

2011.3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake

Local Aid Committee News Letter from Tohoku 25 May 2016 Issue 23

To all churches in Japan, thank you for your daily support and encouragement. We are now in the new fiscal year of 2016. Within ever-changing circumstances we continue to carry out our support work. We ask for your continual support. In this issue, we would like to share about the work that is being carried out in Iwate prefecture, Otsuchicho, and about the work in the Tohoku area after the Kumamoto and Oita earthquake.

Aid work in Ando Otsuchicho

It has been 5 years since the Great Northeast Japan Earthquake. In Ando, Otsuchicho, the levee raising construction is still on going. 5 months after the earthquake many people started living in temporary housing. The houses were planned to house the residents for 2 years. However half a year after, this time was estimated as 5 years, and another half year after that the estimation was further extended to 7 to 8 years. One reason for this was that the forest area that was initially planned for use was discovered to be private property, making it difficult to allocate land divisions. Moreover, surrounding Ando are a number of national highways and Japan Rail tunnels. Therefore before building housing in that area, there needed to be extensive processing with different parties to attain approval. There were also restrictions on what could be done.

Ando first started by building a community center with an evacuation area and made that the center in rebuilding the city. This community center was initially planned to open at April 2016. Construction work is being accelerated and is planned to be complete by November.

The embankment that was destroyed by the tsunami is still untouched. Food stores and convenience stores have finally been built, however it is still going to take some time for the elderly temporary housing residents to be able to go shopping on foot. It is said that it will take 2 to 3 years until everyone living in temporary housing estates will be able to have their own homes and live comfortably. We also visit the Kozuchi area, and here too, there are those that will have to wait another 2 to 3 years until they can move into their own homes.

It is said that the Great East Japan Earthquake was unprecedented. When looking at the magnitude of the earthquake and the reach of its damage, the earthquake was definitely unprecedented. Perhaps one reason that can be given to the slow recovery is due to this unprecedented nature of the disaster. When listening to past experiences of calamities, each calamity has its disasters and each has its list of challenges in recovery. Perhaps in this sense we can call all disasters unprecedented. There has yet to be a disaster where everything was foreseen and all reconstruction could be run as planned. This is why many experience sorrow, anger, hopelessness and grief. We would like to listen to and speak with those that continue to face the challenges of past calamities, and with those that currently face calamities in different areas. Through this we would like to act on the work that the church is being called to do.

(Morioka church Masato Osuga)



Former land of Ando primary school now being used for the building of Ando Community Center



Levee Raising Construction still has a long way to completion



A girl born soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake. She is now almost 5 years old. With her mother and grandmother.

Sending out a pastor from South Kyushu to North East Japan

~Kumamoto Oita Earthquake~

After the Kumamoto and Oita earthquake the Northeast Japan Convention sent out Pastor Makoto Kanamaru (Chomeigaoka Church) and Pastor Shin'ya Tanaka (Nankodai Church) to South Kyushu from May 10 (Tue) to 13 (Fri). We received a request from South Kyushu Convention to share the churches' experiences for the past 5 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and to share about the decisions and mistakes that the church made in response to the disaster. Pastor Shin'ichiro Odori (Kurume Church) took us to the areas affected by the disaster such as Masuki-cho, and Mifune-cho, Udo city, and also took us to the churches in Kumamoto. At Kokubu Church we held a meeting with Pastor Norihisa Tokubuchi, Ms. Chieko Saito, Pastor Mau Mautan, and Disaster Aid Representative Pastor Tatsuichi Mugino for the South Kyushu Convention where we exchanged information. This is perhaps a form of aid that Northeast Japan can uniquely offer.

There was one other mission for this visit. This was to deliver the letters of encouragement to a church in Kumamoto. The letters were written by junior high students from the Miyamae temporary housing estate where we have been visiting the past 5 years. Finding out that we were visiting Kumamoto, the students that now live scattered around Japan, out of their own will, contacted each other and collected donations and over 70 letters. They brought these all the way to Chomeigaoka church. This act not only encouraged the people in Kumamoto, but us. I would like to share with you some of the words written in this letter.

“Dear everyone in Kumamoto. The big earthquake must have been scary. We were also very scared when the Great East Japan Earthquake happened. But your friends are very close by. If you believe in the people around you, something good must happen. Keep going!” “Though this may seem like a long road, good days will surely come. We are always supporting you. Just as we were supported.”

We thank the Lord who made this warm connection between these two devastated areas possible.

(Makoto Kanamaru Chomeigaoka Church)



From the meeting held
at Kokubu Church

The letters were sent to Kumamoto
Higashi Church



The letters and donations
written and collected by the
junior high students of
Motomiya Temporary
Housing Estate