



A Massive Earthquake Hits Eastern Japan

A 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck eastern Japan at 2:46 pm on March 11. This quake, the most severe in the history of Japan, has been officially named the Tohoku Pacific Coast Earthquake. The earthquake, along with the tsunami and fires that followed, caused an enormous number of casualties and injuries in a large area of eastern Japan, including Kanto and Hokkaido. The tsunami, in particular, claimed many lives, while carrying away many buildings and wreaking massive damage.

There are 26 Dharma Centers of Rissho Kosei-kai in the heavily damaged areas of Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima and Ibaraki Prefectures. Many members in the areas suffered as a result of this great disaster.



For the Earthquake and Tsunami Victims in Northeastern Japan

by Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

The recent earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan caused great devastation, with many victims over a very wide area, and things have come to a serious pass. I would like to express my deepest condolences and sympathy for the surviving families of those who died, as well as pray that the souls of those who perished may rest in peace.

I also would like to express my sympathy for all others who were harmed by the earthquake, and especially by the tsunami, and the fires and collapses of houses.

There are still many missing people in the disaster areas. We pray that they may be safe and sound, and we will also continue to offer our sincere prayers for the prompt recovery of those areas.

There are many Rissho Kosei-kai members among the victims. Their mental anguish is more than we can imagine. But precisely in such a time and situation, we earnestly wish to overcome the difficulties, with religious faith as our mainstay, as well as with the cooperation of the people around us—our good friends and sangha members.

Taking into consideration the present conditions in the disaster areas, we will adopt appropriate measures, however limited, for the recovery of the towns and communities there.

All of the victims will remain constantly in the thoughts of all of us Rissho Kosei-kai members, and we wish to continue giving our support to them, praying for the recovery of their areas.

Notice

In this issue, we will officially use the phrase “Tohoku Pacific Coast Earthquake” to refer to the quake that took place on March 11; we will use the phrase “Eastern Japan Earthquake” when we are referring to the quake including the disasters subsequent to the March 11 quake.

Actions of Rissho Kosei-kai



Immediately following the outbreak of the earthquake, Rissho Kosei-kai began investigating the extent of the damage and how the quake and subsequent events affected Rissho Kosei-kai members and Dharma Centers in the hardest-hit areas.

President Niwano made an announcement, expressing his concern and prayers for the victims and survivors (see page 1). On March 12th, the Rissho Kosei-kai Task Force for Eastern Japan Earthquake was established with Chairman Watanabe as its head, and the first rescue team (consisting of 14 people) was dispatched. After a fact-finding mission at the Koriyama and Fukushima Dharma Centers, the team arrived at the Sendai center. There, team members joined in the serving of hot meals to people in the area, and checking on the whereabouts of members. On March 17th, the second team was dispatched and on 22nd, the third team was dispatched.

To deal with the critical conditions, Rissho

Kosei-kai decided to donate the amount of five hundred million yen from the Donate-a-Meal Peace Fund to give assistance to the earthquake victims. The organization also decided to accept the suffering members at the Dharma Centers located in their neighboring areas. In addition, with President-designate Kosho Niwano as its head, they established the Western Japan Relief Center at Rissho Kosei-kai of Osaka, to procure and dispatch goods and items needed in the eastern part of Japan.

The Rissho Kosei-kai Task Force for the Eastern Japan Earthquake sent an invocation and special prayer for the well-being of earthquake victims and for quick recovery from the damage (see page 5) to all the Dharma Centers. Members at each center are now offering this special prayer. A bank account has also been opened to receive donations for members who are affected by this tragedy (for details, see page 7).



Report from the First Rescue Team

In the Spirit of Mutual Support and Harmonious Sympathy

~Around the Clock Rescue Activity Continues, with a Prayer for the Safety of the Sangha~

The great earthquake hit the eastern part of Japan, especially around Tohoku region, at 2:46 pm on March 11. The quake measured a magnitude of 9.0, the largest ever recorded in Japan since observations began in Meiji era.

