

McGinty News Flash April 27, 2011; Letter 7 from Mike and Rowena

Dear Family and Friends,

Ever since the earth shook so dramatically on March 11, we as a mission and as individuals have been shaken as to how we should respond to this huge crisis that has hit Japan. You have seen the pictures in the news of the devastation and read our updates, including the report from our own trip to the stricken area. Now our personal journey is about to take a new direction, radically different from anything we have experienced in the past. **We have been asked by our mission leadership to relocate to the stricken area within the prefecture called "Iwate"** (ee-wa-tay) in order to lead relief and recovery efforts as part of a 2 year project. This means leaving behind our beloved island of Hokkaido which has been our home for 27 years of ministry on very short notice and disengaging from our leadership role here. In many ways, this has been a harder decision than our original call to come to Japan when we counted the cost but were rather naïve about what was involved. There are no such illusions this time around as we anticipate new challenges in leading a team in a very remote area doing things we have not attempted before.

We can barely get our hearts and minds around this decision but God has been speaking quite clearly to us so we are ready to embrace this as something from His loving hand as another step in our ongoing journey of faith. As you have been on this journey with us for the past 27 years, we have asked you to pray for Hokkaido and trust you will continue to uphold the work and people we leave behind. Now we ask you to add "Iwate" to your prayer vocabulary and the new ministry we have been asked to oversee. The amount of prayer and attention that has been focused on Japan in the recent weeks has been overwhelming and it has been matched by many generous gifts towards relief efforts. As part of OMF Japan's leadership team, we felt it was crucial that we respond quickly as the largest Protestant mission in Japan so we have been asked to spearhead this in light of our ministry experience and leadership skills. We take on this new responsibility with fear and trembling at the prospect of what lies before us and with an extreme sense of loss for what we leave behind. More than ever we will be dependent on your prayers for this new endeavor.

Although there is much we do not know at this point, we will try to locate a base of operations within the stricken areas of Iwate Prefecture. We have narrowed it down to Iwate although two other prefectures have been equally hard hit (Miyagi & Fukushima) for a couple of reasons: 1) It is the furthest away from Tokyo and more readily available help and 2) it is closer to Hokkaido and Aomori where we have more accessible OMF resources and partnerships. Iwate Prefecture is one of the least church areas in all of Japan so it seems that God is calling us once again as a mission to the 'inland' parts of this spiritually impoverished country as He did our spiritual forbearers in China as part of the China Inland Mission (the former name of OMF led by Hudson Taylor). While we do not equate ourselves with such spiritual giants of old, we do perceive that some things don't change and we must be ready to serve wherever our Master commands.

We will go on a survey trip in two weeks to try to determine where this base should be established and who we should partner with. We are currently tracking towards a town on the coast called "Miyako" that was hard hit by the tsunami but we need to confirm that this is the best place to locate our relief efforts. Finding suitable housing for ourselves and for teams coming to help will be quite a challenge given the extent of the damage. We will probably be making several trips to the area during the summer as we assemble the pieces of this new ministry, get a team in place and withdraw from our current ministry obligations. We are also looking forward to the birth of our first grandchild in August (which calls for a grandmother's assistance ☺) so our transition will likely not be completed until the beginning of September.

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With all of this going on we would deeply appreciate your prayers for the following items:

- ✓ **Preparations of our hearts for this new challenge**
- ✓ **Suitable coworkers, particularly a Japanese couple to assist us**
- ✓ **Replacements for our current ministry and leadership commitments**
- ✓ **Open doors for ministry in Iwate and kingdom partnerships to facilitate it**
- ✓ **A vision that matches the needs and our available resources**
- ✓ **A place to live and a base for relief teams**
- ✓ **Ability to face yet another move under very stressful circumstances**
- ✓ **A strong network of supporting churches in Hokkaido to stand behind us in this venture**

This quite a bit to absorb in one e-mail so we should probably stop here. Undoubtedly, we will be coming back to you frequently in the days ahead with more details and prayer requests as our plans unfold. I have also been working on a journal of our recent journey and will probably release that in the near future in the form of a blog for those who want more information regarding this sudden shift in our ministry direction. May the Lord continue to show us the way forward as we cling to Him.

Your partners in the Gospel,

Mike & Rowena