

The newsletter of eric & sue takamoto

# THE TAKAMETER



november 2011

serving in Japan with Asian Access

## We're Moving to Ishinomaki!

GOD HAS CLEARLY BEEN  
LEADING US TO MAKE ONE  
OF THE MOST EXCITING  
MOVES OF OUR LIVES

### WHERE IS ISHINOMAKI?

Ishinomaki is a fishing city in northeastern Japan (the whole region is called *Tohoku*). It is about **one hour north of Sendai**, where we lived eight years ago, and about **twelve hours northeast** of our current home. The city spreads over a wide area, with a population of about 160,000 people.

### ISHINOMAKI ON 3/11:

- The tsunami flooded about 50% of the city
- The earthquake shifted the whole city southeast & lowered it by about 4 feet, now causing floods during high tides and storms.
- Most of the tsunami affected areas are predominantly in the fishing industry. Many have lost their jobs due to damage to the factories which are usually by the shore.
- One elementary school, Okawa Elementary, was completely destroyed, killing 75 of 108 students and 10 of 13 teachers and staff. The teachers and students were evacuating from the school and were swept away by the tsunami while crossing a nearby river bridge. One of the teachers who survived later committed suicide. It is a city in need of HOPE!

*“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going”*  
(Hebrews 12:8).



*Maecenas pulvinar sagittis enim.*



*We are planning to move in March, when the Japanese school year ends.*





## GOD AT WORK!

### ASIAN ACCESS

Our mission, Asian Access, has been praying and strategically planning to send 4-8 missionary families and singles up to the Tohoku region at this crucial time to partner with visionary churches in the area. They have asked us to be team leaders for the other missionaries in the region. We are excited about the missionaries and the churches in the region who God is calling “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:4).

### BE ONE

We will be joining a house-church network originally based in Osaka called *Be One* (John 17:21). Since the earthquake, they have continually sent people and resources up to Ishinomaki, establishing a local presence. We have loved joining them these past eight months in their efforts, and have been energized by the ministry philosophy and teamwork of volunteers among Japanese Christians and believers from across the globe. We will be one of several families/singles moving into “the zone,” providing a more constant presence and greater ability to serve. The Huddleston family (our kids

together, above) has already moved up for the time being.

Our vision is not just to help with the physical needs there, but also to see people and communities transformed through the power of the Gospel lived out through our incarnational witness. We are more hopeful than we have ever been that God will bring about revival in Japan through the lives and testimonies of the victims.

### RELATIONSHIPS

We are so encouraged by the many wonderful relationships that are already growing deep among the Japanese and international Christian volunteers, and the Ishinomaki residents.

**Mrs. S.** (pictured top right), lost her adult daughter in the tsunami and her home was badly damaged. Yet even in the midst of tragedy, God has used her to bring hope to many. She tells everyone she meets how God was the first to come in and rescue them. In the picture, she is showing her joy over a new oak tree that Eric ordered and volunteers planted in her yard (more stories about her on our blog). Hope is being restored.

**Mr. T.** was the leader of an evacuation center. Though many different volunteer groups have come through their center, he said there was something different about the Be One group. He shared his story: On 3/11, he was swept up by the tsunami and was sucked under the water. “Suddenly, I felt like someone was pulling me out and rescuing me, bringing my head above the water. It was God. It was **this** God.” And he pulled out a necklace underneath his shirt- a cross pendant. *It was this God.* He knew Who saved him. We pray that he will continue to grow closer to the One who saved his life and loves him dearly.



## Why We Feel Called to Move

*“Do not be afraid, Abraham, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great” (Genesis 15:1)*

### **Eric:**

We have been praying over the past two years for God to show us the “next steps” for our ministry here in Japan. God has blessed the incarnational ministry we are doing in Sanda, and has given us deep friendships here. Many of these friends are walking with the Lord. Yet we have experienced various barriers in other cases where God’s love and mercy do not seem to bring about change.

Five days before the triple tragedy on 3/11, four Asian Access families participated in a one-day training on natural disaster preparedness and response. When the earthquake occurred we were all gathered at our annual missions’ conference. We knew that our timely training was more than coincidence and a few of us from our mission quickly answered the call to go north. Since that day, we have both made numerous trips up to the region; each time our hearts break for the victims.

