

Dear Praying Friends,

April 1, 2011

I am back from Fukushima. The responsibility of our team was to assess the situation in central and western Fukushima and to determine if we should make a base in Nasu, Tochigi, just south of Fukushima. Much of the damage that we saw was due to the earthquake. We saw many damaged roofs, cracks on walls and road damage. Since there is a mountain range between this area and the coast, there was no tsunami damage. Because of the mountains, there wasn't a problem with radiation either.

We were able to enter many of the evacuation shelters. These shelters were well stocked with food, water, blankets, and heat. They were well staffed and some provided minor medical care. There were many volunteers (high school, college students). The shelters were clean, warm and orderly. We were quite impressed. Once the Tohoku Expressway opened up, all the needed supplies came in, although there continues to be a gas shortage.

But what we also saw were people in shock and in need of emotional care and counseling. Most of the centers were strangely quiet as many were lying down or seated near portable heaters. We were able to talk with many of them. We mainly listened as they poured out their experiences. They evacuated because of the tsunami warning, thinking they'd be back the next day. Then the crisis at the nuclear plant came. Many lived within 20 kilometers from the nuclear plants, so they will not be able to return. One cried as she thought about her dairy cows and pets that she left behind. With their homes and livelihood totally destroyed, many worried about the future. When I asked if I could pray with them, they all said "yes", but I sensed their shock when I actually did. I began to realize that for most Japanese, prayer is done at a shrine, temple or family altar. The fact that I could pray right then and there was totally foreign to them. It reminded me of the great privilege that we have as Christians in being able to talk to the God of the Universe anytime, anyplace, and in any situation. He loves us and he hears our prayers.

There was one place that was different. Most of the members were from the Fukushima First Baptist Bible Church near the nuclear power plants. They evacuated to the other side of the mountains. Although these people experienced the same tragedies, there was a sense of joy, peace, and hope that wasn't there in the other evacuation centers. There was a family like atmosphere with members touching, crying, praying and loving each other. They told us that 4 families received Christ. One family was Mr. and Mrs. C. They joined the Christian group because of the relationships that they had with church members. The husband, who works at the nuclear plant, fled in fear with his family. While with the believers, they experienced the love of God and both husband and wife received Christ. During the next several days, the Lord began to change Mr. C's heart. Fear turned to courage which turned into conviction. "I need to go back to the plant to share this good news to my co-workers." Four days after receiving Christ, he left to go back to the plant with a smile on his face and a Bible in his hand. The church sent him out with tears. There are now seven members of that church currently working in the nuclear plant in the most dangerous of situations. We cried with the members and prayed over Mrs. C and the other wives, many of whom had small children (pictured is Mrs. C and 6 year old daughter).



Please continue to pray that the Light of Jesus would shine in the hearts of the Japanese. Love, Richard