

Volunteers walking through the flooded streets in Kesenuma, Miyagi

# The Great East Japan Earthquake

**O**n March 11, a devastating earthquake (M. 9.0) and destructive tsunami hit the Tohoku District (northeastern Japan). 15,471 deaths and 7,472 missing were confirmed as of June 21, 2011. Thousands of survivors have been forced to lead a difficult life in evacuation centers or temporary housing.

On March 12, the Konkokyo Headquarters organized an emergency center and immediately dispatched its staff to the affected areas to assess the situation. They visited Konko Churches in the region, and as messengers from the Spiritual Leader of Konkokyo, they delivered Sacred Rice. Although there were no casualties among ministers and their families, twenty-two churches suffered damage from the quake. In Miyagi Prefecture, the entire first floor worship hall of the Konko Church of Ishinomaki was damaged by the tsunami.

The Headquarters has been collecting donations for the following purposes:

1. Donations to the affected churches and their members;
2. Donations to prefectural and municipal authorities surrounding the affected churches;
3. Allocation of funds for churches to resume operations;
4. Donations to help believers' organizations which have been supporting the affected people.

So far, Headquarters has sent ten million yen each to Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures to support their affected residents, and sent relief money to churches according to the extent of their damage, as well as to the municipalities where they are located.

In Kesenuma, Ishinomaki and Sendai, the affected cities in Miyagi Prefecture, Konkokyo church members have been actively involved in relief operations.

Meanwhile, on April 1, 3, 7 and 10, Konkokyo Head-

quarters held, along with Tenchi Kane No Kami Grand Service, a Special Prayer for the Restoration from the Great Disasters. The service was officiated by the Spiritual Leader of Konkokyo. In the service, he prayed for the victims' rest in peace and for the survivors' return to their normal lives, together with all the attendees there. He stated in the *Saishi* Main Prayer, "Receiving the divine wishes 'When people cannot do well, Kami and Konko Daijin cannot do well, either,' please let all the Konkokyo believers offer sincere prayers and cooperate with one another to help people affected. So, please help us to take on various activities."

Overseas churches and believers have done a variety of mourning services and supporting activities. The churches began to collect donations immediately after the earthquake. Email and telephone communication expressing concern and inquiry regarding offerings of support flooded Headquarters and KIC from around the world.

On April 29, the fiftieth day from the tragedy, the clergy of various religions organized a joint prayer meeting in Ishinomaki City to console the souls of the deceased. The Konkokyo ministers from Ishinomaki and Sendai Churches participated in the prayer with the quake-affected believers and volunteers. Also in Okayama City, on the same day and time, Religious NGO Network on Humanitarian Support, consisting of twelve denominations, organized a prayer meeting for consolation. The Konkokyo Peace Activity Center participated in this event.

The earthquake damage is so huge and widespread that long-term and varied supports are needed. We believe that only through continuing to pray for the peaceful rest of victims' souls and to care about survivors will there be lasting support and wellbeing of all the survivors.



Restoration efforts

# Konkokyo's Faith-based Support Activities



Distributing relief supplies



Ishinomaki Church restoration work



Clearing the debris

A variety of groups among Konkokyo believers are conducting support activities in the affected areas. Among them is the Konkokyo Tokyo Metropolitan Supporting Organization for Volunteers of Disaster, which is an organization consisting of the Konkokyo Tokyo Metropolitan Forum, the Konkokyo Tokyo Center and the Konkokyo Tokyo Churches Association. With Kesenuma City, Miyagi Prefecture, as its acting center, the Organization will work until the end of this year. The Konkokyo Youth Association will continue its support activities for one year with its base

in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture. Both are currently recruiting volunteers for the groups' work. Volunteers will be sent to disaster areas to help address local needs, such as removing debris, clearing sludge, and cleaning houses for a period of eight or ten days. The Konkokyo Osaka Disaster Relief Team, with its base in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, is chiefly making door-to-door visits in mountainous areas where supplies distribution is difficult, to deliver what the affected people need.



