



Christian Reformed World Missions

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Dear friends, family and supporters,

As you know, Ruth and I arrived back in Japan on the 8th. At around 2:46 PM, while we were both at home, Northeast Japan was struck by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, the strongest in its history, that was felt throughout the entire country. Though we were about 200 miles from the epicenter, it was by far the strongest earthquake we have ever experienced in our 30 years here. The quake was followed by enormous tsunami waves, some reportedly as high at 10 meters, that destroyed many coastal areas and severely compromised a nuclear power generating plant. Before and after pictures are now being posted on the Internet, and the extent of the damage takes your breath away. Estimates of lives lost are approaching 20,000 now, and will probably exceed that in the end. Hundreds of thousands are staying in refugee centers, having lost everything, including many family members. Churches within our immediate circle of fellowship were damaged, and at least one church building was destroyed by a tsunami, the elderly pastor and his wife managing to escape only with their lives. Some of our friends and colleagues have no water, sewage or gas, things we tend to take for granted, right? And the post-traumatic stress of it all still is to come.

Even in Tokyo, which other than getting a good shake (and many subsequent ones from hundreds of aftershocks), didn't have the kind of damage you are seeing on your TV news, people have gone into a heightened state of preparedness and alarm, which translates into hoarding of foods, fuel and many other daily necessities. This has made life a little difficult. While it is little more than an inconvenience for us, in the northern areas, these shortages are life threatening. The government, military (US as well as Japanese), many NGOs, and many free-lance volunteers are mounting a tremendous relief effort, but at this point, it is not enough. It's flu season in the refugee centers, and cholera is not far behind. Hospitals in the area are running out of even basic supplies.



I have been given a role similar to the one I played for the Reformed Church after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995. I am serving with Emergency Response Headquarters to translate from Japanese into English the reports of damage, appeals for support, and summaries of relief and rebuilding activities, so that churches around the world will have this information.

How things will go over the next few days at the nuclear plants is perhaps the biggest issue for us personally. Christian Reformed World Missions has a Crisis Management Team that has been monitoring numerous reports. --Excuse me. It's 6:57 PM, and we just had a fairly strong aftershock, the first one I felt today. The ground is still swaying as I sit here. Makes you feel a little dizzy.-- Naturally, we have been monitoring these reports too, to try to determine the best course of action to ensure our personal safety, especially from the threat of radiation. --The emergency news announced that the aftershock's magnitude was 6.1, a fairly strong quake that certainly gave our church in Hitachinaka a good rattling, as the epicenter was right nearby. That's the strongest aftershock in two days, I believe.-- Unlike the nuclear expert who is preaching doom in the USA, I am pretty optimistic that they are getting on top of things. But with the variety of opinions and many rumors, it's hard to know whom to believe. Considering all this, World Missions has strongly urged us to evacuate to another area of Japan where there is little or no risk of exposure to significant doses of radiation, should the worst case scenario occur. *I want everyone to know, that we are not experiencing any kind of significant radiation exposure here in Tokyo.* I have dutifully urged my colleagues to leave, and as of Monday afternoon, I will be here alone with two other partner missionaries. Ruth left for Thailand today on a previously planned trip with the senior class of Christian Academy in Japan. She's supposed to come back to Japan on 3/27. I hope we have our reunion here

then, but who knows? I am making a contingency plan for myself to evacuate, but at this time, I don't feel a sense of urgency to leave my home, and I have plenty to do keeping up with the role I've been given.

