

Monday, March 14, 2011, 4:40 PM

**Report #2 of Damage Suffered in the
Northeast Japan Pacific Coast Earthquake****

[Translated by Larry Spalink (CRCNA missionary) and Stephen Lauer (son of OPC missionary Woody Lauer)]

To all the Reformed Church in Japan presbytery stated clerks:

We give reverence to the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord of comfort and hope.

This is a revision of the damages report previously released with updated and corrected information about damages experienced by the RCJ churches as of 4:40 PM, March 14.

We copy here a portion of the message sent by Sapporo Church pastor Rev. Kenji Kando to the Northeast Presbytery churches:

I give thanks that I have been able to confirm the safety of all the pastors. The Reformed churches are praying for you all, keeping in mind the damages suffered in the area. I am relieved and encouraged to hear the reports of how you are making efforts to support one another in this situation. I am sure your hearts ache as you endeavor to determine the safety of the elders and church members. At Sapporo Church, we are working to assemble a master list of all church members that will make it possible to report as a single database the safety and circumstance of everyone...I pray that the Lord will strengthen and uphold all the pastors and elders. May he [bless] us even in these things for his glory.

This report of damages is being sent by the RCJ's DAC [for distribution] to the RCJ General Assembly Stated Clerk, Rev. Yoshinobu Kazama. We covet your prayers as we continue to engage with this matter on behalf of the General Assembly. ...

In the Lord,

Reformed Church in Japan
Diaconal Action Committee
Chairman, Nobukazu Toyama
Secretary: Makio Nishi

** [translator's note: The name of this horrendous natural disaster has not yet been firmly established, so although it is referred to here as the Northeast Japan Pacific Coast Earthquake, it will be referred to subsequently as the Great East Japan Earthquake, and may still change again. It refers of course to the gigantic quake that struck at 2:46 PM local Japan time on March 11, 2011, and also includes damage from the subsequent tsunamis and nuclear events. This report #2 i[s] built on the information in report #1 and simply adds more detail to that.]

Northeastern [Tohoku] Presbytery

1. Sapporo Church (Rev. Kenji Kando)

No damages reported.

2. Aomori Church

The church members are all safe.

3. Hachinohe Church (Rev. Fujimoto reporting)

3/11 – “We are in the midst of a power outage, and only the water is running, so we are making do with candle light. The aftershocks are quite bad, and there are more tsunamis, however our area is of high enough elevation that we are safe. Because phone calls and emails will not yet go through, we do not have information regarding damage sustained.”

(received by phone)

3/13 – “This morning the power was turned back on. We were finally able to receive news on the television. The phone lines are working again. By God’s grace we were able to hold the worship service. This morning I was able to visit our seekers and church members, and they were all safe. Due to the tsunami, mud was piled up around the city, and cars had been swept about and gathered here and there. The road along the ocean was in terrible shape.” (received by email)

4. Rokunohe Church

3/12 – “We are in the midst of a power outage. There is no damage to speak of. All church members are safe.” (In phone conversation with Mr. Matsuda)

5. Morioka Church (Rev. Kubota)

3/12 – The Kubota family are safe. The church building is safe, and we are at home on standby. The power is out. The roads are jammed with traffic. The stores are all closed.

6. Ishinomaki Church (Rev. Shiratsu)

3/13 – Rev. Tateishi (pastor of East Sendai Church) visited the city of Ishinomaki by car. Rev. Shiratsu and his family are safe, they have taken shelter in the Hebita Elementary School [serving as a refugee shelter]. Portions of the church building are awash [with water from the tsunami]. The building is greatly damaged. (reported by phone call from Rev. T.)

7. Sendai Church (Rev. Yoshida)

Pastor Yoshida and his family are safe. The waters of the tsunami came to the mid point between the Sendai Church building and the Kasumigame Self-defense Force Fort, but they did not come to the area around the church building. (reported by Rev. Yoshioka) Rev. and Mrs. Sudo are okay. About 30 people came to church for a prayer service on Sunday. At this time, it’s been ascertained that about 80% of the members are okay, but some have relatives and acquaintances who live in the area of Wakabayashi-ku next to the ocean, and are anxious since we can’t get near that area. The church building has some damage and there are cracks in the walls. We are keeping guard in light of ongoing aftershocks.

8. Sendai Canaan Church (by phone from Rev. Yoshioka)

The Rev. Keisuke Yoshioka family is okay. There doesn’t seem to be any great damage to the building and the members are okay. We will have church on 3/13. Six neighborhood families are taking refuge in the church. All utilities are back on except gas.

9. Higashi [East] Sendai Church (by cell phone from Rev. Akira Tateishi)

Rev. Tateishi is okay. In the church building, the organ fell over and things are strewn around. It's hard even to get into the study upstairs. Since power is off, he's trying to get information from a portable radio. "Utilities are all down, and I'm waiting in line to get some box lunches. I'm not in a refugee center, but at the church. Because of the power failure, I can't watch the TV news and have to rely on the radio to access the little information that's available. It appears that there is more information about damages in other locales. I'm worried that I can't get through to a church member who lives near Matsushima [an area hit by a tsunami—since then Pastor T has been able to contact Mrs. N, who was unharmed, although her house was destroyed]." Added on the 13th: "9 church members have taken refuge here at the church and we are facing this difficulty together. Power continues to be off." [Subsequent communication indicated that they are quickly running out of supplies and need to receive basic necessities.]

