

McGinty Prayer Update March 30, 2011; Letter 5 from Rowena (and Mike)

Dear Praying Friends,

We have been very much aware of the prayers of many, especially during this last week of special ministry to the tsunami disaster area. Thank you so much. We had so much energy while we were there to work hard and serve the people who were hard hit. It was great to serve warm meals and lend a hand with physical tasks. As the couple digging out across the street from the church said, "Not only have you warmed our stomachs, but you have warmed our hearts, too." Now that we are safely back to our comfortable bed, tiredness is hitting, so this will probably be short.

We just want you to thank God with us for the opportunities God gave us to be a blessing, especially in the cities of Kamaishi and Ofunato, instead of Miyako where we originally thought we were going. Yes, plans kept changing and flexibility was the key word! We thought we were going to be staying in a church with heat, electricity, gas and water and reach out from there, but instead we had the adventure of staying in a tsunami damaged church. It worked out fine, as the second floor had been spared so we slept there. Water was restored while we were there too. Basically, the area looks like an old-style garbage dump with everything all mixed together, including various fish and tons of mud. So the freezing temperatures and daily snow was probably a blessing to keep the smell down. However, the felt need of the people in the communities around the churches was for strong guys to get the rubble and mud out of their houses and businesses. We were glad to be an encouragement in that way, and then they could take a break at noon to eat a hot rice dish and warm up by the fire (in a barrel) we kept going. Meanwhile, part of our team was finding the shelters where they still needed the donations we had loaded in our vans (rice, toilet paper, diapers, apples, vegetables, apple juice, etc.).

Now we are trying to adjust back to 'normal' life and it does not seem right, somehow. Vivid images of the people we met who will be sleeping in shelters for a long time to come are fresh on our minds. Their resilience and determination to clean up and get back on their feet was an inspiration.

Of course we are grateful to God for being with us, guiding and providing in so many ways, but we are also thankful for heat, hot showers, warm beds, good food, and your prayers. Everything had been shoved aside in this emergency so now we need strength and wisdom as we try to get caught up. Once we take stock of what we have learned from this trip and assess current needs, we will probably put together future missionary teams from Hokkaido to assist in the ongoing recovery efforts. We hope to send out a circular soon with pictures.

Love, Rowena (and Mike)