

Japan's Quake Creates Opportunity and Obstacles

Much of northern Japan was rattled to wreckage Friday.

The 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck shortly before three o'clock in the afternoon (local time) and spawned several tsunamis, including a 33-foot wave along the country's coastline.

The temblor was the fifth-largest to hit the world since 1900, and the tsunami it set off swallowed whole sections of land as it fanned out across the Pacific Ocean. Warnings were issued for 53 countries, including ones as far as Colombia and Peru.

Radiation contamination from damaged nuclear power reactors is also being reported. Aftershocks followed throughout the weekend as emergency workers scrambled to respond to the overwhelming needs. The death toll is also expected to rise.

Reach Global, the international mission arm of the Evangelical Free Church, has a team in Japan. We spoke to Howard Plucar from Tokyo via Skype about the team's welfare. He says, "We've been doing some phone calling and using Skype and e-mail to find out how everybody is doing. Essentially, our team is healthy." The exception is the Furukawa EFC. So far, there's been no contact with the pastor and wife"

Despite the destruction, Plucar doesn't think the overall ministry will be disrupted much because the bulk of their group is in Kyushu and Sapporo. However, "In the city of Sendai, I think our team-which is one family-will have more opportunity to actually minister to their neighbors because of what's been happening."

TouchGlobal Crisis Response is assessing the situation. Plucar says, "There's going to be immediate need that's going to flow

in through churches and through Non-Governmental Organizations, but I think where the church is really going to have its greatest impact is in the long people rebuild their lives.”

They’re hoping that the local churches will unite in the name of Christ. “As we show the love of Christ, we also declare the meaning of Christ to people whose lives have been turned upside-down and who don’t have a lot of hope. So, to weave meaning into the acts of kindness is going to be key for the church.”

Ask God for mercy upon the people of Japan, especially where tsunami waters have done great damage. Pray for wisdom and sensitivity to know how to move quickly to give aid and comfort to the many that have been affected.