

## Invitation to the Conference

A great attraction of the Tohoku (north-east) region of Japan is its abundant nature and a way of life rooted in that bounty.

In Autumn 2011, I was investigating the lives and medical care of elderly people living in Onagawa Town on the Oshika Peninsula, which suffered tremendous damage from the tsunami of March 2011. My questions about their future lives elicited answers like these:

“I want to live here”

“I want to return to where I lived”

“I want to live in the same way as before” ...        One after another.

I suddenly realized that the place you were born, the place you're used to, is the place you want to return, no matter how destroyed. Our “home” is where we feel comfortable, settled. After the tsunami, many elderly people were evacuated and settled away from the seaside, but not always willingly. While efforts at disaster prevention are understandable, I think that accepting the threat, while living with the ocean and its bounty, should also be valued as a precious way of life for elderly people living along the coast.

Seven years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake. This summer's conference will be held in Matsushima, Miyagi prefecture, known as one of Japan's three most scenic spots. Matsushima was protected from the tsunami by a group of islands, and few residents were injured, but on the wall of the conference venue—Matsushima Century Hotel—a mark indicates the highest point the flood waters reached. The theme of our conference is “Recovery from Disaster and Crisis Situations —The Role of Christian Health Care Workers.” We gladly welcome participants from overseas for this 47th Asian Christian Medical Workers and Student Exchange Program. While preparing for this event, I have witnessed the power of the Lord a number of times, and my faith has been strengthened. I hope many will have a similar experience through this program.

Welcome to Matsushima this summer!

God bless you.

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