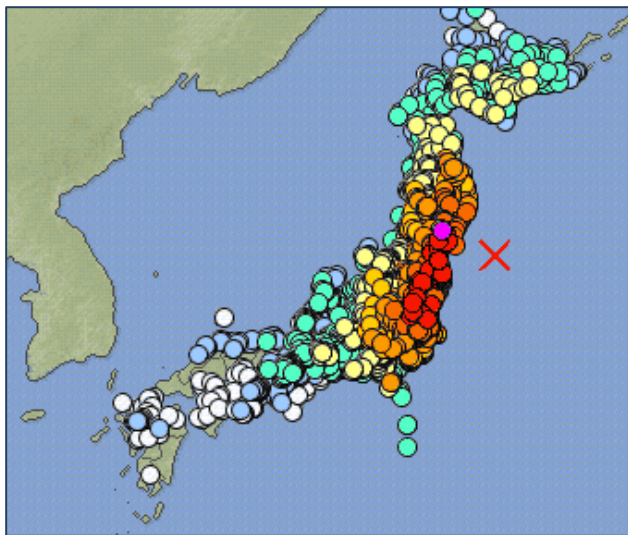
I can't even count the number of emails, thankfully short ones, from so many of you, telling us of your love and concern and prayers. Thank you so much! And many are asking what they can do to help. I have been working closely with the disaster response coordinator of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Wayne de Jong, and I am pleased to refer you to them. World Missions is naturally incurring extra expenses (I've given out about \$5,500 in the last two days to help with evacuation expenses, and that number will climb.), so your gifts to our general fund would be helpful, but *anything you designate for earthquake relief should go to CRWRC*. Please look up the special website that has been created to give you updates and giving information at <<http://www.crcna.org/japan>>. Also I asked the web people to put up a link a colleague from South Africa sent me, but I also give it to you here: <<http://www.ngkok.co.za/missiejapan>>. It allows you to download (in English or Afrikaans) a Power Point program you will find interesting.

Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. Thank you to those who have already given, to those who will give, and to those who will give again and again for the sake of our mission work and now for the sake of extending the love of Jesus Christ in a very concrete way as we reach out to our Japanese neighbors in his name.

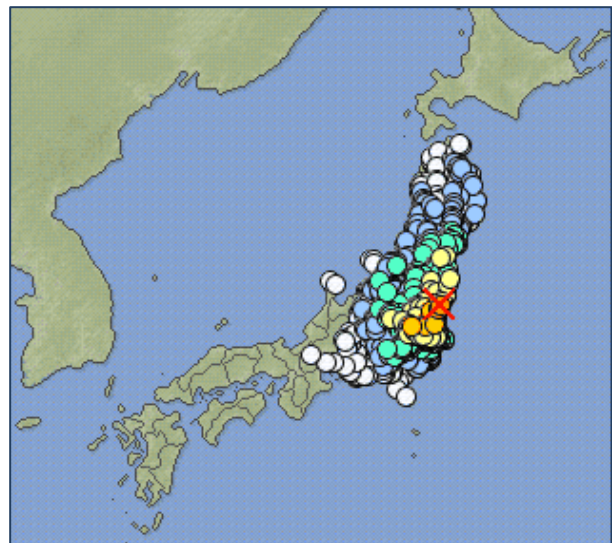
I know this update is already long, but bear with me just a little more. Some have suggested that these natural disasters are the judgment of God on a people that have merited it. I refer you to Jesus words found in Luke 13:1-5. I know it's a tease, but you're going to have to look it up! Others have suggested that perhaps many hearts will be shaken open by these things to be more prepared to receive the Gospel. No one will deny that God is sovereign in all things, and we pray that this will indeed be an outcome of these terrible tragedies unfolding around us. Meanwhile, we will do our part to give as much relief as can be given, and trust that our Lord will bless it. We pray for his mercy and grace.

Thanks for standing with us. Please keep watch and pray for God's protection for all of us still here.

Larry



Original quake, 2/11/2011



Aftershock, 2/19/2011

The colors indicate intensity of the surface shaking, the purple being a “7” on the Japanese scale, with 7 being the highest possible value and virtually unheard of. At our home it was a 4+. The X marks the epicenter.

Pictured above on page one is what my office looked like after “the big one” hit us. I'm so glad my administrative assistant wasn't in that day! She would've gotten seriously hurt!