

April 2011

# ADAIR UPDATE



Needless to say, we got more than we expected out of our vision trip to Japan

## WE WERE THERE

### Our account of the earthquake that hit Japan on March 11, 2011

It's hard to believe it's been a month and a half since we were in Japan. We went on the trip hoping to learn our placement for the next four years, see Robert's old ministry partners in Minamata, and give Roberta a chance to experience Japanese culture for the first time.

After a great time in Minamata, we headed north for the Asian Access spring retreat, which is the annual meeting for our missions agency. On Friday afternoon, we were sitting in a meeting with our colleague Jack when we noticed the room beginning to shake. We quickly realized that it wasn't ending and decided to go outside. We had time to walk down a small boardwalk into a field before the shaking stopped. It felt like medium grade airplane turbulence and there was no visible damage where we were. It wasn't until we heard that the quake had

occurred a long distance from us that we realized the true magnitude of the situation.

From that point on, it was a surreal experience watching the devastation on TV while seeing a beautiful landscape out the window. Thankfully Asian Access (A2) was able to confirm the safety of its staff within a few hours of the quake. We then began making plans and praying about how God was leading us as an organization in the midst of the disaster.

Within a week A2 staff was in the Tohoku region helping distribute supplies through local churches. Our staff has continued to help with immediate needs as well as set up long term distribution centers in the region. It was also decided that this summer we would return to Japan to supervise short term teams from America sent to help in the relief effort. More on this on the back page...



**Quiz:** What are we doing?

- A) Trying to see who is the tallest
- B) Scratching each other's heads
- C) Making a heart
- D) We don't know either

# JAPAN



## Language Lesson

Tohoku (東北):

Literally means "east-north." This is the region consisting of the 6 prefectures that make up the north end of the main island (Honshu) in Japan. The East coast of this region is the area most effected by the recent earthquake and tsunami. Join us in praying for the people of Tohoku.

## Roberta's Impressions of J-Land

I remember feeling tired during the first several days in Japan (true story!). I also remember being impressed by the neatness and order of the streets, train stations, parks, and neighborhoods. That was something that amazed (and, in a way, haunted) me during my stay: neat rice patties, tiny but flawless gardens, meticulously-hedged trees, perfectly-pressed uniforms on workers, and polite but distant interactions with train staff.

I was impressed because Japan is a society that has survived and thrived for thousands of years through order. People line up to wait for incoming trains in a very quiet, particular way. Restaurants display their food (for those passing by and for the patrons) in a very artistic, particular way. The tea ceremony that was performed for us was done in a verrrry precise, particular way. After the earthquake and tsunami, people waited stoically for hours for transportation home, for food and water, and even for news regarding whether friends and family had survived. It seems that, for the most part, the Japanese did not add to the chaos of the terrible situation, and I (like millions of others around the globe watching the news) was

convicted of my own entitlement and me- or my family-first tendencies. I was also reminded of our God being a God of order (1 Cor. 14:33).

Yet I was also haunted by what seemed to me to be perfection as the ideal. I know how flawed and imperfect I am, and I'm grateful that I have not felt pressure to aspire to the same ideal – whether in my appearance, my social and academic performances, or my relationship with others and God. I serve a God who loves me in spite of my weaknesses, and he is somehow glorified through them (what a mystery!). While not adding to chaos can be seen as helpful to the community, there is also a time and place for being able to express grief, fear, sadness, and frustration.

There is so much more I could write about: the amazing, faithful people I met at the Minamata church, the warm welcome I received from the A2 community, the dozens of tiny (and a few not-so-tiny) aftershocks, the bamboo trees and cherry blossoms, the fancy (and FULL) trains, the men in dark suits and women in snazzy outfits. I left with lots of impressions, but, more than that, with a burden for people who have yet to encounter - or hear of - the Prince of Peace.



Robert and some of his friends from Kyushu

## Pennsylvania, Texas, and support

After returning from Japan, we were able to spend time in both Pennsylvania and Texas to start the process of raising funds for our upcoming 4-year term in Japan. Over the two trips, we drove 4,500 miles, stayed in at least 12 beds, and were able to share with a large number of people how God has been leading and preparing us for working in Japan. Overall, both trips were very encouraging. We want to take some time to share our current perspective on support raising through two pictures.

