



de Boo family
church planting Tokyo

BiJ newsletter

www.believinginjapan.com

#32 2012.01

Geert & Eline de Boo
Thom, Berend, Julie
6-3-2-5112 Kachidoki, Chuo-ku
Tokyo, 104-0054
JAPAN

+81 3 6794 1044
deboo@believinginjapan.com
www.believinginjapan.com

We would like to keep you informed about our church planting ministry in Japan. Please help us to keep our mailing list up to date and let us know when you move or would like to receive this newsletter on a different mail address: deboo@believinginjapan.com

After a busy holiday season we did not start the new year as well-rested as we had hoped. Nevertheless, thankfulness is what keeps us motivated to persevere in building up Christ's church in Japan. The year 2011 has been one of the most tumultuous years of our lives. Literally because of one of the most powerful earthquakes in world history on March 11. Followed by the tsunami and its destructive force. The nuclear disaster. The economic crisis. The fear that rules. The lack of hope. But throughout it all we see God's faithfulness. He does not let go of what his hand started. It reminds us of the lilies that we saw last summer, blooming in between the piles of debris in the disaster struck areas. Symbols of resurrection and new life amidst the brokenness.

all damaged doors, walls and windows are removed. The homes that have not been completely destroyed or deserted are waiting to be fixed. As are many of the damaged hearts waiting to be healed. Hearts full of pain, mourning and fear but without hope. The residents are sitting on the ruins of what used to be their home and their future.

faithfulness > The healing of hearts will take a lifetime. Fixing homes can be done quicker, but money is needed for that and the victims have nothing left. Besides that, the mortgage on their damaged houses has not stopped and payments need to be continued. Almost everybody in the disaster hit area worked as a fisherman or in the fish processing industry. Not much is left of that trade and industry. Boats and factories have been blasted away and the ocean has been polluted by radioactive waste water that was leaked from the destroyed nuclear plant. Six months after the disaster the government stopped the emergency allowances. By that time most relief aid had dried up because all the money had been spent and volunteers were not motivated anymore. We want to remain faithful, so people may recognize us as children of the Father who does not let go and who heals. We do not want the people to feel left out in the cold. That is why we came up with a special campaign called 'Keep Them Warm', through which we could give a heater to every household. Grace City Relief's volunteers are still distributing a meal every Saturday. For many people that is the only hot meal they get to eat that week. They do not have money for healthy food and besides that, the gas pipes have not been repaired which makes cooking difficult. Grace City staff members have fixed up a heavily damaged house and moved in. There are very basic guestrooms for the volunteers. This headquarter has been named 'Hope House' and the doors are always open for local people and volunteers from all over the world who want to contribute to the reconstruction. This permanent presence of Grace City Relief is such an encouragement in the community. People are welcome for a cup of tea, a chat or a Bible study. The Presbyterian Church in Japan, the denomination that we are affiliated with, is preparing to send a church planter to this area. Never before has the church been present in this specific area and it is new ground for the Gospel.



Geert and Eline take turns leading a group of volunteers from Tokyo to the disaster struck area. We prepare and hand out food and other necessary items to the victims. Volunteers also mud out houses, clean them and assist in rebuilding homes.

debris > Cleaning up the debris is still going on. In the first months our church's relief aid organization *GraceCityRelief* handed out hot meals to hundreds of people in the Koganehama neighborhood of the badly struck city Ishinomaki almost every day. Until March 11 about one thousand families lived here; now 134 households are left. At the same time we gathered other necessities like blankets, clothing, diapers, bicycles, rice cookers and so on. The next step was clearing out the first floor of the houses. All furniture and other belongings had been flushed away. In what used to be living rooms or kitchens car wrecks, mud and rotten fish lay accumulated. Hundreds of volunteers came through *GraceCityRelief* to mud out the houses. That way houses are cleaned and



Geert and Eline de Boo are sent by the GZB (Reformed Mission League of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands) to Japan. They work as church planters in Central Tokyo.

asia@gzb.nl | www.gzb.nl
+31 343 512444
PO BOX 28
3970 AA Driebergen
THE NETHERLANDS

connection > But even for Grace City relief it is not easy to find enough volunteers. That is why we started 24 hour relief trips for people working as professionals in Tokyo. Through the internet and our network we recruit volunteers who are willing to leave right after work late Friday night by mini-van. They drive through the night and when they arrive early Saturday morning they go straight to work. At the end of the afternoon they head back south to Tokyo, exhausted but satisfied. That way they can recover and get rest on Sunday, but still contribute despite their busy work life. Dozens of professionals have gotten in touch which is important ministry and the community of Grace City Church through these volunteer-trips. We have also found a successful Japanese Christian business man willing to move into the area to help the local people exploring entrepreneurship.

