

March 17, 2011

Grace and Peace from Kumamoto, Japan.

We in Kumamoto continue to watch the 24 hour coverage on TV (although a few stations have now switched to "light programming" and commercials with "be-kind-to-your-neighbor" messages). And we begin to grieve. Kumamoto is still very calm with no shaking at all. It is usually a fairly calm place with very few large earthquakes, but now it seems even more calm compared to the rest of the country. Aftershocks from the original 9.0 quake last Friday, aftershocks from the 6.4 Shizuoka quake on a different fault two nights ago, and aftershocks from the 6.0 Chiba quake yesterday at noon are continuing to be felt fairly constantly. Animals and plants are not the only thing that God made that lives. The earth also lives and breathes and shows us its power. However, we know that the Creator of all of these things is much more alive and powerful than anything else that can happen to His creation. This Lent will be much different than any other year, but we continue to cry out to the Creator who bathes us in His grace. We are reminded of our humanity and frailty.

The ELCA has given permission for the missionaries in the Tokyo area to evacuate west or south, and required a couple to evacuate. She is months pregnant and talked to her doctor before leaving. They arrived in Kumamoto last evening and stayed at our apartment for one night. They will be moving to another missionary home this evening. The new Shinkansen train was full most of the way with standing room only. However, some kind high school girls let them sit down. The Japanese population is continuing to be very calm and polite of one another and all who are have been affected.

March and April is a normal time for transition in Japan. In the missionary community, we have people finishing the school year, and new ones moving in to begin teaching and work in April. This is the case all over Japan as Japanese companies have entrance ceremonies for their new workers on April 1st. This time of year is usually filled with difficult goodbyes and the excitement of newness. Pray that those retiring and finishing their jobs (including missionaries) would be able to have enough closure to their experience, even in the midst of such trauma. Pray that their travels back to the US are smooth and safe. Pray for those who are beginning jobs (including missionaries) that they would have calm heads and hearts as well as excitement to begin new jobs. Their lives and in many cases, their jobs, will be greatly impacted by the state of the country.

Luther Gakuin, the school my husband and I teach at, continues to stay on their normal schedule. We finished classes yesterday, have a sports day today and then have closing ceremonies tomorrow. The students have been mobilized into committees to determine what they can do even during the 3 week spring vacation. They have started with a donation campaign and then will continue with other activities when it becomes more apparent what can be done. The scripture at this morning's daily chapel was Cor. 1 12:12 "In Christ, we are like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts." They continue to bond into one body of Luther Gakuin, then bonding with other schools to work together to assist the full body of Christ--those who were directly affected by this tragedy. Their futures are being determined by how they and the world react to this trauma.

I have been very blessed to have so many people sending emails and their support in so many different ways. Thank you so much. My emails seem to be moving much further than I had ever expected. Please feel free to forward this message where you the information can be utilized. I will continue to add people to my list of contacts as much as possible.

Peace & Prayers, Katie

"Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'"

Katie Sue Narum Miyamoto
1-5-37-602 Shimizumangoku
Kumamoto-shi
Kumamoto 861-8068
JAPAN
096-346-8030