

Michael Mason in Tohoku, Japan- August (Excerpts from original article)

(Next issue will feature Chris Mason in

On August 2nd, I received a phone call about a group of young people from Osaka who wanted to go to Tohoku with a group called Be-One. However, they need 4 people to serve as drivers of the 2 vans...since it was a Monday to Friday trip, this meant that I would not have to miss church on Sunday...Every day I drove numerous vans full of people and trucks full of relief supplies. All in all, it was a great experience for me...I really enjoyed being able to actually work WITH other people to serve those people whose lives continue to be effected by the tsunami last March...A group of 16 people in two vans left Higashi Osaka early Monday morning. Eight of the people (myself included) were somehow connected to Kansai Christian School. The drive to Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture took over 13 hours.



I was assigned to drive one of two trucks that took supplies to the hard-hit area of Minami-Sanrikucho. The trucks were loaded down with relief supplies donated by Ace Hardware in Hawaii. These two men, Paul and Milton, work for Ace Hardware. They had sent over 10 pallets worth of various goods, and then came to Japan to personally help with the distribution.

Our first stop was a community center that was being used as a shelter for those who lost their homes. Some people have been living in these shelters since March 11. After giving the center the items they need, one of the women (right of Michael) from the shelter came out and began to tell us her story. Her whole family was at home when the tsunami struck. Fortunately for her, when the water rushed into her house, it forced her out the window. Once outside the house, the wave carried her up towards the mountainside where she was able to grab on to branches until the wave retreated. Tragically, she was the only one of her family to survive.



This is one of five temporary housings we visited to distribute supplies. It looked like a prison camp

Spent the morning cleaning out gutters in the badly hit area of Ishinomaki.



BBQ!



In the evening, Be-One hosted a BBQ for everyone in the neighborhood. In the first few months after the tsunami, BBQs like this were their only "hot meals with meat" We ended the evening with a rousing game of bingo. The winner received a brand new bicycle(seen in the lower right corner). On the menu was BBQ chicken, grilled veggies, corn on the cob, Costco hotdogs and potato chips. About 40 neighbors joined us for dinner.

Now that I have done it once, I REALLY want to do it again, only this time stay longer than just 3 days. The hard part for me is missing church on Sunday. Recently, we have been experiencing a shortage of people who are able/willing to help out on Sundays, especially in the areas of worship and preaching (two things that I do almost every week.) However, if we can work it out for someone to take over these responsibilities some Sunday, I would like to make another trip up north in the Fall. The camaraderie of working together with other Christians, as well as the obvious impact of shining the light of Jesus through our good deeds is not only fun, but very fulfilling!