

YEAR-END NEWSLETTER

MACTAN, CEBU, PHILIPPINES



BAPTISM OF 6 SOULS

On November 8, 2025, a small but deeply meaningful baptism took place — coinciding with the landfall of Typhoon Uwan,, when the area was under Public Storm Warning Signal Number 1. Despite the gusty winds and the quiet tension of an approaching storm, six young people (two young women and four young men) gathered to make a public commitment to follow Christ through water baptism. The storm's presence did not overshadow the joy of the moment; instead, it felt like a gentle metaphor: even amid life's unpredictable, "stormy" seasons, the first small steps toward faith can grow into a steady, grounding commitment.

These young people began their spiritual journey not as regular, long-time churchgoers, but by showing up to midweek services as their first, tentative stepping stone. New to the community, they arrived with open minds, and a quiet curiosity that quickly bloomed into eagerness to learn. As students with packed class schedules and school responsibilities, the church worked with them to schedule Bible study sessions that fit their availability and short, consistent meetings that gave them space to engage without added stress. In every session, they carried a raw, sincere hunger for spiritual truth: asking questions about core beliefs, wrestling with confusing biblical passages, and leaning in to connect what they learned to their own daily lives and struggles.

After weeks of studying, reflecting, and praying alongside the church community, each of the six made the personal, intentional decision to be baptized. The stormy conditions on that day became a fitting, memorable bookend to their beginning. Huddled close, supporting one another through the wind, they stepped into the water to symbolize the end of their unguided spiritual searching, and the start of a new life rooted in Christ. For the community, it was a reminder that faith often starts not with grand, perfect gestures, but with a single, brave choice to show up — even when you don't know what comes next.



68TH LADIES INTERCON HOSTED BY MACTAN

The Mactan Church of Christ Ladies hosted the 68th Intercongregational Fellowship on October 12, 2025, centered on the theme How Does Your Garden Grow? (based on Galatians 6:9), with invited speaker Sister Cheryl Famorean.

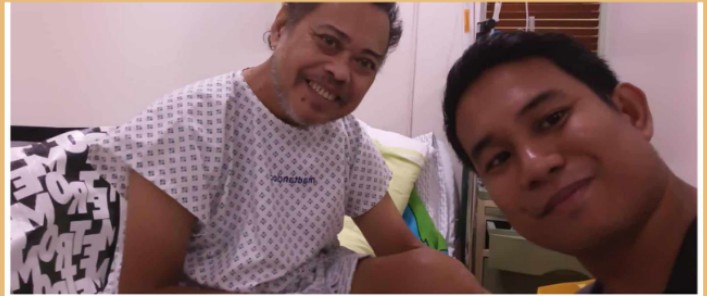
The activity opened formally by an opening prayer, led by Sister Kristel Alegre, and a welcome address from Sister Victoria Japitana. Sister Janova Floria, led everyone in singing praises to God, setting a warm, reverent tone for the day. The fellowship's core goals were to welcome the church's new members, build mutual edification among attendees, and study God's Word — equipping everyone with the "best weapon" for life on earth.

After the opening segment, Sister Cheryl was introduced as the speaker. She opened her topic, then guided a pre-planned group activity: attendees were divided into groups based on the type of flower printed on their name tags. Drawing connections to the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13), Sister Cheryl explained that the growth of a "garden" (one's spiritual life) depends on the quality of its "soil" (one's heart). She emphasized that while people are called to sow seeds (of good deeds, faith, or God's Word), God is the one who brings the growth to completion.

For the activity, each group created a creative presentation to share their understanding of the Parable of the Sower — all of which left a meaningful impact on the audience. Sister Cheryl tied the parable back to the day's theme and Galatians 6:9, highlighting that the verse calls believers to persevere in doing good: a harvest (of spiritual growth, blessings, or changed lives) will come "at the proper time," just as a well-cultivated garden bears fruit. She closed the teaching with a reminder to nurture a "good soil" heart and remain steadfast in good works.

Following the teaching and activities, the group enjoyed a sumptuous lunch. The afternoon continued with singing presentations from each participating congregation, followed by the distribution of certificates of participation and a token of appreciation for Sister Cheryl. Despite challenging weather conditions, the 68th Intercongregational Fellowship concluded as a deeply successful, unifying event.

VISITATION AND BIBLE STUDIES



As part of our work in the Lord's vineyard, our congregation prioritizes two core acts of service: visitation for the sick, and sharing the Gospel through intentional outreach and Bible studies. For the sick, our weekly visitations focus first and foremost on being present: we come to sit with them, offer a listening ear, and share words of encouragement rooted in our faith. We pray with them, and remind them that they are never alone in their struggles, as the Lord walks with them through every hard moment.

