, Nuclear Power Issues Supporting Committee Member.)

The Great East Japan Earthquake Support Team Nuclear Power Issues Team is supporting the making of the "Nuclear Power Plant Accident Evacuation Manual". Our stance toward evacuation during an emergency is "everyman for himself", but we are seeking for churches all around Japan to show their willingness to support when these times occur. Please support us.

Please Support by Donating for the Great East Japan Earthquake Donations

Goal for 2016 Donations: 6,000,000Yen (Domestic and International)

3,950,000Yen Collected so far (November)

Donations made in October and November 2016: in order of donation made. Our deepest gratitude to all who donated

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