10. Sendai Eiko Church

The Rev. Lee family is okay.

11. Kita Nakayama Church

Rev. and Mrs. Sakamoto are okay. The church building is all right.

12. Sendai Megumi Church

Rev. and Mrs. Ogata, Rev. and Mrs. Uomoto, and Rev. & Mrs. Cummings are okay. Electricity is off.

13. Watari Church

Rev. and Mrs. Hayashi are okay after the earthquake. (The Yokotas from Shiga Prefecture were visiting when it struck.) The church and kindergarten building are okay. The roof of the Hayashis' home was damaged.

14. Shiroishi Keiyaku Church

Rev. and Mrs. Shojiro Ishii are okay. Their home has no utilities working; walls around the property collapsed, but there is no damage to the house. Eight people gathered for worship on 3/13 (including the Yokotas).

15. Fukushima Church (Candidate Kenji Kurihara)

Mr. Kurihara is okay. His wife and children are presently visiting her parents in Shizuoka Prefecture. The church members are okay. No utilities are working, but the church building is all right. Because of the nuclear plant accident, church members worshipped privately at their homes. Mr. Kurihara made his way to Yonezawa, further away from the radiation zone.

16. Yamagata Church (Rev. Kazuhiko Yaegashi)

As of the morning of 3/12, Rev. and Mrs. Yaegashi and their son Morris (who is in Sendai) are okay. There is no electricity. Unable to contact church members yet as of this AM.

East Kanto Presbytery

1. Hitachinaka Church (reported by Rev. Kan Hon Lee to Larry Spalink)

One church family went to a refugee center. Rev. and Mrs. Lee are fine. It is difficult to make contact with other church members. [Subsequently, I had direct contact with Rev. Lee, and he said that everyone from the church is fine, though they do not have water at the church and they have continued to have many strong aftershocks. More people than normal attended worship on Sunday morning.]

2. Choshi Eiko Church (reported by Rev. Yoshinobu Kobayashi)

Larry Spalink was able to speak with Rev. Kobayashi soon after the quake struck. There are church members (and missionary Rev. Young) living in Choshi, Hasaki, Kamisu and Kajima. Rev. Young's area received the alarm of imminent tsunami approaching and made his way to high ground, later going to the Suigo Bible Camp in Itako City. [Rev. Young is presently staying in the CRJM Guest House and is safe.]

3. Inage Kaigan Church (reported by Rev. Eiji Mikawa)

On 3/12, reports came in of much damage in the vicinity due to liquefaction of the ground, and many places had water damage. But the church building has not been affected. Many dishes scattered and shattered on the 2nd floor parsonage, and the study is a mess with books strewn about. These can be cleaned up easily enough, and we give thanks that we experienced no injury to our persons. At this time, I have made contact with about half the church members.

On Monday, 3/14, I can report that all church members are all right. Because of severe damage to roads and disruptions to commuter train service, worship attendance on 3/13 was only about half the normal crowd. We rejoice as we saw each other's faces and thanked God for his protection.

Some places still have no water, and from today, planned blackouts for three hours each, twice a day are supposed to be implemented. There is limited sales of gasoline and heating oil, and shortages of instant foods, bread, toilet paper, and other daily necessities. I've been able to clean up the broken dishes and pick up the scattered books.

I give thanks that the church members and building were spared and that we were able to worship together. We prayed together at our morning and afternoon services especially for the churches of the Northeast Presbytery. We experienced only minor damage, but we will continue to pray for God's protection for the Shin Urayasu Church in the difficulties they face and especially the churches, pastors and members of the Northeast Presbytery who have been placed in extremely trying circumstances and experienced great losses. We in the East Kanto Presbytery want to consider what we can do. [Rev. Mikawa is moderator of the East Kanto Presbytery.]

4. Shin Urayasu Church (Rev. Takayuki Ashida)

The neighborhood around the church has been severely affected by the liquefaction of the ground. But the church is all right. (Inage Kaigan and Shin Urayasu buildings are on land reclaimed from Tokyo Bay. The roads have been severely damaged by liquefaction, and it will be difficult for some of the members to attend the worship service tomorrow.)

5. Misato Church (Rev. Hirotsugu Mochida)

In the second-floor parsonage, dishes from the cupboard and books on the shelves in the study were strewn about. I have been able to ascertain the safety of almost all the church members.

6. Tsukuba Mikotoba Church (Rev. Masuo Miyazaki)

There was no injury or damage to the church building. Water is not working, and we are receiving it from the house next door.

[No reports here at this point from Kohokudai Church, Funabashi Takane Church, Hanamigawa Church, Chishirodai Church, Katsutadai Church or Matsudo Koganehara Church.]

Eastern Presbytery

1. Toyo Senkyo Church (reported by Rev. Jeong Soek Gho)

There are cracks in the outer wall of the church building.

2. Nagano Church

There was an earthquake measuring a strong 6 on the Japanese intensity scale at around 4:00 AM on Saturday, March 12, but there is no damage to people or property there.

[No reports here as yet from the numerous remaining churches of the Eastern Presbytery.]

Shikoku Presbytery

There were reports of the tsunami warning issued for Kochi Prefecture, but there has been no damage sustained by the churches there.