Alongside these visitations, we hold weekly Bible studies for prospects with open, receptive hearts, traveling to different areas to share the Gospel. We schedule these sessions in a range of spaces — from small neighborhood gathering spots to meet people where they are, and keep the lessons warm, accessible, and focused on core truths of God's love and salvation. Every week, these Bible studies let us share the Lord's love and the truth of the Gospel with more of our neighbors, fulfilling the call to tend to His vineyard together.

From Seeker to a Preacher

Vivencio Sumalpong is a 38-year-old man who recently graduated from the Philippine Institute of Biblical Studies (PIBS) with an Associate in Church Ministry, a 2-year specialize training course for Christian ministry work. Before enrolling at PIBS, he explored different christian denominations and attended other Bible schools to deepen his knowledge of the Bible. He is someone who earnestly seeks spiritual truth.



The religious group Vivencio and his mother belonged to did not meet their spiritual needs, so they began looking for a community of true Christians. While scrolling through social media, Vivencio came across Mark Copeland's page and became interested in his writings about God. He later discovered that Mark Copeland is a preacher with the Churches of Christ, which inspired him to search for a Churches of Christ congregation in Cebu. Eventually, they learned about the Mactan Church of Christ and connected with our community — a path they believe God guided them toward. Because of Vivencio's eagerness to learn, he and his mother participated in a series of Bible studies, during which they raised many thoughtful questions. Once they fully understood and embraced the spiritual truth they had sought, they decided to be baptized last January 2023. Since his baptism, Vivencio has been a dedicated companion to me in leading Bible studies and evangelism efforts. I encouraged him to enroll at the Philippine Institute of Biblical Studies to receive formal training and expand his biblical knowledge. Now that he has graduated, he serves as a preacher at the Sudtunggan Church of Christ.

DISASTER RELIEF MISSION



September 30 was unforgettable for the communities of northern Cebu — a day that began like any other, and ended with the ground splitting open beneath their feet. At exactly 9:59 PM, a magnitude 6.9 earthquake (one of the strongest ever recorded in the region) struck Bogo City, its epicenter just outside the city limits. The quake and the steady, disorienting aftershocks that followed damaged local Churches of Christ, homes, small businesses, and public spaces; countless residences were rendered uninhabitable, forcing survivors to move into tents set up in open, designated safe zones, and leaving nearly everyone with lingering, unshakable trauma.

In the thick of the crisis, the Mactan Church of Christ and its broader community of believers stepped forward as a lifeline. The church opened its doors as an official drop-off point for donated essential supplies: warm clothing, thick blankets, and personal care items were brought in by community members and well-wishers, then sorted and distributed to the displaced families living in tents. Brethren from across the world also sent monetary funds, earmarked exclusively for purchasing food and safe drinking water — resources that were scarce in the immediate aftermath of the quake, when local infrastructure was broken.

Beyond physical support, the church tended to the emotional and spiritual wounds of the survivors. Local preachers and church leaders organized gentle, consistent Bible studies and one-on-one counseling sessions, held in safe, accessible spaces: undamaged church halls, and even shaded spots near the tent settlements, so no one had to travel far. These sessions were not just about faith — they were a space to grieve, to process fear, and to hold onto small, steady hope, reminding the victims they were not alone in the hard, slow work of recovery.

In late 2025, Cebu faced back-to-back devastating calamities: a magnitude 6.9 earthquake in Bogo City on September 30, followed by Typhoon Tino on November 4, which brought catastrophic flash floods across Cebu City, Talisay City, Mandaue City, Liloan, and Consolacion. The typhoon displaced thousands of families, caused at least 90 fatalities, and became one of the worst flood events in Cebu's recent history — a crushing setback for communities that had only just begun recovering from the earthquake. While our local church congregation was not directly affected by either disaster, we felt called to act, leaning on the Lord's leading to step in for our neighbors.

We launched a disaster relief mission centered at the Mactan Church of Christ, turning our church spaces into a central hub for collecting, sorting, and distributing aid. With the Lord's strength guiding every step, we coordinated with donors near and far: individuals and groups who sent monetary funds, non-perishable food, water, warm clothing, and personal care items, all intended for displaced survivors. We also rallied volunteers from our congregation and neighboring communities — people who set aside their time, relying on the Lord's grace to push through long days of sorting donations, loading delivery vehicles, and traveling to affected areas to hand out supplies directly to families living in tent shelters or flood-damaged homes.

Above all, we thank the Lord: for His constant guidance that led us to launch this mission, for the strength that sustained us through every tiring, emotional day, and for letting us be His instruments to share His love with those hurting. We also extend our deepest gratitude to every donor who shared their resources, and every volunteer who gave their time: you were part of that work, helping us turn the Lord's love into tangible care for our neighbors. We are humbled by the chance to serve, and grateful for the way God used all of us to bring hope to Cebu in its darkest hours.