## Ms. Keiko Ikeda

from Hiroshima Prefecture

Volunteers, including myself, from around the country have been visiting Konko Church of Kesenuma, Miyagi Prefecture, since it became a base of relief activities. The worship hall was offered as an evacuation site along with the town hall which is an officially designated evacuation site. Volunteers for emergency relief are normally expected to be self-contained; but at the Kesenuma Church, we ate and slept on the same floor with survivors and had opportunities to listen to their firsthand experiences. This was possible because the church had built long and strong ties with the local people,

who were not necessarily Konkokyo believers.

Having been learning chiropractic, I participated in volunteer activities at this time in the hope of easing the hardened bodies of survivors even if a little. I was glad when people who were so quiet at first, began to talk about the quake and tsunami little by little and said, "As my body relaxed, I've come to think things in a positive manner." Elderly people in particular showed their amazing nerve and resilience, which invariably cheered me up in turn. Reverend Shiro Okuhara, the Head Minister of Kesenuma Church, said, "Even after this evacuation center will be closed and they return to their individual lives, they will still need volunteers taking care of their health," giving me an incentive to be a part of the future support activities at Kesenuma.

## Voices from Volunteers

**Mr. Ryo Hamada**

from Fukuoka Prefecture



As a member of the Support Team for Reconstructing Eastern Japan organized by the Konkokyo Youth Association, I had been to Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, from April 18 to May 1. Though I have no relief skills, I wanted to do what little I could and hoped to be part of the volunteer team. I am very grateful that I was able to go, thanks to the divine arrangements of timing and situations around me and that my wish was in the prayer of my ministers at church.

Arriving at Ishinomaki City, I was involved in a variety

of activities during two weeks: setting up a base for our team; removing debris around Konko Church of Ishinomaki; removing cars under water and broken concrete block fences, and so forth.

Honestly, I was worried that I would be a nuisance despite my wish to help and that my motive could be self-satisfaction. Therefore, I felt really relieved and happy when the affected people thanked me for my small help.

It will take a long, long time that Ishinomaki City would regain its original landscape. Therefore, I simply pray that I can continue to support people of Ishinomaki for a long, long time to come.

Readers are invited to visit the KIC website, [http://k-i-c.sakura.ne.jp/blog\\_eng\\_2/index.php](http://k-i-c.sakura.ne.jp/blog_eng_2/index.php) which shows Konkokyo's support activities, accompanied by the pictures of disaster sites.

# D People



## I Wish Konko Faith to Be More Widespread in Brazil

**Mr. Carlos Frederico Hasselmann Martins**  
Reported by KIC

**O**ur first impression of Carlos was that of a happy and good-natured Brazilian. He likes to joke and laugh, but his face gets very serious when he talks about the Konko Faith in Brazil. He analyzes the situation of Brazilian propagation thoroughly before delivering his opinion; "I think, from now on, we need an organization in Brazil that supports the Konko Churches in Brazil and gives information to them."

Presently, there are six churches and two propagation halls in Brazil where the Konko Faith has been taught to Japanese-Brazilians and Brazilians equally. At first, most of the believers were Japanese-Brazilians who could speak Japanese, however, most of these third and fourth generation believers speak less Japanese. Brazilians who do come to church and pray still face a language barrier. Therefore, he says, "In order for the Konko Faith in Brazil to develop, it is essential for us to teach it in Portuguese."

Carlos learned about the Konko Faith at his wife's cousin's funeral ceremony. He was deeply impressed and began collecting information on Konkokyo on the internet.

He began going to the nearest church in Butanta and became an ardent believer. "I used to be a complete atheist, but people around me now say that I have changed. I think this is because of the wonderful teachings in the Konko Faith. However, I feel sorry that Brazilians haven't been able to know about the Konko Faith," said Carlos. "Cooperation between Japanese ministers who are currently serving Kami in Brazil and the Brazilians who support them, is indispensable for the Konko Faith here. Brazilians can help these Japanese ministers understand Portuguese and give advice from their point of view." Along those lines, he also offered a proposal; "In Sao Paulo, there are three Konko Churches and they are relatively near each other. It is desirable that believers from each church gather together for activities because Brazilians like to have fun together."

