



Fukushima HOPE News

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Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter -7 Years After the Disaster

Fukushima Hope Project Representative: Keiji Kida

I had the privilege of hearing Philip Yancey - a prolific American Christian journalist - speak during one of his visits to Koriyama. Yancey spoke on the four seasons of suffering based on his book along this theme. It was a very thought-provoking talk. Like Yancey, I would like to use the four seasons to reflect on the last 7 years following the Greater East Tohoku Disaster.

Winter: On March 11, 2011 at 2:46pm we experienced an earthquake like none other. It was as though the cold snowy wind that had swept over Fukushima immediately after the earthquake had lingered and hovered over Fukushima for over a year as we experienced a long cold season much like winter. The coastal regions that were hit by the tsunami were faced with triple disasters: the earthquake, the tsunami, and the nuclear radiation disaster. Though there were victims swept by the tsunami that needed to be rescued, due to radiation evacuation orders these efforts had to be stopped. The depth of distress for those who wanted to continue their rescue efforts but were not permitted to do so was heartbreaking. Those living in the central regions of Fukushima experienced a prolonged state of confusion – though they were not directly hit by the tsunami they were nonetheless victims of the disasters. Relief efforts in Fukushima were slow because of the uncertainty of how to respond to radiation contamination.

Spring: One year after the disaster relief efforts for Fukushima began to take root. With relief work in Iwate and Miyagi wrapping up, it became clear what types of supports Fukushima was in need of. It was in this season that the Fukushima Hope Project began.

Summer: Through the network of churches in Fukushima and the support of many Christian organizations the Fukushima Christian Children's Hoyo Project - the Fukushima Hope Project – began to offer short retreat camps for families and children seven times a year for a minimum five years.

Fall: As the confusion and circumstances from the aftermath of the disaster settled, our initial staff team saw a major change and turnover. Upon reviewing our retreat programs we downsized our work. Just as fall is a season of harvest and a time of preparation for winter in this season we reassessed what was of importance.

As I reflect on the winter, spring, summer, and fall of the 7 years following the disaster, I am particularly struck by the impact that our retreat camps made that went beyond our expectations. We began the retreat camps with the purpose of lessening the negative impacts of radiation contamination on children. However, parents have excitedly reported on the growth and maturity their children underwent through participating in our camps. At our last winter camp, I saw the growth of two of our high school campers and I couldn't help but notice how significant it was for us to continue our retreat camps.

In closing, I would like to ask for your continued supports to the Fukushima Hope Project. Although we are strategically reassessing our programs based on our tight budget we are now at a critical point where we cannot continue the project without your donations. Please consider supporting the Fukushima Hope Project.

Hoyo Retreat Camp Report

35th Hoyo Retreat Camp in Inawashiro

Winter Ski and Snow Camp

Dates: Feb. 3 (Sat) – 4 (Sun), 2018

Location:

Participants: 35 (10 adults, 25 children)



Fortunately the Bandai Mountain region was minimally affected by radiation contamination. Thus, at our winter camp we were able to soak in the beauty and wonder of the outdoors at Mount Bandai. Within the white landscape adults and children enjoyed snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and sledding. While snowshoeing in the forest, campers were thrilled to discover rabbit and fox trackings. Parents expressed the need for these camps to continue. Although we are not sure how long we will be able to host these retreat camps, we would like to do our best to continue to walk with and support Fukushima families.



Feedback from Campers

With so few Hoyo camps available, we appreciate how the Hope Project has been active for so long. We would be grateful if you could continue.

I like to completely immerse myself in nature and detox. Although radiation levels have dropped it's nothing as it was before the disaster so I am worried about the future.

Please continue these camps. I'm still concerned about letting my children play outside and about the food safety here.

HOPE FUND REPORT (SEPT – DEC)

Through the Hope Fund, each year we support 30 families to retreat at their chosen destination, contributing \$200 to each family as a means to offset expenses. Below are some of the comments we have received from families who have used the Hope Fund.

Feedback on the Hope Fund

“Since it’s not safe to touch the dirt in Fukushima, on our retreat, equipped in gardening attire we were able to do some harvesting. It was great that I could teach my daughter how delicious fresh vegetables are.”

“The summer in Nagasaki was so hot we felt like we were melting. We did things we couldn’t do in Fukushima like playing in the river, and catching bugs. We played outside so much that our pale children left with a dark tan.”

Hope Café Report (Nov – Dec)

Throughout November and December we ran Hope Café gatherings at three churches (Sukugawa Megumi Church, Koriyama Bible Baptist Church, Fukushima Bible Church). Altogether a total of 17 adults and 19 children attended the café gatherings. Mothers created Christmas collage cards along the themes of “hope” “joy” and “peace” while the children made Christmas wreaths using organic materials donated from outside of Fukushima.



Hope café participants shared how rejuvenating it was for them to engage in art making. We recognize the reality that many mothers are unable to have time for themselves in the day-to-day busyness of work and parenting. Thus, we would like the cafes to continue to be a unique space for mothers to express themselves through the arts and crafts and to experience self-care.

The purpose for making art at Hope Café is not necessarily to create a beautiful aesthetic piece. Often times when we think of making “art” we try to create perfect product-like pieces. As a result we end up creating un-unique pieces. At Hope Café we value the process of art making in which participants can express themselves and encounter themselves through the use of different colors and materials. Art making has been recognized as an effective therapeutic approach that is vital for one’s well-being. We would like the Hope Cafés to be meaningful spaces and experiences for participants.



Feedback from Participants

The children had their own program, while I could focus on making cards. I was able to enjoy doing something that I usually do not do.

It’s been a while since I enjoyed focusing on something – this helped me de-stress. I felt the thrill of creating my own design while working with beautiful paper.

Staff Announcement

Tomoko Kida who has been on staff with the Fukushima Hope Project since last April will be leaving in March. We are so grateful for all her work this last year!!



Thanks for this last year! I’ll be leaving Fukushima in April to attend Tokyo Christian University. I’ll continue to keep Fukushima in my prayers.

An Important Notice

1. **Donation method:** It is now possible to make donations through Mizuho Bank. Overseas donations can be sent to our Mizuho Bank account. *Please see below for more information.*
2. **Changes to camp fees:** Due to our financial situation in order to continue our camps we will need to raise our camp fees and ask for your understanding with these changes.
3. **Hope Fund:** 2017 marks the final year for the Hope Fund. The fund has closed and is no longer available.

Donation Methods

1. Japan Post 郵便振替口座

【記号】 18150 【番号】 32195191

【加入者名】 福島県キリスト教子ども保養プロジェクト

※お申し出下されば振込料無料の専用郵便振替用紙をお送りいたします。(事務局電話:080-4109-8672)

2. Bank Name: **Mizuho Bank, Ltd.**

Swift Code/Bic Code: **MHCBJPJT (or MHCBJPJTXXX)**

Branch Name: **Koriyama Branch**

Beneficiary's Account No.: **724 - 1350643**

Beneficiary's Name: **Fukushimaken Kirisutokyo Kodomo Hoyo Project**

If you would like to make a donation please contact us by email:

office@fukushimahooproject.com

