

Dr. Joseph Ozawa -- ARI experience '09 – '16:

Having been a volunteer at ARI, almost annually since 2009, I have been through the trials and the joys of ARI. Of course, of special note is ARI's experience in 2011 during and in the aftermath of the triple catastrophe in Tohoku which affected ARI in terms of substantial structural damage from the earthquake and environmental and soil contamination from radioactive fallout. Yet, in the end, ARI survived, became stronger, and the resilience of the participants and staff brought ARI to a new, and indeed higher, level!

As a psychologist and Christian pastor as well, I hope you will forgive me if I say that in my estimation, God's hand has been upon ARI since its inception in 1973 under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Toshihiro Takami and the Theological Seminary for Rural Mission in Machida, Japan.



It has been both a blessing and honor to be a volunteer at ARI!

To me, the dual themes which characterize ARI are:

The mission: ***“rooted in the love of Jesus Christ”*** and the motto: ***“that we may live together.”***

Jesus had only one “new” commandment, that we *“love one another as (he) loved us”* (John 13:34). Hence, to me, it is God's love through and in each one of us which binds ARI together, and as is often stated, ***“Love of God, love of the soil, and love for each other.”*** It is this love which enables the staff, participants, and volunteers from such diverse backgrounds, cultures, and religions to “live together.” It is also God's love for ARI and for the “land,” which enabled it to survive and thrive post-3/11/11.

At ARI, I have counseled participants, staff and volunteers, taught workshops on peer counseling, conflict resolution and dealing with stress and trauma, and participated in “foodlife,” mainly in the kitchen. However, many of the other activities -- community work activities, interaction with Japanese guests (e.g. primary to university students and other visitors), prayer meetings, *“Minngos”*





gospel choir and concerts, Sunday church services, dancing together at the “bon” festivities, the “Harvest Thanksgiving Celebration” (HTC) with the local community, etc. -- have provided a vast, colorful mural which is ARI.

Though the differences of cultures, races, ages, religions, and educational levels sometimes create unique challenges, it is the interaction of people who eat, talk, worship, sing, and dance differently, which gives ARI such a unique flavor. Many with unique tribal dress, accents, habits and personal testimonies makes each day unique. Then subsequent to their stint at ARI, the participants often interact via Facebook, and so via social media, one can continue to be “friends,” to enjoy the total cultural interaction of people as they return to their homelands, from Malawi to India, from the Philippines to Cameroon, from America to Nepal, and beyond!



ARI is a place to grow, learn, to approach with an open heart and mind. Although it is often misperceived as such, it is more than an organic farm, teaching farming techniques. It is also more than a model for servant leadership. It is all that and yet more -- a place where individuals learn to “live together” in community, to experience the true meaning of being “rooted in the love of Jesus Christ.”