Currently, he provides Konko teachings in Portuguese on his blog page everyday and he is creating a Brazilian website for the Konko Faith. Furthermore, Carlos is an energetic translator who cooperated in adding Portuguese subtitles to the animated movie "Konko-Sama" and is working on a translation of "Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo."

Carlos visited Japan from April 28 to May 22 to learn about Konko Faith deeply and the organization of Konkokyo. He trained at the Head Administrative Office, Konkokyo Research Institute, International Center, and Tokyo Center, while also visiting and worshiping at the Main Worship Hall and several other churches. "My three week stay in Japan was very beneficial to me," he said. "In order to foster supporters for ministers in Brazil, I think it preferable to offer a training course in Japan to Brazilians who are interested. I want to find a way to propagate to Brazilians."

Carlos is fifty-five years old now and is ready to commit himself to the growth of the Konko Faith in Brazil.

*a short story based on the Konkō faith*

## You are a god

**O**ne evening last autumn, I had dinner and drinks with my friend in Shinjyuku.

I was on my way home around 10 p.m. At the subway station, there was a middle-aged man who was walking up behind me who was trying to hold on to the fence separating the railway track from the platform but tripping instead. Although surprised, I instinctively asked “Are you alright?” and then noted he smelled of alcohol. I thought he had tripped because he was drunk, so I used my both hands to help him get up. We both got on the train, found vacant seats, and after seating the man, I finally felt relieved.

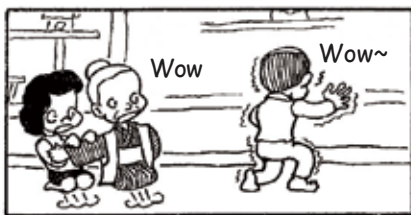
Shortly thereafter, as I was looking towards the front of the train, an old man was moving his hands and legs

in the air while lying on his back, much like a turtle. The other passengers pretended not to notice, probably to avoid getting involved. I went to the old man and asked “Are you alright?” The wet floor on the subway train, from the day’s rain, apparently caused him to trip and land on his back. When I offered my hand for assistance and said “Please get up by holding my hand,” he said, “You are a god.” At the upcoming station, the old man got off, and as the train left the station with me still on board, I could see the old man bowing in my direction.

In my home church, we encourage a practice called “Help (support) other people even a little.” Examples, such as those above, make me glad to be able to practice the teaching of the Founder, “Practice faith and remember that saving people in distress is to be human.”

Reverend Yoshio Asano

### Faith Life Sketch 2



by Tama Hyoroku

### Konkokyo Gatherings in Europe 2011

KIC will hold Konkokyo Gatherings in the UK and Germany! Please contact us if you would like to learn more or if you (or someone you know) would like to attend either gathering. Everyone throughout the world is welcome to join us!

#### --- Konkokyo Gathering in UK ---

Faith Enrichment Workshop (English & Japanese)

Date & Time: Sunday, July 17, 10 a.m. – noon

Service followed by Sermon & Casual Discussion  
(All are held in English & Japanese)

Date & Time: Sunday, July 17, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Location: Senate Room, Imperial Hotel, London

Russell Square, London WC1B 5BB, UK

+44 (0)20 7278 7871/2/3

#### --- Konkokyo Gathering in Germany ---

Faith Enrichment Workshop (Held in Japanese)

Date & Time: Saturday, July 23, 4 – 6 p.m.

Service followed by Sermon & Casual Discussion  
(All are held in German & Japanese)

Date & Time: Sunday, July 24, 9 a.m. – noon

Location: Thang Long Hotel

Treskowallee 89, 10318 Berlin, Germany

+49 (0)30 5001 248-0



### KIC on Twitter!

We now have a Twitter account where we tweet the Founder's teachings in English and inform you of upcoming activities. Please follow us! @konkokyo\_kic



FACE TO FAITH NO. 69 VOL. 18-3 issued by

**Konkokyo International Center**

2-17-11 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku,  
Tokyo 113-0033 JAPAN

URL: <http://www.konkokyo.or.jp/eng/kic/>

E-mail: [kic@konkokyo.or.jp](mailto:kic@konkokyo.or.jp) Tel: +81-(0)3-3818-3701 Fax: +81-(0)3-3818-3793