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Dear Friend,

I spent the week surrounding Christmas up where the tsunami hit last year. The reality of the devastation finally set in when we drove past the piles of debris. My heart sunk thinking about all the people that the remains represented. Sometimes there would be an enormous pile of just refrigerators or just car tires. It's hard to imagine that many homes and lives being abruptly wiped away.

But meeting the Tohoku people was so precious! They shared their joy and their pain with us. At times, we'd gather in a small social area at the temporary homes. We danced, sang, played games, and ate together. Even living from their humble, box-shaped homes, the victims were hospitable in typical Japanese fashion. Then our team delivered Christmas presents that had been donated, mainly from churches in Tokyo.



At the first set of homes, I had a passenger on my back almost the entire time. She said my jacket felt warm, and she didn't dismount until it was time for tonjiru (a kind of miso soup.)

So, the first present I gave was in a smaller community of homes to a girl named Yuri. Though most of the kids were huddled together, Yuri was



sitting with her grandmother. Like many of the women we presented gifts to, Yuri's grandma began to share about some of the trials that come with their circumstances. I couldn't translate entirely but learned that Yuri-chan is separated from her big sister. I told them I was so sorry, and that I can understand just a tiny bit, because my little sisters are in California. There's a general spirit of perseverance that has helped Japan overcome the disaster, but people were also able to honestly express some of their grief. I'm so thankful we could laugh and cry together.

Sharing our experiences as a team each day was also incredibly valuable. Some students who came on the trip were not Christians, but one freshman said he was so glad he joined the team and that he's growing in compassion for the victims. God's love for people in need is so clear through this situation.

In Christ,

Christina

Please pray for those in temporary homes for:

- ◆ Encouragement in the midst of tragedy
- ◆ New homes (there is a two year limit on temporary housing)
- ◆ Faith in Jesus Christ, who is the only one who can bring true hope

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