

Missions Moment October 18, 2020

Fred and Fely Tanoja, Serving with OMF in the villages of Pinalangga and Mabuhay, Samar, Philippines. Fred.Fely.Tanoja@omfmail.com



(Background Information)

In February, 2020, following a year of retirement, Fred and Fely returned to the Philippines just before the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic was declared. Not anticipating a lockdown, while visiting Fely's home village of Macrohon on their way to Samar (where they had planted two churches in previous years), the Philippine government locked down the country.

From their prayer update received July 9, 2020: *"We are grateful in the Lord for protection and provision as we continue to spend our lockdown days in our own home in Macrohon, Southern Leyte, about 250 km south of Marabut, Samar, our place of ministry... We were hoping to move to Samar in June but quarantine guidelines prevented us... (Plus) the buildings serving as isolation centers... have no running water, no proper washrooms, let alone a bathroom... and overcrowding. It seems that the door to return to Samar ministry is closed while COVID-19 virus is around..."*

Prayer Update, October 8, 2020

"We pray that you are well and at peace during these uncertain times. By God's grace we are fine and appreciating life in this small village of Lower Villa Jacinta in Macrohon, Southern Leyte. It's been home for almost 7 months, the longest time we have stayed in the area since we've been coming to the Philippines.

"In June, the OMF team in Samar was evacuated to Manila for precautionary reasons. We could have done the same but opted to stay rather than moving to a congested city. We praise God that we are locked down in a place with familiar people of which roughly 90% are Fely's relatives. This has been a time of rest and reflection and being still but also a time of spiritual warfare. Dealing with the reality that God is closing the door to Samar lies heavy in our hearts. We have come so far and overcome oppositions and here we are just 250km away from the people we love and long to see and serve and the door is shut. We wrestled with God, with family and with ourselves, and decided to return to Canada. That was early September, we started writing this letter then, to tell you the news of our return, but we were struggling with something and it was holding us back.

"A good friend compared our situation to Paul's experience in Acts 16:7. "When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to". A few days later, we were reading the same verse in our daily devotion. Please allow us to share an excerpt of the message:

"During such times, it was difficult for me to leave my work unfinished when I believed it was service done in the power of His Spirit. But I finally remembered that the Spirit requires not only a service of work but also a service of waiting... Dear Holy Spirit, my desire is still to be led by You. Nevertheless, my opportunities for usefulness seem to be disappointed, for today the door appears open into a life of service for You but tomorrow it closes before me just as I am about to enter. Teach me to see another door even in the area of service where You have closed a door, a new entrance into Your service. Inspire me with the knowledge that a person may sometimes be called to serve by doing nothing, by staying still, or by waiting. And when I remember the power of Your "gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12), I will not complain that sometimes the Spirit allows me not to go."

"We have been ministering to the church in Macrohon as part of our mandate from OMF while waiting for the big move to Samar. The pastor, who is Fely's first cousin literally handed us the responsibility of teaching and preaching for as long as we are around, he said. Soon we sensed a church divided; struggling with different issues but nobody was talking. We became listening ears to all sides.

"The Lord closed the door to Samar and also delayed our return to Canada. Towards the middle of September, we received a registered letter from the court about Fely's family dispute over properties. A mediation took place on September 22 but no settlement was reached. We are looking forward to a second mediation with the judge presiding hoping that she can bring both sides to an amicable resolution. This process takes time and requires our presence to deal with it. It is in the Lord's hands.

"Praise God for His grace. He allows us to go into battles to bring us closer to Him. He arranges circumstances for us to be in the right place, at the right time to serve the right people He chooses for us to serve. His timing is perfect. Praise God that even in our inadequacies and stubbornness, He does not give up on us.

"The Lord has opened the door to serve the church in Macrohon. We tried to conveniently avoid it for the call to Samar and by returning to Canada. As God wills, we will serve for as long as we are here. We believe that He brought us to this place for this specific reason.

"Please pray with us for:

- **Spiritual growth for the church, teachable hearts and humility for its leaders, and protection from the enemy.**
- **Wisdom as we mentor and model Jesus' life to the church.**
- **Settlement of property dispute to avoid further court cases.**
- **The Lord's perfect timing for us to return to Canada, and for good health and protection from Covid19"**