

Netherlands, December, 2020

Christmas greetings from a cold (for me) Netherlands. I am grateful for a small perfect place, not too far from my sending church in the midst of the forest. I made my own “parol”, christmas star.



Christmas in the Philippines

Did you know the Philippines starts celebrating Christmas on September 1? Once the “-ber” months come in, malls will start putting up Christmas decorations and selling holiday stuff. A renowned singer’s “Christmas in Our Hearts” will be heard being played on the first day of September, signalling the start of the Christmas season. And on September 16, the country’s tv news programs will start the 100 days before Christmas countdown.

The “-ber” months also signals the heavy traffic season. Hence, in Metro Manila since last

Christmas season, mall opening hours was moved back an hour so that around 200,000 mall employees will not be on the roads during the rush hour. Weekday sales starting in November were also banned in a bid to decongest the expected holiday rush traffic.

Evangelical churches during this time are also very busy with different activities – cantatas, plays, evangelistic services, parties... Adding to that are various outreaches to orphanages and gift-giving to the poor.

This year will be different. It is unlikely that there will be big gatherings in churches this December to celebrate Christmas like we were used to. But perhaps God wants us to reflect on many Christmas activities we were doing that have become church-centered but not thinking of the two billion people who have never heard of the Christ of Christmas.

What opportunities are there in your country where people hear about Christ during the Christmas season? Have you ever wondered how other countries celebrate Christmas and what opportunities they have to hear about Jesus’ birth? Ime (my colleague in the Philippines)

Home Assignment in Covid times

Like nothing is normal in 2020, also a Home assignment is not. No women/youth/elder groups, church services, prayer meetings etc.

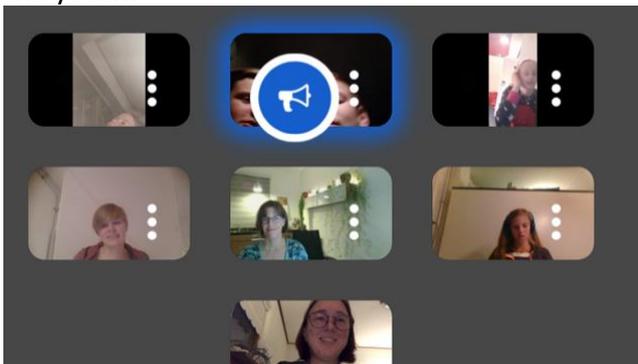
But God opened other doors: I was able to have one-on-one meetings with many people, while taking walks in the forest. I visited families in their houses, faceted with others. Since i live closer to my church now, i was also able to receive more visitors.

It has been good also to be able to join commissions, Bible Study groups, play volleyball with folks from church and participate in the



church covid choir (only 5 people are allowed to sing in the church now).

A very special moment was misison Sunday, in which I was given the chance to preach in my home church on the theme of “show yourself”. We studied Jeremiah 20. This passage shows us clearly that God does not mind us asking Him the difficult questions. And who did not at least think some of those this past year? The youth also helped in the preparations by thinking through how they respond when they are angry. Afterwards we also discussed the message with the youth.



The kids got a Binggo card with words from the message to help them listen well. Other youth helped with the audio visuals. A Dutch service, with Filipino elements, to worship God.



In one church, I was able to submit a video to be used in the service. One prayer meeting will meet again in January, so I hope to go there.

I am also taking a course on “Leadership in change’. Always an important topic, but evenmore in the time of Covid-19 and the coming years. I am learning a lot, we are a small group of 11 pastors from a few denominations. It is quite an intense course, but it also helps to give some rhytm to life in Home assignment during covid lockdowns.

I still had to chair a board meeting in the Philippines via facebook messenger -not recommendable:-), and some other zoom meetings. Webinars also helped to get some extra training and interaction with people. besides that I have been writing small articles for church magazines, websites etc.



Bosnia, Indonesia and Gana... amazing!

Though not easy, it is good to slow down life a little and have more time for walks in nature, some crafts and reading.



Philippines

Though the Philippines' covid numbers seem reasonably low, the country remains on a quite strict lock-down. Hopefully with the vaccine slowly being distributed travel restrictions will be lifted and I will be able to travel back there somewhere in the first quarter of 2021.

Agenda:

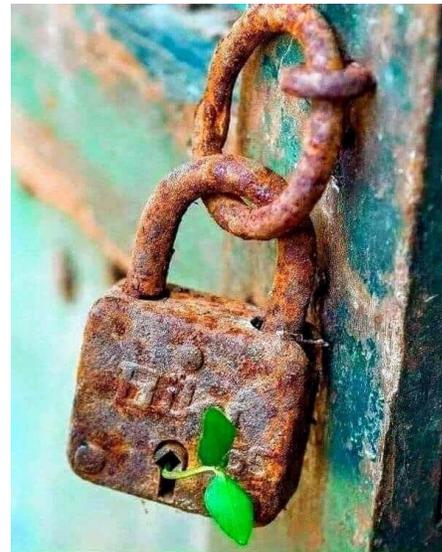
Subject to corona :-).

But if there are possibilities, I like to come by electronically (all over the world), or in real life .. feel free to contact me.

Blessing!

Iljo

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May we enter 2021 with hope from above.



COLOFON

De GZB en de OMF werken samen om de uitzending van Iljo de Keijzer mogelijk te maken.

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