The following morning, the headquarters in Tokyo organized a support team; the team was dispatched to Sendai in the afternoon. Continuous updates on the situation were provided, and the moment-by-moment revelation of the extent of the damage made our hearts ache.

On the way to Sendai, we took a roundabout route all around Niigata, and then we turned ahead to east from there. Sights of collapsed block walls, tiled roofs that had fallen to ground and manhole that had risen up through the ground filled our eyes from the time we traveled across Fukushima prefecture.

About 30 hours after we left the headquarters in Tokyo, we finally arrived at the Sendai Dharma Center; it was around 9:00 pm on March 13. Around 40 people had evacuated their homes around the main hall of the Dharma Center. Some of them lost homes in the tsunami, escaping from the aftershock-impacted ruins of their houses. They all had the same uneasy look on their faces.

Immediately after the first shake, a blackout covered the entire city, and the majority of cell phone users lost service. So the process of confirming members' safety was extremely difficult. Even in such terrible conditions, there were those who patiently visited members' homes and searched evacuation centers, hoping to confirm that members of the sangha were safe.

Ms. Saki Kobayashi, a 49 year old chapter head, is one of these people. On the fourth day following the quake, we joined her efforts as she sought to confirm the safety of her members. On the way to hard-hit area on the Pacific coast side, Ms. Kobayashi suddenly but quietly said, "That seems OK." I asked what she was referring to. She pointed to a house and said, "That is my home." She never stopped her car but continued on to shelters and members' homes.

I later learned that Ms. Kobayashi had made contact with her family only once after the quake, and not been home nor seen her family since.



In the Spirit of Mutual Support and Harmonious Sympathy

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Her concern was with her missing members, so she had been staying at the Dharma center since the outbreak of the quake and scrambling to find out how her members were doing. Although she was also a victim of the disaster, she was constantly concerned with the safety of others. I put my palms together in recognition of her deep compassion.

Traveling south from Sendai, in Iwanuma we saw large fields on both sides of the road. On the surface, the scene looked like a picture of the countryside, but a second look showed that all of the shorter trees in the groves, as well as the plants and herbs, were angled in the same direction. I heard that when the tsunami reached this area, it carried big trees and livestock animals over a long distance, despite the fact that this area is about 5 kilometers away from the coast.

At the Iwanuma Civic Center, we met 76 year old Ms. Takae Katsurashima, a district leader who is taking shelter there. Her home was damaged by the tsunami, and the furniture and tatami mats were swept away. I asked her what kinds of supplies, such as food or blankets, are needed there. Ms. Katsurashima replied that there is nothing special that she personally needs, but she does wish that all the refugees would be able to share equally.

When I returned to the Dharma Center, the youth members took the initiative to cook rice and distribute it to the victims. A 33-year-old district leader, Mrs. Sakiko Otsuka,

guided me at the entrance of the center. She was married three days before the earthquake took place. With a smiling face, she said to me, "Of course, newly married life is enjoyable, because we can live a life just by ourselves, without anyone else. But it is even more wonderful for me to be able to serve others with my husband." Her attitude was comforting and healing to people around her.

A woman in her thirties coming to the Dharma Center with her primary-school boy said, "His appetite is at its peak. As a parent, I am very much grateful for the kindness of people here." The Nepalese students studying in Japan live near the center, and are very anxious about suffering from such a massive disaster in a foreign country. One of them said in tears, "People here accepted us with smiling faces, and welcomed us warmly."

What I came in contact with is only a part of the widespread damage in the disaster area, and what I knew of the refugees and victims is that I could only scratch the surface of emotions deep down inside them. Whatever the extent of the damage they have suffered, they are all victims of the disaster. From them, I learned the strength of the human mind, and the power of people's prayers and wishes. Seeing these remarkable people as my spiritual supports, I vow to be involved by playing my own part in these efforts. This is a pledge I have made to myself.



