

Japan Earthquake news from the McGintys

Letter #2 (from Mike)

Dear Friends and Family members,

We want to thank everyone for their concern for our safety expressed through the many e-mails and Facebook messages that have been sent. Although Hokkaido experienced a number of strong quakes and some tsunamis, it was nothing on the scale that occurred on the main island of Honshu. The images you are seeing on the news are largely from that area. In that sense, we almost feel as distant from these terrible events as you do on the other side of the ocean. However, everyone here is affected by it in one way or another but it will be quite some time until we are able to gauge the spiritual impact it has on the country that has been our home for 27 years.

I'm glad I changed my sermon for this morning at the last minute and preached from Psalm 121. When we look up to the surrounding mountains or the raging sea that brought so much destruction, it is good to recall that "*my help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.*" (vv.1-2) While we want to do whatever we can to rescue and assist those whose lives are presently in shambles, the true crisis of Japan is of a spiritual disaster and it has spanned many generations. It is our prayer at this time that we as the people of God may know how to respond, not just to the immediate situation, but to the needs of a nation that does not know the living God.

Many of you have asked what you can do to assist in these circumstances. We have now set up an OMF Japan project to funnel gifts towards this critical need. A number of us are already making tentative plans to go the stricken area to help so donations to cover this would be welcome. OMF is also prepared to direct such gifts to needy people while working in partnership with other like-minded Christian agencies in Japan. The **Sendai Earthquake Relief Fund** has therefore been created by OMF International to channel funds to this effort. If you wish to contribute to this, please contact the OMF office in your country (<http://www.omf.org>) and give the project number L60500. This will be the most efficient way for OMF to receive such gifts.

We are still trying to determine what we can do and when we can do it. Some years ago a missionary set up an organization called CRASH (Christian Relief, Assistance, Support and Hope), which is a network designed to facilitate Christian relief work in Japan and around the world. CRASH is endorsed by the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association (JEMA) and works in cooperation with the Disaster Relief Commission of the Japan Evangelical Association (JEA). You may want to visit their website at <http://crashjapan.com>. We joined this network a few years ago and since then we have been developing a crisis response plan with their helpful advice.

A command center has now been set up and representatives from several organizations and churches are meeting now to determine a plan of action. Access to the most affected areas is very restricted right now due to the heavily damaged transportation system and concerns regarding the damaged nuclear reactors have forced evacuation of large segments of the population creating further chaos.

OMF has two churches and three missionary families in the vicinity of the area that was most impacted and we have received reports that they are all safe. It seems that only experts are being allowed into the hard hit areas so in the meantime we will marshal our resources and try to respond in a timely and helpful manner when we are permitted to do so. There is a website that has helpful suggestions on how to pray when disaster strikes <http://opsafeintl.com/2011/01/how-to-pray-when-disaster-strikes/> so you may want to check it out.

According to latest reports, the transportation system in Tokyo seems to be fairly back to normal and the officials are now allowing flights out of Sapporo to Tokyo. Since there is nothing we can do immediately in the matter of relief efforts, I will probably fly down to Tokyo tomorrow for my scheduled meetings. That will also give me a chance to meet with others to further discuss our response once restrictions are lifted. I apologize that this e-mail will have to substitute as a reply for the many personal messages we have received but we sincerely thank each of you for your ongoing prayers and desire to help.

May the Lord guide us all in these important matters and use this tragedy for His eternal purposes.

Standing firm in Him,

Mike & Rowena