

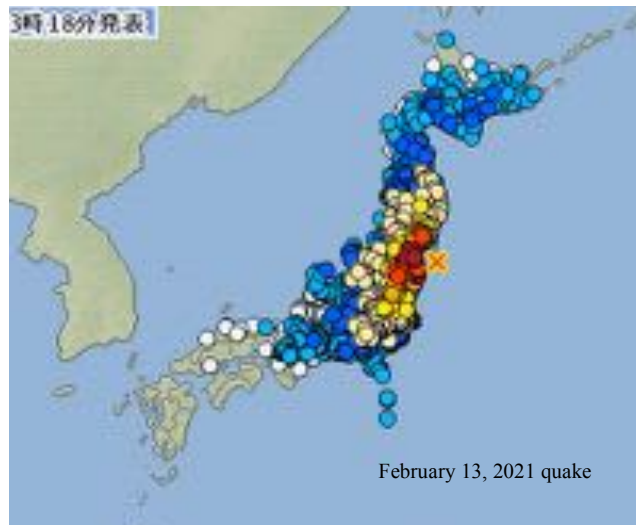


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March 11, 2021

ANNIVERSARIES: 10 years since the “big one” hit

It's a “special” day for us here in Japan today. It is the 10th anniversary of what is known here as the “Great East Japan Earthquake,” the magnitude 9 monster that spawned a massive tsunami that devastated the coastline of Northeast Japan and knocked off line all of the emergency generators of the Fukushima #1 Nuclear Power Generation plants. That led to meltdowns and several explosions that spewed radioactive elements into the atmosphere, elements that rendered much of the area inhabitable and rained down on almost all of Eastern Japan, including on all of Tokyo & Yokohama. Contamination continues to plague the area, and the melted down nuclear fuel cleanup is making very little progress; some estimate it may take up to 40 more years and will require new technology still to be developed.

I was deeply involved with many others in relief activities that also continue today. Countless lives have been touched by God's mercy, collaboration that often eluded groups before, and an untold number of new church planting projects in a region of Japan that is notoriously resistant to the Gospel. Much of the damaged infrastructure has been restored and is now superior to what was there before. Our beloved Nozomi (hope) Center is still carrying on, giving light and good news to the people of Yamamoto Town, and it is now the location of one of the new church plants too!



But it's not over yet! Just a few weeks ago on February 13, the whole area was rattled by another quite powerful quake, this one being a magnitude 7.3 jolt. Geologists tell us that this too was an aftershock of the 3.11.2011 quake! No way!

ANNIVERSARIES: Covid-19 pandemic

Just yesterday we hit the one-year mark since the novel corona virus had merited the classification of “pandemic.” All of us are very much aware of the suffering and death that has traveled the globe, disrupting our lives in ways we could not have imagined. Though not nearly as bad here as in the USA, some of our friends have come down with it, and a neighbor's mother lost her life to it. Everyone knows others who have experienced similar tragedies! But we are also worried about the economic impact, and there's lots of fretting about how Tokyo might be able to actually pull off convening the 2020 Summer Olympics! Yes, 2020, right? Well, we'll see. Meanwhile this has forced us on both sides of the ocean to consider and implement new strategies for continuing worship and evangelism. A theme is emerging: instead of lamenting about what we can't do or have lost, let's look ahead and discover the new options and explore new possibilities! Now, using Internet applications like



Zoom and YouTube, we are actually reaching far more people who join us to hear the Gospel and to worship the Lord. This morning I recorded a Sunday school class for the 14th, and Saturday I will be taping a service (preaching on Joshua 24). It will be broadcast during our regular worship time on Zoom, and after that it will be publicly available on our YouTube site, linked from our home page. Some may not know what I'm talking about, even though you may be enjoying the fruits of your own church groups doing this too! Additionally, My colleagues and I are producing full manuscripts of our sermons that can be distributed to those who are not able to tune it. These are sent by email or even “snail-mailed” (sometimes hand delivered) to shut-ins or others who ask. Churches have discovered they can connect with people without concern for distance or even national borders, and we all see now how easy it can be to have multi-site worship and outreach activities, tremendously beneficial here where we have such a shortage of pastors! Some of our churches have continued gathering, others are restarting gradually. But the bottom line is this: it seems to me there is lots of new, vital outreach taking place! Hooray!

Did you know that there are more than 50,000 people in Japan who are 100 years old or older?!

ANNIVERSARIES: February 22, 1981



Well, you'll get the idea from the picture, right? Yes, it has been **40 years** since we first flew from JFK in New York to NRT (Narita Airport) in Tokyo! Ben was just a baby, and we had little idea that we would be here this long. Our "5-year plan" was to return to a congregation somewhere in the USA. But God had other plans for us! For those who may wonder, the answer is no: the trip hasn't gotten any shorter! Oh, that question. The answer is also no to that one too: we are not done yet! Thanks to all who give and pray to keep us at it. Someone suggested I ought to write some sort of memoirs. Right now I'm too busy writing sermons and speaking for special occasions, and so forth. Maybe some day! But it has been a remarkable lifetime of service!

PRAYER REQUESTS

-- One of our deepest and most important needs is for the work of the Spirit to break down the numerous barriers that keep people from really hearing and responding to the good news of new life in Jesus!

-- A close second to that is for the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into this field! We are very eager to welcome new missionary families! Maybe it will be you!

We are also extremely thankful when local folks devote themselves to do ministry! On March 2 I attended (virtually, of course) the graduation of Kobe Reformed Seminary. One of the new candidates (pictured here) is entering ministry as a "second career." Mr. Makoto Ishikawa's wife is also a very gifted person, singer and song-writer Yona Ishikawa. "She's quite something," he says! She just pulled off a wonderful concert and released a new album. I'm a big fan of hers, in case you can't tell! I invite you to add them to your prayer lists. I'm excited to see how the Lord will use them in the days & years that lie ahead!



-- Ruth and I are waiting on our personnel office to try to arrange a schedule that will allow us to keep serving here in Japan through the end of 2022 without a 6-month time of home service (deputation). There is US government red tape that must be dealt with for this to happen. Can we ask you to pray for that also to be ironed out? **Thank you!**

Your missionaries in Japan,
Larry and Ruth Spalink



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