

2011.3.11 Great East Japan Earthquake
Local Aid Committee News Letter from Tohoku
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Issue #20

To all the churches throughout Japan, thank you for your daily support through prayer and donations. After a breathtaking autumn fall, Tohoku Japan is entering into a cold winter. 4 years and 8 months from the disaster, there are still places that are in the process of reconstruction. However, there are places within the stricken areas that are about to face great changes. In this issue, we would like to tell you about the aid taking place at Miyamae temporary housing estate, Motourayashiki temporary housing estate, and the education-aid taking place in Togura elementary school in Miyagi prefecture.

Watari-cho Miyamae Temporary Housing Estate Aid Work



There will be big changes with the aid carried out at Miyamae temporary housing estate. November 16 (Sunday) will be the last tea party held at Miyamae temporary housing estate community hall. This estate can house up to 85 households, but currently there are only 7. Many families left the temporary housings when the new residents were built. Because of this, the number of residents at the temporary housing estates declined, the door to the communal hall got locked and the reception of volunteers was also stopped. The first tea party held at Miyamae temporary housing estate was on the 27th of July 2011. Since then we held 81 tea parties. The reason we were able to hold all of these gatherings was because of God's guidance and the support of all of you throughout Japan. Although we had our last tea party, we intend to continue

visiting Miyamae temporary housing estate and encouraging the residents there until the last resident leaves the estate. Please continue to pray for us. We would like to share with you a message from a former resident of Miyamae temporary housing.

“Thank you for all of your support until now. All those at Miyamae temporary housing are grateful. From the moment we entered the housing estate, we were supported through your many donated goods and each one of us, whether we be young, old, man, or woman, was greeted with warm words. We even started to make new events together. The delicious snacks sent from throughout Japan were filled with love. At the tea parties many times we laughed and cried together and spent good times together. We are greatly thankful to all of you for coming to Watari. Please send our thanks.”

(Sendai Chomeigaoka Church Makoto Kanamaru)

Motourayashiki Temporary Housing Estate Aid Work



Motourayashiki temporary housing estate is at the center of Ishinomaki city in Miyagi prefecture and is an area that was devastated by the tsunami. Taitomi church has been involved with the aid work at this temporary

housing estate since 2011. Since the start, our church has received many volunteer teams from the U.S. and Korea and have take them to the temporary housing estate to hand out gifts and spend time together.

Currently we send daily necessity goods, snacks and flowers once every two to three months. Every Christmas, we visit with children from church and sing hymns and carols together at the communal hall. There was in fact a couple from the estate that traveled a long way to visit our church once. In 2011, there were 42 households at the estate. Now, there are 24.

There are those that are in worry because they could not move into the new residents, and there are those that were able to move but are finding it hard to build relations with their new neighbors. There are many different difficulties and worries. We pray that we can continue to be with the people here and be with them through the joys and the tears. We thank the brothers and sisters throughout Japan and the world that continue to remember and pray for the disaster areas. We hope that we can carry those prayers and hopes to those in the disaster areas.

(Taitomi Church Yu Towery)

Togura Elementary School Education Aid

Since right after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Miyagi Team has carried out aid work for elementary schools (Okawa Elementary and Togura Elementary) on the coast of Miyagi prefecture. After the disaster, the schools were being held in temporary facilities and there were not enough supplies. Therefore we sent food, school supplies, and other supplies to the schools. Through continued visitations to the schools, we were able to carry out aid that met their specific needs. Currently we are carrying out music therapy.

Togura elementary school is situated two hours from Sendai on the South Eastern coast of Miyagi prefecture. A total of 71 students attend the school. During the disaster, the school was swept away with waves that were higher than the building itself. 80% of the students lost their homes.

Since September 2013 we have been carrying out special music therapy classes as a part of the school's music class credits. We have been interacting with three children who have disabilities through music. The two twins (with autism) that we started working with when they were in the first grade are now in the third grade, and the other student (with intellectual disabilities) is in the fifth grade.

It is hard to see the scars that the disaster left on the children. The disaster must have been a harsh experience for these children who have difficulty communicating and expressing their thoughts in words.

Through music it is possible to express things that cannot be

expressed through words and cannot be bottled up. It also becomes a medium for people to connect and express.

Here, we have been seeing how, through sound and music, the children have been able to grow their hearts and bodies. We continue to work, hoping that the children will continue to develop the power and strength to live.

(Sendai Church Nozomi Mukaida, Music Therapist)



New Togura Elementary school. Until now classes had been held in Zennouji elementary and Shizugawa elementary (as temporary facilities). However the new school building was completed in October 2015 in Togura. They build the school on high ground where they can see the coast of Minamisanrikucho. We hope that we will be able to see the children that we work with graduate from this school in three years.

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