

# East Japan Disaster Relief Projects Report March 2013



One of the handmade Christmas cards received by all the residents of the temporary housing in attendance at the Christmas gathering.



Rev. Makoto Iijima gathered together for worship with residents of temporary housing in Kamaishi.



The smiling face of the youngest worshiper at the gathering.



Rev. Makoto Iijima dressed as Santa Claus handing presents to those gathered at the Christmas gathering.

## Celebrating Christmas with Residents of Temporary Housing Worship Becomes a Reality

In December of 2012 the UCCJ held three Christmas gatherings in places which were affected by the tsunami – Kamaishi, Sendai and Ishinomaki. Among these, the UCCJ worked in cooperation with the city of Kamaishi's temporary housing units to have one of the gatherings at Heartful Tono's "Ochakko," a tea time ministry. Heartful Tono's Ochakko ministry began in the summer of 2011 as an outreach to the residents of the temporary housing. Beginning in one location, it now operates in four locations and over 2000 residents have participated in the program. The Christmas gatherings were held at each of the four locations.

Because the residents come from a variety of religious backgrounds the Ochakko ministry has tried to be very low key about its Christian affiliation. However, this event featured scripture readings, hymn singing and prayers. What should have been impossible became a reality when all joined together in worship. This worship was made possible through the efforts of Mutsuko Sasaki, a non-Christian, who has been overseeing the project since its inception. For the past sixteenth months she has worked to develop trust relationships with the residents of the temporary housing which has made the ministry successful.

This year the Ochakko ministry will expand to seven locations. We pray for God's guidance on the future of this ministry. We of the UCCJ pray for all those who continue to suffer from the devastation of March 11, 2011 as we stand beside them in solidarity.

(Makoto Iijima, UCCJ East Japan Disaster Relief Projects Director)

### Total Domestic Giving

(through January 10, 2013)

**¥471,041,521**