

Seeds of Grace

Reaching people, Planting churches... in Japan

October 2011

From the Editor

Hi and welcome to another edition of Seeds of Grace. This month we take a look at how things are going in the Tohoku disaster area seven months after the tsunami struck. So far a number of our workers have joined people from around Japan and the world to volunteer to help the people of Tohoku. This edition of Seeds of Grace hopes to share some of the insights gained as volunteers.



Whilst many around the world have moved on with life and forgotten about the tragedy of March 11th, life for people in Tohoku is still far from normal. Whilst shops, business and essential services may be back to business, there are still many people living in temporary accommodation, still others in shelters, or staying with friends. And many who still have their houses are waiting for carpenters to renovate.

To date a large part of the cleanup work has been cleaning out the damaged houses. But there is still the big task of repairing these houses. And more are still waiting cleaning.

One of the biggest needs approaching is getting these houses ready for the approaching winter and accompanying snows. Samaritans Purse and other volunteer organizations are now sending out teams of skilled carpenters etc to seek to get houses winter-proofed before the snows come. Obviously volunteers skilled in these areas are needed as well as others to continue the clean-up work.

Pray also for the hearts of people who are still suffering from the trauma of March 11th. No-one was unaffected, and many people will carry this trauma for many years to come. Pray for God's peace and love to heal these hurts and to set people free from the fears that haunt them.

Pray for the hearts of long term volunteers, many of whom struggle to cope with what they have witnessed.

Pray too for the salvation of the people of Japan in this time of struggle.



Tohoku: The Cleanup Continues.

Over the last couple of months, many of our workers have served in Tohoku. Here's what a few of them have to say of their times.

"Considering the vast areas of housing that have been damaged, it is obvious that droves of volunteers and a lot more professional carpenters are needed over many more months and years."

"There was a large aftershock and tsunami warning. The house-owner was nervous and urged us to drive inland, to which he and his wife led us. However, nobody else in the neighbourhood took refuge. Considering they had all suffered the same trauma, I find it quite sobering that only one couple has determined to heed warnings. I myself would have shrugged off the warning and got on with work; but this is precisely the attitude that resulted in tragic loss of so many lives. It must be difficult to live with frequent aftershocks and to know how to act wisely, but spiritually speaking, may the Lord teach us all to heed the gracious warning messages He sends."

Jocelyn Pethybridge

"Our job was to dig out drains. The ditches were so full of all kinds of debris and all kinds of household items. It was hard work but my children loved the digging! The area we were working on was about 500m from the sea. The places we worked had been 3m underwater.

It was kind of scary to realise we were so close to the sea. Can you imagine the fear in the hearts of the people who are still there today and actually saw the sea surround their homes and sweep away their friends?"

Edi Wilson

"We were in Ishinomaki. It looked almost as if the tsunami only just came. But things have changed. The church where we performed had had water above your head, but now it has a new floor and is totally usable. Before the tsunami, this church had only five members. Now, a further 25 non-believers also attend. During the concert, the door was open. and throughout, more people off the street came in."

"It really impacted me how Christians from all over Japan have dropped their lives and moved to

this area, where they are simply serving the community. The kindness we received from these Christians was truly of God."

Catherine Porter

"It wasn't long enough (to clean up Tohoku) I want to go again."

Andy Wilson, 13yo

"The work was really hard. The time in the hot springs was too short."

John Wilson, 8yo