Memorial Service for the Spirits of the Victims of the Tohoku Pacific Coast Earthquake and the Prayer for the Quick Recovery of the Survivors and Their Communities

- Homage *(Chant the O-daimoku three times)*
- Meditation on the Place of the Way
- Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures
- Invocation

We put our faith in

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One;

The Tathagata Abundant Treasures, witness to the Lotus Sutra;

The emanations of the Buddha in the ten directions in the past, present, and future;

The four Great Bodhisattvas: Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and
Steadfast Practice;

The Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas: Manjushri, Universal Wisdom, Maitreya, and all other
Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas;

Great Bodhisattva Nichiren, revered practitioner of the Lotus Sutra;

Founder Nikkyo, Great Teacher of the One Vehicle;

Cofounder Myoko, Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion;

The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai;

And the countless heavenly spirits in the ten directions.

May you all be present among us and know our deep devotion.

We members of Rissho Kosei-kai gather together to conduct this sincere memorial service for the spirits of the victims of the Tohoku Pacific Coast Earthquake, and offer our heartfelt prayers that the survivors quickly recover and rebuild their communities.

We members, with our hearts and minds as one, all hereby offer our sincere prayers of condolence to the spirits of the many victims of this catastrophe. We pray that the injured, those who have lost their homes, and those who are still unaccounted for will be safe and sound and quickly return to normal livelihood.

We earnestly pray for guidance in all things through the merit we receive from reciting the Great Vehicle Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.

(Strike the gong and chant the O-daimoku once)

- Opening Verse
- Sutra Recitation
- Universal Transfer of Merit
- Chanting of the O-daimoku
- Transfer of Merit

Having respectfully recited the Great Vehicle Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, may we transfer its merits to and thus reciprocate the boundless compassion of

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One;

The Tathagata Abundant Treasures, witness to the Lotus Sutra;

The emanations of the Buddha in the ten directions in the past, present, and future;

The four Great Bodhisattvas: Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and Steadfast Practice;

The Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas: Manjushri, Universal Wisdom, Maitreya, and all other Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas;

Great Bodhisattva Nichiren, revered practitioner of the Lotus Sutra;

Founder Nikkyo, Great Teacher of the One Vehicle;

Cofounder Myoko, Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion;

The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai;

The guardian spirits of Rissho Kosei-kai ();

The guardian spirits of member families of Rissho Kosei-kai;

And the countless heavenly spirits in the ten directions.

(Strike the gong once)

Now, we have conducted the sincere memorial service for the spirits of the victims of the Tohoku Pacific Coast Earthquake, and we have offered our heartfelt prayers that the survivors quickly recover and rebuild their communities.

We have offered our sincere prayers of condolence to the spirits of the many victims of this catastrophe. In the presence of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, we have single-mindedly prayed that the injured, those who have lost their homes, and those who are still unaccounted for will be safe and sound and quickly return to normal livelihood.

We respectfully pray and ask that you extend your hand of compassion and sympathy through your divine communication with us, so that profound guidance and protection may be given to the people in the disaster-stricken area.

- Homage

(Chant the O-daimoku three times)

Donation for the Eastern Japan Earthquake

Rissho Kosei-kai has opened a bank account for your donations to help members who were impacted by the Eastern Japan Earthquake.

(1) Name of Donation

Donation for the Eastern Japan Earthquake Victims

(2) Payee

Name of Bank: Mizuho

Name of Branch: Nakano

Address of Branch: 4-44-18 Honmachi, Nakano, Tokyo

Account Number: 1185601

Swift Code: MHBKJPJT

Name of Account: Higashi Nihon Daishinsai Kyuenbokin

(3) Reception Period

From March 15 to May 31, 2011

(4) Please Note

When you transfer the money, please be sure to clearly state the name of your branch, as well as your name, so that we can identify the donor.

(5) For More Information

Contact your nearest Local Dharma Center or
Rissho kosei-kai International staff:

Ms. Kanao or Ms. Suzuki

Ms. Kanao (email: eriko.kanao@kosei-kai.or.jp)

Ms. Suzuki (email: sayuri.suzuki@kosei-kai.or.jp)