

Report: Japanese Pastors Need Missionary Backup

More problems plagued Japan's damaged nuclear power plant over the weekend. According to reports, 45 tons of highly radioactive water leaked from the Fukushima power station into a gutter that leads to the Pacific Ocean. This was the result of cracks in the runoff container's concrete wall.

While this is another setback in the March 11 devastating earthquake and resulting tsunami, the work of Japanese Christians is ongoing. Their continual care to the disaster victims in the region is nothing short of amazing. This hard work may be what propels the church into future outreach.

President of Asian Access Joe Handley is in Japan. He told Mission Network News that Asian Access went into the disaster zone to host a pastor's seminar and retreat for those who not only lived through the triple disaster but who have also been at the forefront of the relief efforts. Asian Access also invited Adrian DeViser, national director of A2/Sri Lanka, who experienced the Asian tsunami in 2004.

"We wanted to go encourage them, strengthen them, come alongside them and provide counsel," Handley says, adding that these pastors have not only provided the initial relief, but they're doing all sorts of things, from small business creation, to providing aid, counsel and grief care when necessary. "But they're tired," he says. "They're really worn out."

Because of the efforts of the church, Handley says they're now more trusted in the community. The city of Ishinomaki is just one example. "The city governing officials were touched by what the church was doing. They told them, 'You know, there are a lot of people providing relief, but you guys really have

a heart, and we want to help you,' he says. "So the walls between community and church have completely fallen."

However, the churches are now in a situation where they need their space to handle the incredible growth, while also continuing to help the needy. Handley says they've "started to establish centers for hope. And they're hoping to construct some buildings that will be dormitories and relief centers so they can move out of the churches being the centers to actually having a relief center."

Asian Access is raising money for this purpose.

These centers could be instrumental in seeing many turn to Christ. Handley says, "This is a new season in Japan. Pastor after pastor said to me, 'Joe, we need hundreds of missionaries to come to Japan. This is the hour.'"

Because people are searching for hope, Handley believes there's an openness to Christ: "These pastors say we only have a small window here to invest. And that window is anywhere from two to three years. They say, 'We're desperate. We need help.'"

Just one example of the hunger is a church that had a congregation of 10 people. It now numbers 50. "Ten of those people have now been baptized. And all 50 of them have said, 'We so love these people and this church we're going to invite three people to come on Christmas.'"

If you're interested in becoming a missionary to Japan, supporting the work of Asian Access or simply want more information, go to .