

reachbulletin

december 2022 vol. 30 no. 3 | resources employment and community horizons

Ordinary Days? The Reversal of Christmas

Vision:

The gospel and God's Kingdom, actively and freely permeating all levels of society in a holistic and contextualized manner.

Mission:

To develop disciples of Jesus Christ as whole persons and promote a contextualized holistic Christian discipleship in the developing world.

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Equipping People to Become Complete in Christ

Ordinary Days? The Reversal of Christmas

by David Brooks

Strings of lights didn't twinkle outside homes, tinsel trees didn't adorn salas, and no one exchanged cards or gifts on the night before the first Christmas. To most, it was an ordinary night, following an ordinary day. Folks drew water, fed flocks, tilled fields, caught fish, bought and sold goods at the market, and offered sacrifices at the temple.

Passages such as Isaiah 9 foretold of a coming Messiah, but no one had a clue when that would happen. After all, God hadn't spoken for 400 years — no new scripture, no prophets, no miracles — nothing.

But ordinary doesn't mean uneventful. A priest finished his duties unable to speak. A woman past her prime became pregnant. A virgin claimed to be pregnant. Her soon-to-be husband decided to keep her. A census stirred a migration across an empire. Finally, angels appeared to shepherds in a field with good news of great joy for all.

Life is full of disturbances. So much so, that even disturbances can seem, well, ordinary — least of all prophetic. Can we blame the Jews for not connecting the dots?

The rhythm of life simply flowed around the disturbances like a stream does around rocks jutting out. Working, eating, sleeping, births and marriages to celebrate, and deaths to mourn reduced small town gossip to the level of mundane chatter.

Even after Jesus' birth, the Holy Family lived under the radar, until wise men showed up talking about a new king. Herod the Great grew nervous and ordered the male babies two years and under murdered.

The Holy Family fled to Egypt prompted by an angel's warning. But



Sheep in the Judean hills outside Bethlehem. Illustration generated by artificial intelligence (MidJourney).

when they finally returned, they set up home in Nazareth and life settled down again. For 30 years, Jesus lived an ordinary Jewish life. He played children's games, managed sibling rivalry, celebrated a bar mitzvah, learned a trade, and grieved a step-father's death.

Life today is no less ordinary. We wake up early, drink coffee, get a head start on traffic going to work or school, come home, and repeat the cycle. People still eat and drink, marry, work, retire, and die.

And like the Jews, we have no idea when Jesus is coming again.

We also experience disturbances. There is COVID-19, wars and rumors of war in the Ukraine and the Middle East, a world system growing more hostile toward God, and leaders falling away from the faith.

Sadly we reverse the focus of Christmas — turning it solely into parties, gifts, and decorations — and forget the hope it brings.

Despite humanity's nearsightedness, God's plan continues unfolding — even if imperceptible. His Kingdom expands east and west, north and south, among young and old, and every color of skin.

The same Jesus who came as a baby to save us from our sins, will come again just as he promised. This time as a King.

May these closing words in Revelation 22:20-21 encourage us:

*“Yes, I am coming soon.”
Amen. Come Lord Jesus.
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with
God's people. Amen.*

That will be no ordinary day! ■

TODA Fellowship: Taking the Word into the Streets



Tricycle drivers meet weekly at a waiting shed to hear God’s Word in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. The fellowship is sponsored by a church attended by the Martinez family.

By Romy Martinez

I first attended a men’s cell group fellowship in Sitio Villa Isidra, Bantug, Muñoz, Nueva Ecija on Saturday, June 18, 2022. Mario, Dennis, and Aris of Majestic Christ Church, in Bantug organized the fellowship. It’s the church that Lalac, Anja, and I have attended since January.

The group, mostly composed of tricycle drivers, met at the DSWD Multi-Purpose Hall. Subsequent meetings were held on Saturdays from 5:00-

6:00 p.m. in the noisy, waiting shed of the Tricycle Operators and Drivers’ Association (TODA), in hopes of engaging more TODA members while waiting in the lineup for passengers.

