

We would like to thank the churches and ministries all over Japan for your daily support and encouragement. 6 and a half years have passed from the Tohoku Earthquake, and as recovery efforts have become more fruitful, more and more people have begun to adjust to their new lives. However, there are also many areas in which not much progress has been made in restoration, such as Minami-Sanriku-Cho in the Miyagi Prefecture, where it has been reported that the embankment being built stop future tsunamis is being constructed at a progress rate of 1.3 percent. Please continue to remember the Tohoku region in your prayers. This month, we would like to share the work of volunteers from Seinan University.

A Trip To Understand The Disaster-Areas and A Trip of Encounters: the Morioka Team

This summer, amidst the flooding that occurred all over Japan, we invited several volunteers from Seinan University and visited the coast of Iwate Prefecture with them. Among the participating students and staff were three people who were particularly set on visiting Iwate. The words of one participant that “the Tohoku region of today is what Kyushu will be in a few year” were especially memorable. A few of the students who come to help out every year looked upon



Otsuchi-cho Today

Otsuchi-cho from a tall hill and were surprised to see that the restoration of the town had progressed quite a bit since last year. However, there were also volunteers who expressed their dismay and sorrow about the current situation of the town despite 6 years having already passed since the Earthquake. “You can’t understand unless you see it with your own eyes,” one of the participants said.

On the second day, we visited Taro-cho, a town which is said to have collapsed in 4 minutes during the tsunami to listen to stories about the Tohoku Earthquake. Everyone was at a loss for words when they heard graphic accounts of the tsunami and saw actual footage. “Tsunamis are terrifying. Those who were properly afraid of them were the ones who managed to escape unscathed,” were the words of one person there. The many stories that were told that day left an impact on everyone that cannot be expressed with words. We also visited the Ando Community Center, the 4th and 7th Kozuchi Temporary Assembly Halls to have tea breaks, massages, and a fan-creating workshop. The mother received us warmly, saying “The people in green have come again,” and “The people from the Baptist Church are here!”, but also showed concern about the floods in Kyushu asking us how things were faring there. They told us how



Making fans

the situation in Kyushu reminded them of the tsunami and there was encouragement between the two areas of Tohoku and Kyushu. To the people of Otsuchi-cho, where the restoration process has not been the most successful and volunteers slowly began to stop going,

it seemed to mean a great deal for others to simply remember them. The energy of the young volunteers especially brought smiles to their faces. There were also a few people who came all the way from their temporary homes on a bus that comes 3 times a day to the Assembly Halls just to see us. We found out how far away they lived when a church member, Mr. Sato, sent them home by car and told us, “I thought they lived close by, but it took me a while to reach their homes.” The youth of Seinan bring joy to the people in this town and we appreciated their youthful energy.

(Morioka Church, Ayako Ogawa)



Sending people home after the tea breaks

A Trip To Understand The Disaster-Areas and A Trip of Encounters: the Miyagi Team

This year, 14 volunteers from Seinan University arrived in Sendai on the 31st of August to aid in the restoration process of the areas affected by the Tohoku Earthquake. On the first day, we visited the towns of Yuriage and Arahama to observe the remaining aftermath of the earthquake and listened to the stories of the survivors. On the second day, we visited Ookawa Elementary school in the morning. At Hiyoriyama, located in Ishinomaki city which we stopped by at, we listened to the explanations of local volunteers while gazing upon the remnants of the city’s center. In the afternoon, we helped out at the oyster-breeding farm in Maginohama. That night we stayed at the Maginohama Assembly Hall. We had a great time of fellowship with the people there and feasted on local cuisine made for us by the head of the Toyoshima Ward. On the third day, we were separated into three groups and worked in Maginohama, Oginohama, and Ayukawa respectively. At Maginohama, the volunteers met and interacted with the local people through hosting the “Summer evening festival”, a tea ceremony, and helping out at cafes and game booths. At Oginohama, because the assembly hall was to be closed in September, the volunteers held their last tea gathering. The volunteers in Ayukawa visited the few remaining households there. On our way back, we stopped by Tsukinoura, in Oginohama, where we were able to hear the stories of Mr. Esashi, the Oginohama Ward Head, and Mr. Aizawa, the Tsukinoura Ward Head. On the fourth day, we separated into 3 groups to go visit Sendai, Nankodai, and Taitomi Church in the morning, and in the evening listened to Ms. Kasamatsu from Nankodai church talk of the radiation problem and to Mr. Yamaguchi from the Seinan volunteer group talk about the Kumamoto/Ooita Earthquakes and the activities of the rescue groups up in Northern Fukuoka for the heavy rains.



Helping out at the oyster-breeding farm (top) and listening to Mr. Esashi’s speech (bottom)

A few of the students who had experienced the earthquake in Fukushima told us, “Although not directly, we were able to feel the existence of a certain level of discrimination in various places. With these team members, however, we were able to open up our hearts freely

because we felt that they wanted to hear about what really happened during the accident.” There were many volunteers who were able to realize just how great the scale of the destruction was in the Tohoku areas and to understand the importance of disaster prevention. . A student who mentioned this trip was his third time around told us that they were attracted to the beauty of the land and the people. Yet another student who had been in the 6th grade when the earthquake occurred said that even though she had been meaning to visit the Tohoku area for a while, it wasn’t until she was this age that she was able to truly grasp the grand scale of what had occurred. (Sendai Church, Chieko Ichinose)

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