



Interconnections

Ministry Update from Rene and Lani Quimbo serving in the Philippines with PMI

Dear friends,

After closing the doors of our church building up here in the mountain ministry center in Lacolac since the onset of the pandemic, we were finally allowed by the local government authorities to open it for in-person corporate worship beginning July 12, provided we follow strictly the quarantine protocols. We decided to open it for Sunday worship for youth in the morning and for the children in the afternoon to see how it would go. Everything went well.



Our first time back to worship with the youth

The following Sunday, the worship service included the adults. At this time, the extension worship area in the newly repaired ministry building (though still incomplete) was ready for use. **The church was packed with worshipers**, we didn't have enough chairs for everyone. We had children sit on the floor. Needless to say, we were overwhelmed with gratitude to the Lord for the opportunity to worship together after so long a time, several of us shed tears of joy.



Our first children's worship service

Down in the city of Cagayan de Oro, our weekly worship, Bible study, prayer meeting and youth fellowship remain online. The families with very young children would not risk taking their children outside the house. Our co-workers in Zamboanga City longed to open the ministry center in Mampang for Sunday worship service. Upon consultation with the local government authorities, they were told to wait until the covid cases would go down. It has been going up in the city (the same situation in Cagayan de Oro City) due to the influx of LSI's (locally stranded individuals) and ROF's (Returning Overseas Filipinos).

Late this September, our co-workers started visiting church members in Arena Blanco and holding weekly small group Bible studies and prayer meetings in our Muslim neighborhood in Masepla. They just have to wear face mask and face shield at all times.

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In our church in Opol, our son Iking drives there every Sunday since August 23 to preach for the worship service for members who reside in Opol (Rene stays at the Portal Study Center to preach for the online worship service). The Bajaus in Opol come for the worship service while those residing in Cagayan de Oro City were unable to come to Opol due to strict travel protocols. They also were unable to join the online worship service due to issues of internet connection. We also cannot visit them due to localized focused containment in their area (a Bajau woman tested positive for covid and had to be hospitalized). We communicate with them through cell phone calls and texts.



Youth online Bible study lead by Josh (upper right corner), an elder in our church

Despite the pandemic, church is happening all around us: admonishing brothers and sisters who are struggling in dealing with spiritual challenges; ministering to a church member in prison (falsely accused of a drug related crime) by bringing his maintenance medicines and other needs (face to face meeting is not allowed) and caring for his family (he has young children); this guy in prison is now leading a Bible study each night after roll call; guiding students through the completion of their weekly modules (modules are distributed by schools to their students to work on their own at home (some parents are illiterate, others are not knowledgeable enough to be of any help to their

children); helping parents of a 6-month old baby who still could not move much with milk and nutritious food (she eventually passed away first week of September), praying and providing practical help for the sick among our congregations; receiving blessings from the members from what they have grown in their farms (fruits, vegetables, grains, and poultry), being “middlemen” of some members’ farm produce and ornamental plants (members of the Opol church would sell them for a reasonable profit) in Opol and Cagayan de Oro City; assisting as many members in our churches as we can to earn their living (doing farm work, carpentry, housekeeping, laundry, and small scale buy and sell business; several Bajau men were being employed by the city government as look-out in busy intersections); and even in sharing knowledge by teaching others (our drummer in Opol church came to Lacolac, stayed for 21 days, to teach those interested how to play the drums).

In the midst of our current challenges, we encourage one another to keep being church.



Helping the community sell ornamental plants in the city

Even as we are estranged from our customary gathering and ways of doing church, we strive to exercise our faith as devoted believers. We have been inspired by the fidelity of several members to the faith despite restrictions on gathering together, and we are persuaded that the discipleship ministry is being blessed by God.



Our first adult worship service at the mountain ministry center in Lacolac, Baungon, Bukidnon

We are looking forward to expand the Sunday worship service ministry in Opol to include children's church and Sunday school, for Mampang Ministry Center in Zamboanga City to open its doors to the worshipers soon, and to be able to invite the congregation in Lacolac to join the prayer meeting and prayer walk around the community. Please pray with us that these goals will be accomplished to give honor to God. Also, we ask for prayers as we are trying to complete the repairs of the ministry center in Lacolac. While much has already been done (upstairs extension worship area, office, and rooms of co-workers have been completed), there is still much to do in the bathroom and kitchen areas, and we have used up all allocated resources.



Left: Rambutan harvest from our farm to be sold in the city,
Right: farm produce shared with us by church members

Dear friends our heart is filled with gratitude to our God, the Hope of believers. He fills us with hope and faith for everything, whether big or small. We remain, as always, grateful to you all for your faithful ministry of prayer and financial support. We are so blessed by your strong partnership through all these years of Kingdom work. Praying for the accomplishment of God's purpose in your life and ours.

In Him,

Rene and Lani

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