

# The Ofunato Update

## Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society

Chikako and Fred Whitwer

February 2015

### News

- We visited 19 different temp housing areas in December with the Christmas tree craft. The accompanying message was "Strength in the Lord". See photo at right.
- In January we resumed the yarn flower craft (see the November newsletter). The message is "God cares for you as He does the lilies of the field". This is a timely message since many folks are moving to public housing and are worried about the move.



Christmas tree craft at Kamihira

### Prayer Requests

- Continuation of patchwork gathering this spring at the Baptist church.
- Continued growth in the faith of new believer Emi-san.
- Protection for Mei-chan a middle school new believer. She is being mentored by Lina-san a staff member at Grace House.
- Chikako's control of diabetes and various health issues during the remainder of the harsh winter.
- Pray for Japanese pastors and workers to come so that they can help to nurture and disciple new believers and those who are interested.

### Praises

- The Christmas Eve event at the Baptist church was well attended by tsunami survivors and temp housing managers.
- We were saved from a serious accident when our car slipped off the icy road on the way to visit the doctor in January.
- A young fellow named Tomoya has come to belief and was baptized on January 28. We met him after his confession of faith. He worked with us for 3 weeks. See photo on next page.
- A group of pastors from the Doumei conference came to Ofunato to gather information. They may want to send a pastor to the coastal area to work full time. Please pray for a decision.
- The Japanese Wives Bible Study (JWBS) in Yokosuka donated Christmas candy packs along with tracts.
- The International Chapel Ministries in Nara made a financial donation to Grace House for Bibles and reading material.
- Kamihira temp housing area has shown much interest in Jesus' life as a result of the Christmas tree craft making event. They asked pointed and difficult to answer questions about the conception and birth of Jesus. Pray that we can start Bible lessons that will be applicable to them.



Sakiyama-san

### Close Up

Sakiyama-san has confessed faith in Jesus during one of the craft events. Since she is not able to walk without difficulty she cannot attend church events easily. Therefore she has to be visited. She copies Bible scripture and listens to recorded Christian radio programs. We pray for her growth in knowledge of God. She lives with her adult daughter in temp housing. Her son and his family lives near the Baptist church.

**Tsunami Zone Information**

- Schedules were published showing that 5 large temp housing areas (660 units in total) will remain open indefinitely.
- Permanent public housing is being built by the government. Over 800 units in projects across Ofunato are scheduled to be completed by mid-2016.
- The largest public housing complex will have 147 units and be located next to the Baptist church. It is called Midori-machi.
- Of the 3 noticeable earthquakes on February 17 one triggered an evacuation of all low lying areas along the Iwate coast. The tsunami caused by the earthquake was measurable but very small.



Stephen (L) Tomoya (C) Us (R)

**Donation Information**

Make checks payable to JEMS  
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**Updates**

December arrived with mid-winter like conditions. Two large storms dumped more snow than expected for December. January by contrast was "mild". We seem to be adapting to the winter better than in past years.

The lease on Grace House may be extended past June. At this point we are not sure if the owner will have to move from his temp housing unit back to Grace House. Please pray for him in that in recent months he has shown openness to things that are spiritual.

Fred's back pain has subsided and he is able to stretch regularly. The lack of pain has allowed him to return to Satoh-san restaurant to help with the rebuilding on occasion.

The Baptist church continues to face trials. Of the three members one did not attend most of 2014 due to health problems. Another member took a much needed job which keeps him busy on most Sundays. There is no pastor either to shepherd this small flock. The nearest church in the same denomination is 45 minutes away in Kesenuma. That church likewise does not have a pastor however there is a 10 person congregation. Please pray for a pastor to shepherd both churches at the same time, the one in Ofunato and the one in Kesenuma.

Kids club attendance has dropped significantly this winter. Now only Genshu attends faithfully. Some kids have moved away, others have joined after school clubs. Still others perhaps lost interest in English. In any case the one on one tutoring time and Bible story time with Genshu has been a blessing.

People are looking for a casual way to study the Bible and sing Gospel songs. Many are not yet ready to attend a church service and desire a gathering that is seeker friendly. Michiko-san, Ojima-san, Oikawa-san (interested in Gospel singing) and Morita-san are all interested. Please pray for their commitment for a period of time to attend this casual get together. Also, please pray for the availability of a suitable meeting room to use for this purpose.

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Websites: [www.jems.org](http://www.jems.org),  
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