

**Sariaya, March 2008**

**Christmas in March**

Sounds strange in March, but thanks for all your Christmas cards! They are still hanging near the stairs and all Filipinos love to look at them. So many snow and ice pictures... Every now and then still some cards come in late ;-)



*Picture after Christmas celebration.*

Christmas celebration in our new building! Not finished yet, but a great encouragement for the young congregation to be able to use it. For me a first experience to see my name on a banner as the announced speaker in the service. An other Filipino experience ;-)

On the picture we are wearing the traditional Pilipino dress.

**Philippines in the News**

More and more people in the country want our president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to step down. Weekly there are protest actions, and bishops write general letters asking her to step down. The regular elections are only planned in 2010. Please continue to pray for safety for the people here. A new coup attempt can happen, but does it get better through it. Or do we just replace one corrupt leader by the other? Pray that the people will keep their heads cool.

In the mean time the investigations of the suspected actions of Sison, a Philippine communist leader who lives in the Netherlands continue.

**Progress church construction**

Construction is progressing slowly but certainly. With grants from Wageningen (district Markus) and United Kingdom, building continues. The roof is there and walls are being smoothed. Roof still needs work on the inside. Hopefully soon we can put in doors and windows, so the church will be secure and we do not need to take out tables and chairs every week after service. By the end of April we hope to baptize the first 5 persons inside the church. Under the pulpit we are building a mini swimming pool for the baptism ceremony.



*Church under construction.*

**National Assembly**

Once a year, all the pastors from the ABCCOP (Alliance of Bible Christian, Communities of the Philippines) come together –if finances allow- for training and networking. A National Council of Elders was installed. Important issues were discussed with the whole group and more specific issues in all different meetings. A busy time, but a good time to network and encourage each other.



*New National Minister is being installed and prayed for.*

Several people offered different things for a raffle between all the pastors. Most of them only get a very small allowance for being a full-time pastor. The main prizes were a motorbike, laptop, washing machine, but they had many small prizes so all got a prize. Of course everybody wanted to win the motor or laptop. But all were happy with the ones who won. I won 150p (2 euro). One of the pastors thought I could use the money to travel to their village (2 hours from here) to speak in their youth service ;-). In short a good, friendly atmosphere of togetherness.



*Group picture.*

This was the 35-th Coral anniversary of ABCCOP. 35 years of togetherness and blessing

between Bible believing Christian churches in the Philippines

### **Sunday school training**

At the end of this month we hope to start a monthly training for new Sunday school teachers in 2 villages. Besides the monthly training, they will receive on-the-job training with a Sunday school teacher. Bit by bit they will take over more and more of the teacher and the students put what they learned immediately into practice. Since all trainees are still very young believers, we will add some general Biblical training.

### **ACTS Mobile Bible school**



*How to make a good sermon?*

In 6 basic lessons (6 Saturdays) students are prepared for preaching. How to study a text? How to find a theme? Finding Bible passages by a theme? How to make an outline? How to deliver? The last week is practicum. All students must hand in a word-for-word sermon and 5 of them have to actually deliver it in the class. The others will probably use it in their respective churches. The teacher is an experienced preacher and had even written a book about preaching in Tagalog. So after the sessions the students still have good material to work with the next time they need to preach. Slowly the admin is getting more in order and was I able to hand in the year end

report of year 2006 and 2007. Next point on the agenda is the students handing in all the assignments they were supposed to hand in in 2006 and 2007. Also there is a practical part of the school, where students work in ministry and get practical experience –if they are not already pastoring a church, which is still not in place.

### **Just an average week...**

Tuesday is as always team meeting. The team decides instead of further evangelism (A DVBS in new barangay) to continue to focus on a small group of people they are currently for several years already studying the Bible with, with mixed results. I was disappointed, but cannot force people to do something they think they cannot do the extra work it would involve. Wednesday I find out that the Mobile Bible School, that runs since Jan 2006 has not registered a single mark of the students and that all students still need to hand in assignments from 2006! Also the practicum assignments have never been done. A lot of work ahead..

Friday we have a meeting between a church and their missionary -who they forced to no longer be a member of their church, because of misunderstandings and broken relationships-. During the meeting the missionary pastor and the pastor of the sending church start shouting at each other. In the end they found some kind of compromise in the way they will work separate but together for God. But if that works??? Saturday we have e meeting with all leaders from whole province and we need to make a year planning and –budget. The leader of the province does not believe in budgeting. The amount of money that comes in is all depending on God, so what is the use of planning. Just spend it as it comes in. The province wants to send out 2 missionaries to start a church in a new area. There is no budget, so they just need to trust God to provide for theirs needs. But there is not even a place they can live in...

At the same time, this leader only wants to stay in his position if there is a financial compensation from the provincial churches. The person responsible for mission has handed in a 40.000 Peso budget (about 700 euros), but no strategy to get money coming in. last year the provincial income for missions was 0 Pesos. Sunday we have our monthly youth service for 5 different villages. The leaders comes 2 hours later and the song leader too. Why was I here? What are we doing here as missionaries? What can we do?

After the service I am talking with one of the youth, whose life was touched by the message and who wants to grow further in faith. I also remember that my colleagues now, were 10 years ago reached by my colleagues and are church planters now. Guess we are not here for nothing after all. But to follow Jesus and make disciples!

### **Youth work**

Slowly the monthly youth services are owned more by the youth. Song leading, introduction games, merienda (snacks after service), solo singing, Scripture reading and prayer are being done by them now. Sometimes it is stressful if the person carrying a certain responsibility does not show up.



*The music team during one of the services.*



But it is worth the stress, because the youth is growing in faith and confidence standing in front of a group. Growth groups are active in a few of the villages. Hopefully we can start soon too in the other villages with discipling the youth.

### **Church planting**

March 4-5 we attended a church planters retreat. A time of reporting what we have done the last 6 months. As we received further training, we learned more about servant leadership. Something very difficult is Filipino culture, to lead as a servant. Leadership often means power. A real eye-opener for many of them. The last hours we spend on planning how we are going to continue our work; what we continue, what you stop doing and what you start doing.

### **Agenda**

March 12-13: Willem van Dis, our Netherlands OMF director comes for visit to see me and my work here.

April 21-24: training for trainers at OMF. We hope to learn more about the best way to train our Filipino workers.

April 25-May 10: my parents hope to visit.

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