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Fukushima Now: Report from a 30KM radius -2-

Minako Sasako (Reporter, Mejirogaoka Church Member)

June 6, at the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, Oarai, Miyagi Prefecture there was an incident where particles of radioactive material was released in a research room, exposing five workers there to the material. The issue was resolved but it was reported that 22,000Bq of plutonium was found in the lungs of one of the workers. I was shocked when I heard this report. This is because 22,000Bq is an abnormally high number.

Becquerel (Bq) is a unit to measure the quantity of radioactive nuclide. In Japan, the Sievert is often used to measure the level of radiation. Perhaps the Becquerel is a term that many people are not familiar with, but this is a word that Fukushima residents hear every day. The radiation level is reported on television news every morning as though to report the weather. Throughout Fukushima prefecture there are radiation monitors. Even in parks, these monitors are placed much like the boxes placed to measure the weather to show the radiation level. Primary school students all wear a "glass badge" to measure radiation levels as they commute from home to school. This measures the total amount of radiation they are exposed to during a year. I myself have never used a "glass badge" but the first day I visited the Fukushima office, I was handed a portable radiation monitoring device by my company and was told to carry it at all times. I had to report my daily exposure level every day to my superior, and once I had passed a certain level of exposure, I was moved to a different post.

This radiation monitor is an exact machine, and must be regularly sent for maintenance. If regular maintenance is not carried out, the monitor will show outrageous numbers in impossible places. The quality of these monitors vary widely and it is difficult to measure the exact amount of radiation at any given time. There are several "hot spots" that have been mistakenly reported to have high levels of radiation because of the wrong measurements shown on the monitor. However there are places that are actually real "hot spots" too.

These issues rarely come up in Tokyo, but in Fukushima prefecture, these issues still come up often.



Book recommendation: Minako Sasako
Until the Apples Rot.

Reports from within the 30 kilometre radius of the Nuclear Power Plant -Reporters' Notes-
Kadokawa Shinsho publication. 863JPY (with tax)
(Ringo ga kusarumade. Genpatsu 30km ken kara no houkoku. Kishya noto kara.)

Reporting about the victims of the Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake, I noticed that the same things I had seen and heard from the 2004 Niigata Chuetsu earthquake was taking place. Solitary deaths of the elderly, alcoholism, family breakdown, disharmony of the local residents brought about by discrimination and division, the dilemma of returning and not returning. I, saw these things take place before my own eyes, and I wrote about this reality that I witnessed as a reporter, but from my Christian perspective.

3a in Koriyama ~ questions brought about by the people we met ~

Koriyama Kosumosu Dori Church Chikayo Kaneko

It has been 7 years living in Koriyama since the disaster. I am now used to living a life where we cannot dry our laundry outside and cannot open our window. I am used to a life where I see scenes of decontamination. It is now normal for me to eat vegetables grown in the prefecture, trusting that it has been measured and is labeled as "safe". It was while this sort of lifestyle was becoming normal, that I encountered the group called "3a".

The "3a" has the three pillars of Anshin (security), Anzen (safety) and Action. The organisation was set up by local young mothers who wanted to take action toward the nuclear radiation after the disaster. They have projects such as the summer recreation program held by the United Church of Christ in Japan and programs held by other organisations to help with their children's recreation. We also support in measuring the radiation levels of homes, and give guidance on thyroid echocardiography, and hold study groups. Every Tuesday we hold a "Vegetable Market" from 10am to 4pm. Here we sell vegetables from the West of Japan. We currently have vegetables from Nara lined up on the shelves. We have komatsuna, spinach, onions, potatoes, carrots, etc. Though the vegetable market is only open on Tuesdays, the 3a office is open everyday from 10am to 4pm, Monday through Friday. Through the radiation contamination, we have come to hear the many voices of those who are worried. People are concerned with what to wear, with shelter, relationships, the environment of schools and kindergartens, etc.

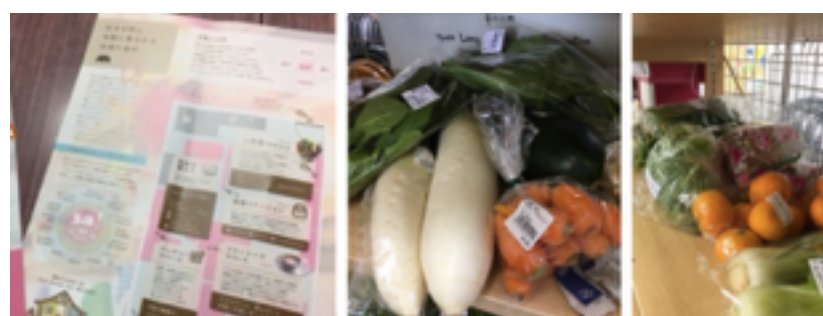
Because I was a former kindergarten teacher, I was asked, through Tohoku Help, to listen to the mothers, and see how the children were doing. It was through this that I encountered the mothers and children. This was when I had started to feel completely "used to" life with radiation. Through this encounter, I was able to once again wake up to the reality I was in. The other day, I was called to lead the "Evacuation Manual, Exercise and Meal" event. We had a unique interaction with 13 people from Koriyama.

"Ms. Kaneko, what are you going to do next?" There are many things that I want to do here. I give thanks to the many encounters that God has provided me.

<Introduction of 3a Activities>

- Vegetable Market: Order safe vegetables mainly from western Japan
- Radiology measurement room: carry out radiation measurements with a micro radiation measuring instrument and rent out equipment
- Expense subsidies for medical examination: Introduce people to medical institutions, and assists expenses for newborns
- Information station: Information on children's recuperation at Fukushima.

Pictures of the pamphlet and the Vegetables Market. →



From the Local Support Committee ~Currently continuing support activities~
Local support committee Kanamaru Makoto (Sendai Chomeigaoka Church)

The fiscal year for 2017 has begun. Six years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake, and we can see changes taking place in the support activities of each disaster area. Below, we will update you on the ongoing support activities.

Thank you for your prayer and support. For further details, please contact the church in charge.

- Support for Otsushi-cho (Ando/Kozuchi) in Iwate Prefecture: Overlooked by Morioka Church, Yamagata Church, and Koriyama Kosumosu Dori Christ Church.
- Oshika Peninsula (Miyagi Prefecture, Ishinomaki City) Support: Tea ceremonies, temporary music therapies, vegetable distribution (once a month) at temporary housing, etc. Overlooked by Sendai church (local relations), Nankodai church, Taitomi church, Sendai Chomeigaoka church.
- Miyagi Prefecture Watari town assistance: Work to visit people who left temporary housing or the elderly living elsewhere in reconstruction houses (once every two months). Overlooked by Sendai Chomeigaoka Church.
- Fukushima Prefecture Koriyama City Midorigaoka temporary housing Support: Tea ceremony at Midorioka Temporary Housing (Once every 2 months) etc. Overlooked by Koriyama Kosumosu Dori Christ Church.

2017 Earthquake Disaster Fundraising Report

Target: 6 Million Japanese Yen.

Accumulated total as of May: 426 thousand Japanese Yen. Thank you.

Akatsuka, Isahaya, Miehama, Minami Kyushu District Convention Kohitsuji Group, Chofu, Shonandai, Seinangakuin x2, Yuko Kubo, Kochi Isezaki, Seinan Gakuin "Donation not to forget the disaster", Tokyo North Women's Group, Chofu, Shoji Saisho, Koga, Omura Kogashima, Fukuma,