

The following email is from Thomas Proctor, principal, Christchurch Rudolf Steiner School, re the recent earthquake in New Zealand.

Hello everyone in our Federation and Steiner network of schools and friends,

Thank you everyone who has contacted me over the last days. Our little city is in ruins. There is tragedy everywhere that you see both in the news and things that you may never hear. It is so so awful and fills me with tears that so many people have died, so many have torn amputations, spinal injuries, crushed bodies, weeping spirits and that the whole city is ruined - from every historic building to the most modern. The effects will be decades in rebuilding.

We personally are ok. My family is ok and we have had damage but minor compared to most.

School was evacuated at 12.51 on Tuesday. Getting out of my office was like trying to walk on a rocking ships deck - grasping for hand rails before being tossed in the other direction. Files were falling, draws flying open. The kids ran to their designated areas. everyone was accounted for. Children were weeping and hugging. many of the teachers who were terrified after the last quake were pale and shaking but overcame this to bring calmness to their classes. i am so proud of them all. Most kids jackets were inside. It got colder and, with big quakes every few minutes, their anxiety rose - especially as they saw houses on the hills behind us collapsing.

Our flash text communication system with every parent was useless as power was gone. we waited and parents slowly and frantically arrived. some had run from teh city centre and brought stories of modern buildings collapsing. Others told of roads broken and water gushing onto the streets, liquefaction creating gaping holes in roads. St Martins supermarket - just over the river - was impossible to get to. The kindergarten children sat with Robyn and Frances and Annalie and Ellen and their helpers. They kept assuring the little tamariki. In the lower school children sat in their class groups. all our practises for fire drills were SO helpful - we had class lists ticked off, barley sugars, blankets and stories. The Upper school, who are usually a little frisky about fire drills were superb, contained and supportive of each other.

We watched quake after quake ripple across the school land, saw cracks like lightening bolts appear in the concrete slabs. we could hear the deep rumble of teh next quake seconds before it struck.

As i walked around to each class I was so proud of our community of teachers and the increasing number of parents who brought in food, chocolate, bananas, pears, hugs, comfort and assurance.

Lyttelton was cut off, Sumner and Redcliffs too and there were reports that Diamond harbour was isolated. text messages were intimitant.

We were looking at evacuating to a welfare centre. But by 5pm almost most children were gone with someone who was either family or classmate. parents who had lost their homes setup tents in the field.

School is now closed. no water, no electricity. we have to wait for a building inspection before we can return. Ironically there was an insurance assessor inspecting damage from the last quake at school as it struck. he was upstairs in the staff workroom and saw all the computers fall to the ground.

We don't know when we will have water without sewerage as the entire infrastructure of the town is cracked. School could be a long time beginning.

A few Steiner schools have offered to have children and families who want to get out of town. Thank you very very much for the offers. I am trying to coordinate lists of frightened families (most have no power or water or cell phones or petrol) and places in schools that are available. We are looking at Federation funds assisting this. If your school wants to do something for the earthquake you could raise money for these families or just raise money for Chch. The cities needs will be ongoing for a long long time. we wonder whether the central city will survive.

Can you email back to Mark and he could set up an account for this perhaps. please email me at Thomasp@ihug.co.nz (as school is not working) regarding places in your school and families that can take in our parents.

If you aren't in a position to do this, then pray for Christchurch and its suffering families - thank you very much.

Another shock has just passed through - its a weird mixture of inner high alert and helplessness. The sense i get is that this is very different from the last quake. Apart from more deaths and more carnage, there is a weariness and exhaustion from months of vigilance and work that is now useless. That resilience to get up and get at it (like digging out the heavy clay liquifaction) is not as strong and is counter to the much talked about indominatable Canterbury spirit. I think we will need long term continual suport on many levels to get over this one.

Lots of love to you all, and thanks for what you can do.

Yours,

Thomas - for all the teachers