In our trips north, we have partnered with Be One and have focused primarily on several communities in Ishinomaki. Because of the localized efforts and repeat visits, we have already been able to form many close relationships. Through many significant conversations and times of prayer with survivors, we have sensed an overall spiritual openness and God’s clear leading in the lives of individuals. He has shown us His plan for evangelism here: He is revealing himself, but we need to be available to serve, speak, pray. This requires simple obedience on our part, so that He may

show His personal love and hope-bringing power to the needy. Chad Huddleston, one of the Be One leaders, related to us a profound experience from a recent personal retreat. He sensed that God was not commanding their family to move up there, but rather inviting them. There is the promise of a great harvest -- the invitation is to be a participant in it.

Similarly for us, our current ministry is good and there has been fruit. To stay would not be a bad thing. But we want God’s best, for ourselves and our family, but especially for the nation of Japan. We consider God’s invitation to serve there an answer for all of us who have been praying Matthew 9:36-38: “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then [Jesus] said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

### **Sue:**

That Sunday after the earthquake, as our mission gathered in small groups for communion and prayer, I found myself in that somewhat embarrassing situation of full-body sobs, unable to control the deep grief I was feeling. God had touched my heart beyond words with the needs of this region. I didn’t know what it meant, but I knew that something in my heart had turned.

Since Eric has been working in Ishinomaki with Be One, many of us have noticed God changing and

shaping him. I’ve loved watching his leadership and kindness merge together in unique ways as he has helped provide leadership for the many volunteers who have been part of the relief efforts through Be One. Since we first met at Fuller Seminary, I have known that Eric’s heart is most moved by opportunities to do holistic ministry to the needy and destitute. We are excited for the many ways God can use our combined gifts and passions in Ishinomaki.

This past month on numerous occasions God has brought before us the story of Abraham being called to leave and go to an “unknown place” (Hebrews 11:8-10; Genesis 12-15). This story has guided us forward. And God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:1 (quoted above) has served to quell our concerns and remind us of God’s promise for protection and care for us and our children as we make this move.

### **Both of us:**

As we look over the past year, we see many ways in which God has led us to this point. We are thankful that we can partner with other Asian Access missionaries and churches in the Tohoku region in serving the Team Leaders. And we love it that God is calling us to Be One, an innovative church network with proven effectiveness in reaching the Japanese. We don’t know what God is going to do, but our hope is in Him. He is our shield; able to handle our fears and concerns. His abiding presence will guide us, step by step.



Worship at the Be One house with members of the community.



Be One House remodeled

## IF 50% OF THE CITY WAS CITY BY THE TSUNAMI, WHERE WILL YOU LIVE?

PRAY WITH US, PLEASE! While we have been disappointed in Sanda that a bigger house had not opened up, we now understand why! It would have been a bigger expense and a much more challenging emotional leap to move up north if we had recently moved in Sanda. Our Father knows what He is doing! We have no idea where we will live, but we are trusting that God will supply the right home for us. Our prayer is that God will give us a home that is a **refuge** - for our family and for many others -- wherever it is located. It is most likely that, with God's help, we will find and fix up a home that is abandoned because it was damaged by the tsunami (see right).

## WHAT ABOUT THE SCHOOLS? WHAT WILL YOUR KIDS DO?

The schools in the area all are back in session, though in some badly damaged areas the kids are being bussed to other schools. We are planning initially to have our children attend the local Japanese schools, and supplement their learning with English (see *Wanted* on page 3). We are going to take it prayerfully, step by step.

## Q & A

### HOW CAN WE HELP?

There are three big ways that you can help us with this huge move:

1. **Consider bringing a team!** We will be needing **construction teams** and continued **relief teams** - please contact us for more details.
2. **Consider beginning to support us or increasing your support.** Our moving and move-in expenses will be considerable, and we will also be losing about \$1000 in monthly support that we receive from our English classes here.
3. **Would you pray for us?** Really. If you choose **one day a week** or **daily** - we would love to know about it. The transition is going to be huge, but we know this is where God wants us. Pray for our children; for the friends we leave behind in Sanda; for the many who still need hope in Ishinomaki.

### Oswald Chambers:

“Faith is not common sense; common sense is not faith.”



Photos Above: The Be One house, fixed up. (The first floor had been ravaged by the tsunami; after Be One folks helped the owner, who moved away, he rented & then sold the house to them). Below: One of the many tsunami-gutted homes. Pray for God to find us a home in the neighborhood of His choice - perhaps in a little better shape than this one... (smile) that will be a refuge for many.

**SUPPORT THE TAKAMOTOS:**  
**ASIAN ACCESS**  
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