On the right you can see a picture Robert took of Mt. Fuji a few years ago. We have been using this picture when discussing our financial need for the next 4 years in Japan. You can see that Mt. Fuji is a really big mountain. God has been showing us an important parallel between Mt. Fuji and the funds necessary for us to minister in Japan. There is no way around it; it's a big number any way that you break it down. That said, there is not much we can do about it's size. The encouraging thing is that, in this picture, Mt. Fuji is small in comparison to the sky. In the same way, God has been

encouraging us that His resources are exponentially larger than our need.

The second picture that has helped our perspective is the bell from Roberta's mother's back yard. While the Mt. Fuji picture reminds us to have a healthy perspective on money, the bell reminds us of the overall purpose of what we will be doing in Japan. When a bell rings, people look towards and frequently come to the source of the sound. It's easy for us to get lost in details and logistics surrounding going to Japan. Finances, training, and other preparation take a lot of time. It is essential for us to be frequently brought back to the central purpose of our role in Japan which is to share the gospel and provide opportunities for people to come into a relationship with Christ.

We have a healthy respect for the amount of money necessary to get us to Japan. We are committed to being faithful stewards of the funds entrusted to us through individuals and churches. We are encouraged that God has already already provided most of our start up funds and about a third of our monthly need. And we look forward to seeing how God is going to provide in coming months. Thanks again for your friendship, prayer, and support.



## PERSPECTIVE



### Quiz Answer

C) Making a heart

Shortly after our wedding, the church in Minamata sent us a video to congratulate us. In the video one of the families had a really cute segment where they made a heart like the one in the picture. We have been doing our best to imitate it ever since.

# SUMMER RELIEF TEAMS

## This summer we will spend 6 weeks in the area impacted by the earthquake

One of the decisions made at A2's retreat was that Roberta and I (Robert) would supervise the short term team portion of A2's response to the earthquake and tsunami this summer in the Tohoku region. I have been serving as j-Team (short-term) team coordinator for A2 for two years and have experience with short term ministry in Japan with A2 dating back to 2001. Roberta also had experience on various short term teams in college as well as receiving them during her time in Kosovo. This experience in combination with our mobility motivated the agency's decision.

### Purpose

As a part of A2, j-Teams shares the same vision and values as the organization as a whole. Therefore our ministry will be focussed on ministering with Japanese churches and helping them reach their community and the areas effected by the disaster. The specific ministry will range from clean-up, manual labor, distribution of supplies, listening to peoples' stories, sharing how Christ has impacted our lives, connecting people to Japanese churches in the region, and doing whatever we can do to bless the Japanese church and people.

### j-Team

There are two types of teams that we will be working with this summer. Before the earthquake, A2 accepted seven individuals to serve on one of our standard programs. They have agreed to combine into one team and

serve together in Tohoku. Roberta will be leading this team, and I will be helping out as much as I can. They will be in Japan for six weeks from June through mid-July.

### Church Teams

Immediately following the events on March 11th, churches began contacting us asking how they can help.

We are currently looking for placements where they can partner with local Japanese churches to be the hands and feet of Christ in the midst of this tragedy. The number of church teams that will be coming is still foggy as we have many that have expressed interest but few that have committed. While Roberta's role this summer is with the first team, my primary role is supervising the overall project.

### Short term vs. Long term

The main tension we wrestled with regarding ministering in Japan this summer was whether the opportunity to serve in the midst of the tsunami clean-up would impede our hope of returning to Japan for a 4 year church planting term. We didn't want to damage our long term



If there is something we can do...

ministry for a chance to be involved in some exciting ministry in the short term. There were two things that were key in making the decision to go.

1. Because this is a special assignment with A2, the funding for this summer will not come out of our personal account.
2. We believe that the opportunity to meet real needs in the midst of this crisis outweighed the risk of losing momentum in support development.

We are thankful for the chance to partner with our Japanese brothers and sisters in Christ as we minister to their communities. Please pray that Jesus would be glorified, that our team would be safe, and that many people would come to know Christ through j-Teams this summer.

## Prayer Requests

Please joining us in prayer for our lives and future ministry. Above all, we ask you to pray that we would grow daily in our relationships with Christ and with each other. Also pray that our lives would be oriented in a way that facilitates good preparation for our future in Japan.

## Please pray for:

- Support development
- Language acquisition
- Safe travels to the Balkans in early May
- Logistics involved in preparing for the summer program
- Our relief teams will work well with their Japanese partners
- Robert and Roberta to get enough rest in the midst of a busy travel schedule

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