

September 2018

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting Grace Community Empowerment.

When Jesus came into my life, it was a clear and sharp encounter that has burned in my heart ever since. That led me to answer the call of God 17 years ago. I started GCE holding Isaiah 61:1-2.

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;*

We ran many successful programs and, in 2008, God opened the door for us to salvage the poor and aimless tribal youth from the mountains in Muslim Mindanao. By the grace of God, through Arrows Bible School and internship, we selected those to groom to be the next generation of gospel leaders.

This year, I was deeply hurt that the boys who graduated had their own plans and not all wanted to be tentmakers. It was hard for me to release them, being worried that they will fall back into vices or leave God. Manny said to me that we should rejoice for all their salvation and that even a few have chosen to embrace Matthew 6:33 (*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*), and we need to trust and believe that what God has started in their lives He will bring to completion.

Five of our scholars graduated and went back to Mindanao and started a church with a congregation of a hundred. Four graduates and GCE workers are pioneering in a terrorist area running home bible studies. Six graduates are full-time staff, working alongside the scholars in operating the Dumaguete and Cebu bases. I thank God: whether they be graduates, scholars, or interns, I can see their dedication and joy in the Lord. And we are content and thankful to Jesus.

In His Vineyard,
Sharon and Manny





WEDDING CRUSADE

*Because He
Loves*

August 25, 2018. It was the best of the 11 weddings we have had. For the past ten months, our boys were dedicated in their weekly Bible studies with the pre-marital couples. Bible studies have always been happy times for our couples and a fine way to share Christ. We have seen small groups in Gilutongan Island that have grown from six to 16. At the wedding rehearsal, when Sharon was walking around, a groom from the Chinese Cemetery grabbed her arm so tight as he said “thank you” to her. Every time we enjoy good times like these with the poor, we see Christ there. We thank God for the many salvations—we baptised 94 of them. I want to express our sincere thanks to all the friends and churches that donated and helped in the wedding. It was our first time to have the wedding in a hotel.

REACHING THE MALNOURISHED

We took in 30 new babies last month. Some are so thin that they will need God’s miracle to pull through. The main occupation of the islanders to whom we minister is fishing. Three months out of a year, they cannot fish due to the monsoons. They do not have job alternatives because the islands are an hour away by boat from the main land. So, their children starve during the lean months. And, when food is back on the table, some of these children have lost the desire to eat. Because of these malnourished children, God has opened the door for us to bring the gospel to their parents. We baptized 14 new converts in August. Praise God.



ARROWS SCHOOL OF MINISTRY



We thank God for much success in education: we had 55 enroll and 50 graduate. 29 of the scholars came from Palawan Island.

One of our Arrows scholars had been working as an administrator in the Philippines customs office. At Arrows School, he felt convicted by the Holy Spirit to work full-time at GCE. Praise God. Ronnie, from T'Boli, Mindanao, has returned to GCE, as has Rose Pastre. It was good for them to check out the world for a brief time and now find their place and calling in Christ.

We are always thanking God for His mercy and grace towards the scholars ministry. Since 2011, the Arrows Foundation has year by year funded the Bible-intensive training program. We have seen many from Arrows who have gone back to their communities to help their churches evangelize and make disciples. Praise God.

Thanksgiving

- We thank God for a lady in Hong Kong who donated a jeepney for our Preschool transportation. Our old jeepney has been broken down for almost a year.
- We thank God for Pastor Yarra from Palawan and Pastor Tagal from Maguindanao, Mindanao who have come on board to help us in the pastoral care of the GCE boys.
- We thank God for the years of partnership with a church in Hong Kong and couple of churches in the U.S. They have enabled us to do the programs that have led to the salvation of hundreds of people.
- We thank God for healing Pastor Manny's lung and total recovery from the motorbike accident. He was able to teach in Mindanao this past June.

Prayer Requests

1. In June, Pastor Manny challenged all the boys in GCE to embrace Matthew 6:33. Those who would not seek God's kingdom first, he asked to leave. All except four of our older boys chose plans of their own and did not wish to answer the call of God. Please pray for the 24 men that remain in GCE. These boys have stood the test, and they are so powerful in their preaching, bible studies, and worship.
2. Sharon plans to take a sabbatical in 2019 in Seattle to finish her long-awaited dissertation. Her specialization is Community Transformation. Rose has accepted the call of God to serve full-time in GCE. Sharon feels this is the right timing for her to finish her doctorate.
3. The next Wedding Crusade is August 24, 2019. Join us as we will be praying constantly for the next phase of evangelism as we reach the poor with this program.
4. We are planning to evangelize the youth in Labogon Island through a bi-monthly youth outreach. God has groomed the GCE boys and they are ready to go. A lot of the youth in Labogon are into drugs and most of them are without hope, just like the tribal youth we see in the mountains.
5. Please pray for our ministerial staff, that they will maintain their passion for Christ. Pray for them to stay righteous, and grow in understanding and compassion in their service to the poor.
6. We are constantly praying for the funds for all our different programs.
7. Pray for Neilboy and his team of four serving in the terrorist area in Mindanao. Pray for their protection and the advancement of the gospel. Next year, we intend to bring Arrows School to Mindanao. So many mountain pastors have turned to Islam because of their lack of foundational truth. My hope is to gather the pastors in North Cotabato and re-train them in Christian basics, and how to defend their faith. The problem is most of the Arrows teachers do not want to take this risk and only one has signed-up.
8. We thank God for our donors and we constantly pray for them. Proverbs 19:17 *Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.*