

# Churches rally support after Japan earthquake

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Toronto, Canada, March 11 (ENInews)--Churches and church leaders have sent messages of support for the people of Japan after a devastating 8.9-magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami rocked the country on 11 March.

In England, the head of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, sent a message of condolence to the Anglican Archbishop of Japan, Nathaniel Makoto Uematsu, offering sympathy, support and prayers for the Japanese people.

"The news of the horrific earthquake in Japan has shocked us all," wrote Archbishop Williams. "We await further and more detailed news with apprehension, but I want to say immediately that our hearts and our prayers go out to all who have been affected and that we as a church will do what we can to offer practical as well as spiritual support at this time of great suffering and great anxiety for so many."

The primate (national archbishop) of the Anglican Church of Canada also wrote to Archbishop Uematsu expressing his sadness about the disaster and offering prayers for those involved in the relief efforts and those ministering to the needs of "a stricken, grieving nation." Archbishop Fred Hiltz wrote, "as we follow the news we recognize your very real fears of after-shocks and further tsunamis."

Bishop Susan C. Johnson, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada called on church members to pray for the people of Japan "in the midst of the devastation they are experiencing from the earthquake and tsunami" and those around the Pacific Rim who were watching and waiting for the possibility of tsunamis.

A global Anglican mission agency based in the United Kingdom, USPG, also pledged its prayers for those affected by the disaster. Rachel Parry, regional manager for

USPG in Asia, said on the agency's website, "We keep all the affected people in Japan, and in particular our fellow Anglicans, especially those who have not yet been able to be reached in Tohoku Diocese, in our thoughts and prayers."

Meanwhile, religious relief organizations were mobilizing in the hours following the quake.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee announced it would be working with other agencies, including the Geneva-based Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, in its response to survivors in affected countries.

(In an e-mail to its partners on 11 March, ACT Alliance noted that it would not be coordinating an appeal for Japan - "since it is a developed country and has existing arrangements for support" -- but it expected to be needed in the "humanitarian response in a number of countries where we already work ... as a result of the aftershocks and the tsunami that is spreading through the Pacific.")

The Catholic News Agency reported that Caritas Japan, a Roman Catholic aid organization, would be working to assist victims of the disaster. A partner aid group, Catholic Relief Services, was preparing to provide support in other countries in the Pacific, as a tsunami warning was issued for much of the Pacific Rim, including New Zealand, the entire U.S. western coast, Hawaii, Mexico and Central and South America.