

The Bencke Family in Japan

Volume 29, March 13th, 2011



In the wake of tragedy

You've seen the images of Sendai, Iwate, Fukushima, and other areas devastated by the recent natural catastrophe. You've watched the videos. Heard the newscasts. Maybe you have friends or family in Japan and have talked about it with them. The devastation caused by the record-breaking earthquake is unbelievable. Lives were ruined, lost, or altered forever in just a matter of moments.

Only a week and a half ago, our neighborhood was faced with a tragedy of a different kind. A little girl named Kokoro, 3 years old, was abducted and murdered in a supermarket about 1 km from our home. Her body was put in a backpack and disposed of in a concrete water sewage enclave about a 10 minute walk from our house. Equally disturbing was that the man who committed this horrible crime lived in our neighborhood.

As I watch and listen to the stories coming out of northern Japan and those of our neighborhood, I am faced with the same question, "Why? Why *there*? Why *them*? Why *her*?" It doesn't make sense. What good can possibly come from all of this? None of the events directly impacted us in a tragic way, and yet my heart feels so heavy with the sorrow I see around me. I wonder what I can do. I am so close to all this, but still wonder how I can be a light for anyone in these difficult times.

Prayer is my answer, quietly beseeching God for comfort, for mercy, for wisdom, for an opening that I might see a way to praise Him through all this. And so I lift it all up to Him. Additionally, to help cope, I have had over 100 emails in the past two days, from friends, family, supporting congregation leaders, as well as messages from supporting congregation members for whom this disaster lays heavily on their hearts. I write to say thank you for your messages. Please continue to pray for us, but more so for all those who are suffering in such deep physical and emotional ways right now. Pray that they may find an olive branch amidst the rubble they once called their homes.

If you are wondering how you can help, first and foremost, I would say pray. Pray aloud or silently. Pray while you are exercising or while you are making dinner. Pray as you look out to the west as the sun sets, knowing that the same sun is rising in a country whose people may not believe that a new day will necessarily bring new hope. Pray that God reveals Himself in his grace and splendor to the many who have been affected. May He even deliver a few miracles over the next few days.

For those of you wishing to make a financial contribution toward relief efforts, the ELCA has already set up a way to make that happen. Checks can be sent directly to the following address, or follow the link to a webpage that will point you in the right direction. Peace be with all of you.

*ELCA Disaster Response
39330 Treasury Center
Chicago, IL 60694
Memo: Pacific Earthquake and Tsunami*

<http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Responding-to-the-World/Disaster-Response/Ongoing-Responses/Japan-Earthquake-and-Pacific-Tsunami.aspx>

Prayer Corner

We give thanks to God for law enforcement agents, who quickly identified the murderer of Kokoro and apprehended him so he is no longer a threat to the children of our neighborhood.

Prayers are requested for our brothers and sisters in northern Japan, many of whom await news of the whereabouts of loved ones. May God grant them an abundance of peace and protection as they proceed through these days of waiting.

Prayers are requested for the rescue teams who have been dispatched to come to the aid of Japan. May they be successful in their mission in finding survivors, and may they find the strength and courage to face the difficult tasks ahead of them.