fruit > Besides visible signs of reconstruction, we have also been able to witness spiritual fruit through the relief effort. Tsuruoka is a middle-aged man and his deep wrinkles testify to a tough life. He is one of the community leaders in Koganehama and every activity of Grace City Relief is coordinated carefully with him. A couple of weeks ago he approached the staff and asked them to share about Jesus and Christianity. It had been bothering him that the local Buddhist association and the priests at the Shinto shrine only seemed to care about their own (financial) wellbeing, even though everybody around them was suffering. Over the last half year following the disasters, he had observed that Christian volunteers had been sacrificially helping others. The 'Keep Them Warm' project finally made him decide to ask the Grace City Relief staff about the motives of the church. "Who is this Jesus that you believe in?" he asked. The love and the joy that the Christians had displayed, contributed to his longing to get to know Jesus. Shortly after, he prayed if God would give him faith. Most Japanese are not leader type persons, but followers. The fact that a leader like Tsuruoka became a believer gives hope that more people will follow.

fruit > Not only amidst the debris in the disaster hit area lilies, flowers symbolizing the resurrection, bloom. Also amidst the asphalt and concrete of Tokyo people come to a living faith in the resurrected Lord. In December Takashi and Saori were baptized. Takashi, in his early thirties, came across the website of our church during his quest for truth. He sent us an email and we invited him to attend a worship services. From that day on he found a new home and felt that he had reached his destination. Saori is a typical working woman. In spite of her self-confident appearance, her heart was desperately looking for something to cling to. She found that in her new husband, who is a Christian and through him she discovered God's truth. Jesus gave her faith and we feel so privileged to see her bloom. After the earthquake GraceCityChurch went through a deep valley. Everybody's life was turned upside down and it took months to recover from that. We could not do that ourselves, but God pulled us through by his power of his Holy Spirit. And the Spirit keeps

swiping through the church. Every week we get in touch with new people. Seekers are added to one of our ten community (small) groups regularly. Every week we welcome first time visitors to the worship service. Some stay, others move on. At least they have heard the Gospel! Through a variety of weekday events we try to reach the target group and serve the city. A good example of this was the Art month we celebrated. Especially well educated Japanese are very interested in art and spend their leisure time in a museum or theatre. For one month GraceCityChurch offered a range of events where Christian artist could show their work. At all the occasions the gospel was being portrayed, whether through a ballet performance of the Messiah or the movie written by a Japanese scenario writer. Art touches the heart, and a warm heart moved by beauty will open up more easily to God who created it all. That is exactly what we see happening during concerts. We try to follow up all new contacts, get to know the people better and see if they are open to reading the Bible together. Purposefully we go to the place where the target group is. In the heart of Tokyo. There we organize lunch meetings where young professionals can hear an encouraging word from the Bible, they are taught practical application for the tough reality in the workplace and receive and participate in prayer. That way they can go back to work better equipped with the gospel of grace.



We recently celebrate Fleur and Lucile's second birthday! Together with Julie, Berend and Thom they had a stressful year with the earthquake and Lucile's surgery. We praise God for the joy each of them gives us and many Japanese.

recovery > We also see recovery and growth going on at home. Lucile underwent major hip surgery and had to be in a cast for 6 weeks. We praise God that her hip seems to be healed at last. It was a joy to celebrate the twins' birthday, and having them actually *walking* around together. Thom, Berend and Julie suffered from a bad and contagious pneumonia. They all recovered relatively quickly and are very healthy in spite of the cold winter weather. All the kids are growing up so fast and they are thoroughly enjoying and blooming at school. Thank you so much for your prayers for our ministry and family. We will continue to pray for God's grace being poured out over your lives, too!

Geert, Eline, Thom, Berend, Julie, Fleur, Lucile

one, two... no one >> GraceCityChurch's youth group plays games with the children of Koganehama on Saturday afternoon. 35 kids are enjoying all the games that we prepared. Their moms are watching them and are keeping their eye on them constantly. Mother Kamata clings to Eline because she is so thankful to see her son Tsubasa play and enjoy himself for the first time in a long time. After every game he comes running to his mom and begs her if they do not have to go grandma's home just yet. She keeps on wiping her tears with a tissue and hopes he does not notice she is crying. Eline asks Mrs. Kamata how many children she has. "One, two... no, just one". Her three year old daughter got swept away by the raging water of the tsunami before her eyes. Mrs. Kamata does not know how to move on. She feels numb. Her house is gone and she found temporarily shelter at her parents' home. She is clinging on to Tsubasa. He is all she has left. He is all that makes life worth living.



We value your ongoing support towards our ministry in Japan. You can send your donations to:

Riverside CRC
604 Comstock Blvd. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Please write "Geert & Eline de Boo, Japan" on the memo line. Your donations are tax-deductable.

For questions about the processing of your donations you can contact Neil Rogers of Riverside CRC (616-361-0604 or riversidecrc@att.net)