

The Ofunato Update

Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society

Chikako and Fred Whitwer

August 2015

News

- Volunteers were blessed for 3 plus years with access to Grace House as a place to stay and operate from. In October it will be returned to the owner by his request.
- The new partnership with Ofunato Church has gone very well with the pastor visiting many temp housing areas with us.
- Bible message time was asked to be increased in length at a couple temp housing areas.



Tokyo Union Church volunteers with apple farmer Owada-san

Prayer Requests

- Continued healing for Ofunato Bible Baptist Church (OBBC).
- Wisdom for how best to operate out of our temp housing unit without access to Grace House.
- The annual patchwork retreat on Sept 26 and 27. Many tsunami survivors want to attend.
- Strength and wisdom to continue Bible study with Ojima-san.
- How to balance events at temp housing and permanent housing with individual visitation.
- That those who have made a confession of faith would understand what it means.

Praises

- Stephen and Soo Bay returned to the US in June. He will take up a pastor position at New Song church. We thank the Lord for their work as missionaries here in Ofunato. We wish them and their family many blessings.
- Short term volunteer Yukiko Ko was our assistant for 2 months. She took time from her studies at seminary in Hong Kong to help us. Her fiancé Hiroshi from Kyushu came to help for 3 days during this time as well. He is an assistant pastor at a church in Fukuoka as well as public school teacher. See photo on page 2.
- Our request for extension of our stay at Kimachi temp housing area for another year was approved by the city government.
- Pastor Muraya at Ofunato Church has given much of his time to accompanying us to temp housing areas for events. Certain church members have shown a willing to help out as well. A Gospel singing event was held at Ofunato Church in June and July. A teacher comes from Tokyo to teach all who are interested how to sing Gospel music. Next class is on 26 Sept.



Nao, Tokiyasu, Rui, Genshu (Kids Club)

Close Up

Shown to the left are the Kids Club regulars. Also shown are volunteers from Baiko Gakuin University (Inoue-san on the far left and Kuma-san on the far right). These 4th grade boys can be a handful at times. However it is amazing how tuned in they become during the message time. We typically read a few pages from Manga Messiah to begin message time and follow the reading with a few comprehension and application questions. We close with a prayer. Other boys that often show up are Keito, Yuha and Ruito.

Tsunami Zone Information

- The height of the tsunami in Ofunato was just over 8 meters. We learned that the height in neighboring Rikuzen Takata was over 15 meters.
- The pastor of the only protestant church in Rikuzen Takata is nearing retirement. Please pray for a replacement pastor to be found.
- Construction of public housing projects is in full swing. Phase one of Midori-cho is scheduled to be completed in September. It will have nearly 100 units and be located a few hundred meters from the Baptist church. Please pray for a regular event to be started since we know many people that will be moving there.



Short term volunteer Yukiko Ko with fiancé Hiroshi

Donation Information

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Updates

Late July and early August were indeed very hot and humid. By eating salted dried plums called ume-boshi we kept from feeling severe lethargy often associated with Japanese summers. Now in late August the typhoon season has arrived.

We hope to increase personal visits this coming fall. Particularly for those who have made confessions of faith we would like to begin discipleship training. We took a small group of visiting pastors and their wives to Nochinoiri temp housing area. During the visit a couple ladies said they believed in God. Much work is needed to find out what they believe and help them to a fuller understanding.

We are thankful that a meeting location for Kids Club has been found. One of the regular attendees has moved to public housing that has a meeting room. We have been given access to this room on a weekly basis. The other attendees now have to travel farther by bicycle to come to Kids Club. Please pray that the increased distance does not keep them from attending especially during the upcoming winter.

Bible message time has been a part of most temp housing events. We would like to lengthen the time from the current 7 to 8 minutes. Please pray for us to know how best to proceed. Temp housing residents have requested this increase since many are elderly and craft projects are a challenge for them.

High school age teams were frequent volunteers this summer. In June the team from Tokyo Union Church came for the first time. See photo on page 1. They helped at temp housing areas by providing food events which are always popular. They also helped apple farmer Owada-san with removing a bamboo forest near his orchard. Then in August the all-girls high school in Tokyo (Tamagawa Seigakuin) sent a 13 member team. This school has made 8 trips to the tsunami region over the last 3 years. They provided cooking events as well as games and songs.

The owner of Grace House has recovered to some extent from his stroke this past winter. He has moved from hospital rehab back into temp housing. He is more open than ever to our prayers for him.

Email: cfwhitwer@sbcglobal.net

Websites: www.jems.org,
311.ichurch.jp

Church Contact Information

Santa Clara Valley Japanese Christian Church, 40 Union Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 USA
Morioka Seisho Baputesuto Kyoukai, 3-6-36 Ueda, Morioka-shi, 020-0066 Japan