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**Fukushima Now ~ Report (6) from a 30Km radius of the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant~ “The Ever Changing Disaster Areas”
Minako Sasako Mejirogaoka Church**

7 Years from the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant accident, any of the disaster areas have changed, but many have stayed the same, their clocks frozen in time.

In Hirono-machi, situated between Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and Iwaki City, there are many advertisements for worker placements. While there are many people who have yet to return to the disaster areas, people are being sent out to work for the country-led reconstruction efforts. It is said that there is a shortage in workers. At the new shopping mall that opened near the city office housing complex, I saw a group of Vietnamese shoppers. They moved into Hirono-machi and are now working there.

J-village in Naraha-machi, was made into a car park for the working centre of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, but now it is being re-built back into a soccer field. Yoru No Mori Park in Tomioka-machi, which used to be famous for its cherry blossoms, used to be barricaded off and heavily guarded by the police, but now the fence lies half open, and there are no signs of guards. Just across the road from the “difficult-to-return-zone”, there are new apartments being built, and decontamination workers are living there. JR Tomioka- Station, that had been destroyed by the waves used to be covered with weeds, but now it has been nicely restored, and trains run on its tracks.

In Okuma-machi, near the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, the level of radiation was over 2 Micro Sievert in one hour. In Tokyo the level of radiation never rises above 0.1 Micro Sievert. Namie-machi, that had high radiation levels due to wind direction, has a clock that stopped at the time of the Tsunami. The clock can be found in a primary school playground. Meanwhile in area only a few kilometres away, there is a new secondary school that has been built with brand new facilities. The fishing port has been rebuilt, and embankments higher than 7m have been built. Seeing the new school building with no sight of children, I could not help but see how the government is building only the outside, and enforcing development, as if to say “nothing happened here.” I feel that there is a silent pressure that enforces guilt on those who do not return, and praises those who do. Approx 34,100 people who were affected by the accident now live outside of Fukushima Prefecture. Returning to Fukushima seven years after the disaster, my honest thought is that these numbers are understandable.

The reconstruction efforts and the words of the politicians do not show their stance of walking beside the people who were victims of the disaster, but at the same time I cannot find the right answer on how to walk beside the victims either. The victims’ daily conditions are ever changing, and it is difficult to understand what they are hurting from, and what they are in need of. But I will swear that I will not forget about what happened or make it as if it never happened.



Left: Half-opened gates of Yoru No Mori Park
Right: Ukedp Elementary School where the clock has not moved since the tsunami



The above column was written by Ms. Minako Sasako (Mejirogaoka Church). We have had a series of 6 columns since Issue #43. Though this column is the last one, please do not forget the suffering that was caused by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident, and remember the people who are still under this suffering. If you would like to read more about this issue, we would like to introduce Ms. Minako Sasako’s book “Ringo ga Kusarumade Genpatsu 30Km-ken Kara no Houkoku,” “Until the Apple Rots - Reports from a 30Km Radius of the Power Plant.” (Office)

**Looking back on the past 7 Years
Fukushima Ayumi no Ie Church Pastor Seiyu Watanabe**

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, I think that people living in areas other than Tohoku were watching the news of the earthquake disaster on TV. However, the vast majority of the people in the Tohoku areas could not watch TV because of the power outages. In my case, I was able to learn about the tsunami damages and news of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown by listening to a battery run radio and reading the newspaper. By the time electricity was available, news about the tsunami had ended, and every day was news of the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The government did not completely hide information about what was happening. Chief Cabinet Secretariat Edano announced the release of radioactive substances into the atmosphere, but I remember the phrase "There is no immediate threat to health" being repeated again and again. The radiation level in Fukushima prefecture was announced on TV. I heard the word micro-sievert many times. However, I could not understand the meaning of the numbers at that time. I received a call from a church member in Yamagata Church. This is when I heard that many people were evacuating from Fukushima to Yamagata. Those who evacuated to Yamagata were self-evacuees. I was surprised that orders to evacuate outside of Fukushima Prefecture had not been made by the administration yet.

The reason the voluntarily evacuees were able to have a sense of crisis was probably because they knew the abnormal amounts of radiation that had been reported. In order to understand the abnormality of the situation at the time, people had to have knowledge of the usual radiation levels. Without this knowledge, it would be impossible to see the abnormality. This is how I was seven years ago after the nuclear power plant accident. Radiation levels increase and decrease daily, so there is no need to worry too much if it is a minor change. However, if it is extremely increased compared to the normal radiation level, it means that there has been an abnormal event.



Disaster Relief Donation Goal for 2017 Donations: 6,000,000Yen

7,480,000Yen Collected Donations made between Dec 2017 ~ March 2018: 149 donations in order of donation

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