

Western Japan was inundated with rain for four straight days last week, resulting in the flooding of rivers and dams, and multiple landslides. To date 183 people have lost their lives, and 65 are still missing. As temperatures in the Pacific Ocean continue to rise, we are experiencing unprecedented weather patterns here in Japan; unseasonable typhoons, sudden summer thunderstorms and hailstorms, intense heat spells, and this latest confluence of heavy rain clouds in one area of Japan.

The papers report 483 landslides, many dams with cracks that could break down at any minute, 7000 people living in evacuation shelters, 270,000 homes effected, 240,000 home without water and electricity, shortage of water and food items for those living in the devastated area. The news we have from our partners at this time is that there have been no reported deaths of church members, but some churches, and church members are among those affected by the flooding. Two days ago, as the weather cleared and residents returned to their homes to clean up after the mess, suddenly a dam broke up in the mountains sending forth a rush of muddy water which hit the town downstream. Several more lives were lost as a result.

The Japanese islands are lush, green and mountainous. (87% of Japan is mountainous) We are used to having rain, and it is customary to have several typhoons develop off the coast of the Philippines and sweep up along the Japanese archipelago in late August and September. But now it is getting to the point that the host of weather channels admit that they are having a hard time predicting the weather. These disasters teach us that we have to be prepared for the unexpected. The storms last week dropped more rain in one area than has ever been recorded in Japanese history.

Our partners are among the many organizations that are now mobilizing to send volunteers down to the affected area. The heat is intense now, and there is the worry that any further rain could trigger more landslides and flooding. Our church partners in the local area will have the challenge of ministering to the people, even while they themselves are burdened by the effects of the disaster. Please keep the people of Japan in your prayers.