



INTERCONNECTIONS

Ministry Update from Rene and Lani Quimbo - Philippines



Dear friends,

July was quite a busy month for us as repair work of the **Hillside Learning Center** in Lacolac was a bit demanding in terms of transporting building materials and supervising work of various carpenters with different attitude towards work, and ongoing ministry programs in all 4 ministry centers.



HLC new concrete posts, beams and walls

We took time to go to Zamboanga City the last week of July to enroll **Alpad and Eugene in the Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Master in Ministry programs**, respectively, at Ebenezer Bible College and Seminary. The enrollment process contributed much to Alpad's spiritual preparation as he had to overcome so many hurdles. Since Alpad is married and has two children, the burden of providing for his family while at the same time a fulltime student must be addressed. The Seminary's long-standing policy is for all undergraduate students to live on campus, but this will not work for Alpad's family since their culture considers a couple separated for a month to be divorced. *The Seminary board made an exception for the first time.* Alpad being a Bajau, felt transported to another world as he walked the Seminary campus. Eugene's brother care helped Alpad become familiar with his travel

and campus routine. On the other hand, Eugene's enrollment was delayed. The graduate department has new leadership, and the Canadian professor who is going to teach the first module has not arrived yet.

Then the Bayanihan Ministry Center in Arena Blanco, Zamboanga City collapsed on August 5. This ministry center was constructed on water. During high tide, sea water can go as high as 8 feet. Heavy rains, high water and strong currents contributed to its destruction, but its foundational structure was too weak to withstand such pressure. We hurried to Zamboanga City to evaluate the damage. We decided to dismantle the building to save what can be reused. Suaib (a Tausug) who is our neighbor and friend, and his family offered to accommodate Eugene, our co-worker, and to hold ministries in their house. He strengthened his house by adding more mangrove posts for these purposes. Suaib and his family (8 people in all) were the ones we rescued together with Eugene during the siege in Zamboanga City by Muslim rebels 2 years ago. They stayed with us in Cagayan de Oro City for one month until it was safe for them to return home. Suaib has given his testimony at church that he will not spare his life to serve the living God in whatever way he can.

The children in Arena Blanco continue to worship every Sunday in the chapel of a government cemetery in the adjacent community that is predominantly non-Muslim. Day care classes are held at Itah's house, the day care teacher.



We hope to finish repairs of the Hillside Learning Center in October, and **begin rebuilding the ministry center in Arena Blanco in November.** We have already ordered some building materials, and will first build a secure shed to store materials. We will also need to strengthen the footbridge connecting the road to our location on water (about 175-200 meters) since we will be transporting heavy construction materials. Since we are bringing carpenters from Cagayan de Oro, (we will employ some carpenters in Arena, but our experience is that they will leave the job anytime for any reason) we also need to rent a place where we can stay. The time we rebuilt the ministry center 3 years ago, we were accommodated by Franciscan missionary sisters who have since given up their apartment due to death threats by some government officials.

We are grateful to Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis Chinese Christian Church, Christ Enrichment Church, Covenant of Grace Church, families and individuals who responded to the urgent need for funds

to rebuild the ministry center.

During our evaluation trip to Zamboanga City, we noticed that Napsa, Alpad's wife, was a bit unhappy. She was uncomfortable with the changes in Alpad being a seminary student. While before he worked as a fish peddler wearing the usual rugged clothes and slippers, he now wears a uniform including shoes, and sometimes speaks in English (since English is the medium of instruction, and used inside the classroom), busy doing homework, and a completely different routine. We sensed her indifference, and spoke with her, assuring her that she is Alpad's home, and she should not feel left out for this is their family's response to God's call, not just Alpad's. When we left, she was feeling much better, and much reassured of her place in this changing family circumstance.

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) had all the structures built on water under its jurisdiction demolished save the **House of Hope Ministry Center** and 2 small structures. PPA requested to use the ministry center to temporarily house the Bajaus until they can find permanent relocation area for them that is suitable to their cultural background. The Bajaus prefer coastal areas, but the Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has

declared coastal areas as "no build" zone since the Super Typhoons Sendong and Yolanda. We continue the regular ministry programs, with much time focused on counseling (*Bajaus are a bit disoriented with their current circumstances and have lots of petty disagreements*). After rebuilding Arena Blanco, hopefully by the end of this year, we will begin construction of the new House of Hope Ministry Center in its new location in Opol. Please pray with us. The budget allocated for its repair in its current location provided by Midway Presbyterian Church together with whatever materials we can salvage from the ministry center, may not be sufficient. Thank you.

We say with the psalmist *"If the Lord had not been on our side...the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away. Praise be to the Lord...our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 124).*

Thank you dear friends for your prayers, encouragement, love, and endurance in fighting with us the good fight of the faith (1 Timothy 6:12)!

Yours in Christ,

Rene and Lani

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