

U.C. Sends Experienced Trainers to Make Relief Effort Plans in Japan

Celine Tardy
April 13, 2011

Japanese Unification Church members are grieving for five members who lost their lives to the tsunami, according to the Japanese Unification Church website, and some church families are still missing.

Meanwhile, volunteers and aid to church members in the quake zone are arriving. Shortly after announcing a fundraising drive to help Japanese tsunami victims, Rev. In Jin Moon, Unification Church President and CEO, reached an agreement with Dr. Ron Patterson, Executive Director of Christian Disaster Response (CDR), to work with Unificationist leaders in Japan to make an assessment of needs, and to train Japanese volunteers who wanted to help their communities. Japanese leaders welcomed Patterson and his team which included Mr. Luke Higuchi, Director of S.A.F.E and Mr. Richard Sapp, an activist with the Universal Peace Federation.

Prior to the arrival of the training team, the Japanese Unification Church headquarters already had been sending food and supplies to those in need. By April 13, 2011, more than 500 Unificationists had been evacuated to four facilities around Japan. They had already been recruiting volunteers to help, and planned to send volunteers out to areas on April 1st.

Dr. Patterson and his team arrived on March 27, 2011 and offered a two-day disaster relief training workshop for 50 recruited volunteers from March 29 to March 30, 2011 at the Unification church in Shinjuku . “The training workshop focused on the full disaster cycle of response, recovery, education, prevention through mitigation and preparation for future disasters. Christian Disaster Response's training program meets all the guidelines set down by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Administration of the fifty youth volunteers,” explained Mr. Richard Sapp to Familyfed.org.



Unificationist volunteers helping to "muck out" victims' homes.

After the two-day training workshop, each volunteer committed to help for a period of nine days, including seven days of work and two days of travelling to and from Sendai. Fifteen aid volunteers were sent out on April 1, 2011. During the week, volunteers worked from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day at different houses assigned by government officers. Volunteers dug mud out of houses and put it in strong bags to be loaded into trucks. “The mud was very heavy because it is still wet from oil and broken glass,” Higuchi reported. “Due to the change in weather, it also smelled profusely.” Volunteers also helped with taking broken furniture out of houses, as well as special Japanese flooring made of rice straw, called “*tatami*.”

Assessment of Supplies Needed

Mr. Patterson, Mr. Sapp, and Mr. Higuchi next went to Sendai church on April 4th, where 30 more volunteers were trained. Higuchi said that he felt these members were ready and waiting to be trained. "They were highly motivated to help the community after what they had experienced in their hometown," he said.

Church leaders in Sendai had a meeting with Dr. Paterson to make a proper assessment of the materials most needed to be sent to Japan with the money donated from American members, as well as how to manage the material after it was shipped. "Everyone wanted to make sure the money being given to Japan by the United States (\$120,000) was used effectively," Higuchi explained. "Thankfully, they were very capable to make an assessment. They knew what they needed and where it should go."



Church leaders in Sendai meet to make an assessment of supplies needed.

It was found that most members and people in the community already had food. The Unification Church in Japan has already invested \$10,000 for food for members, and after the church members had enough, they delivered food to the community. According to the assessment team, the critical need at present is for supplies for temporary housing.

Temporary housing is currently being built at public schools and parks, mostly in the form of mobile houses, and many units will be finished within a month. Therefore, the supplies for these families have been timed to arrive when the houses will be finished, including health kits, kitchen utensils, and bedding. The supplies will take three weeks to ship, and thus will arrive in May. "Sendai members are very excited to bring this material to those in need," Higuchi stated.

The damage due to the quake runs 500 miles down the coast of Japan (longer than the distance in miles from Boston to Washington, D.C.). Mr. Higuchi tells Familyfed.org he only saw one town, Ishinomaki, in the Miyagi prefecture. "It is hard to describe the damaged area I saw," Higuchi said. "This rebuilding process will take a long time, and we will definitely need continued support, including both donations and volunteers."