At the time, we followed a 10-lesson series developed by the church, *Start Up Your New Life*. A typical fellowship lasts one hour — opening prayer, study lesson exposition, *huddle* (small group discussion), and a closing prayer. Usually 12 to 15 people attend.

On July 23, I expounded on forgiveness. Rod Estigoy and Gene Tolentino also joined to help me.

Afterwards, the three of us had our late afternoon one-hour walk.

Recently, we finished the ten-week lesson. Now Mario, Dennis, Aris, and I take turns preparing and delivering 10-15 minute messages based on a biblical theme or passage.

Many of the attendees are regulars. I believe they are being blessed by the fellowship. ■

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Romy Martinez is a Chief Science Research Specialist and concurrent Interim Director of Research, Development and Extension Directorate of the PHilMech in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija.

Infiltrative Disciple Making: PHilMech Christian Fellowship

Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization

#philmechurpremiercenter

A robust fellowship meets at PHilMech and invites Christian speakers from the surrounding science and academic community.

By Romy Martinez

Our online Saturday evening fellowship at PHilMech started September 2021 with six people from my division. We are all born-again Christians. Our intent was to enrich our workplace experience as Christians.

We started with a seven-lesson series from The Gospel Coalition website, *Introduction to Faith and Work*. While going through the material, we began inviting other born-again Christians from the division.

Eventually, we decided to evolve the fellowship into something more standard. It included an opening prayer, sharing and testimony time, a message, takeaways, and closing prayer. We try to keep the fellowship within one hour, Saturdays, 8:00-9:00 p.m. We take turns as facilitator and speaker. A message is typically 20-25 minutes on a topic close to the speaker's heart.

At one point, our number dwindled to three attendees. So we

spent the time praying for fellowship revival. God honored our prayer and the number steadily grew. We also started inviting non-born-again Christians as well, followed by workers from other divisions. As a result, the participants became more heterogenous. Our highest number of attendees was 78 in September. During that fellowship, Dr. Rex Cruz spoke, whom we introduced as former Chancellor of U.P. Los Baños.

After taking turns as speakers, we started inviting guest speakers. Our first guest was Jerry Francisco. In succeeding fellowships, we invited Alma Francisco, Cynthia Ubiña, Elbert Sana, Rod Estigoy, Aldrin Badua, and Gene Tolentino.

We also inviting retired employees of PHilMech to speak, which helped increase the numbers. Lately we have invited speakers from the science and academic community — Ronnie Domingo, Director of Philippine Carabao Center; Karen Barroga, Deputy Director of PhilRice; Eulito

Bautista, former Deputy Director of PhilRice; of course Rex Cruz; our former Director, Silvestre Andales; and PhilRice Director, Doc John de Leon.

Doc John also invited Jay Feliciano of Christ's Commission Fellowship (CCF) and started the M.O.T.I.V.A.T.E. lesson series. The series was written by husband and wife, Peter and Deonna Tan-Chi of CCF. The material was originally intended as a guidebook for parenting but CCF tweaked it for the workplace.

The challenge is how to move this fellowship forward. It remains very loose and anything goes at the moment. We are aware that non-born-again Christians are attending and the fellowship is growing. For the last two months, we averaged 50 attendees. We feel blessed by the numbers. But there are trade-offs, such as the loss of intimacy of a small group that we had in the beginning.

Please pray for directions on how we will take this fellowship forward. ■

Dr. Gloria Camarao: The Influence of a Single Life

by Dr. Teody Solsoloy

I called her, then, as Ma'am. Although she was my thesis adviser, she wanted me to call her Ate Glo — a sign, indeed, of her humility. She is one of God's rarest jewels who significantly touched my life — professionally and spiritually.

Ate Glo inspired me to pursue Entomology because of her dedication and zest in teaching. The rest is history. By God's enabling grace, I followed her footsteps, and enjoyed a fulfilling professional career.

But there is a far greater impact, from which I am grateful to her. God used her to make a significant dent in my life as my spiritual mother. Through her, I realized that even if I have the best life in the world, without Christ, life would be nothing. That was when I felt the stirring of my spirit to know and accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

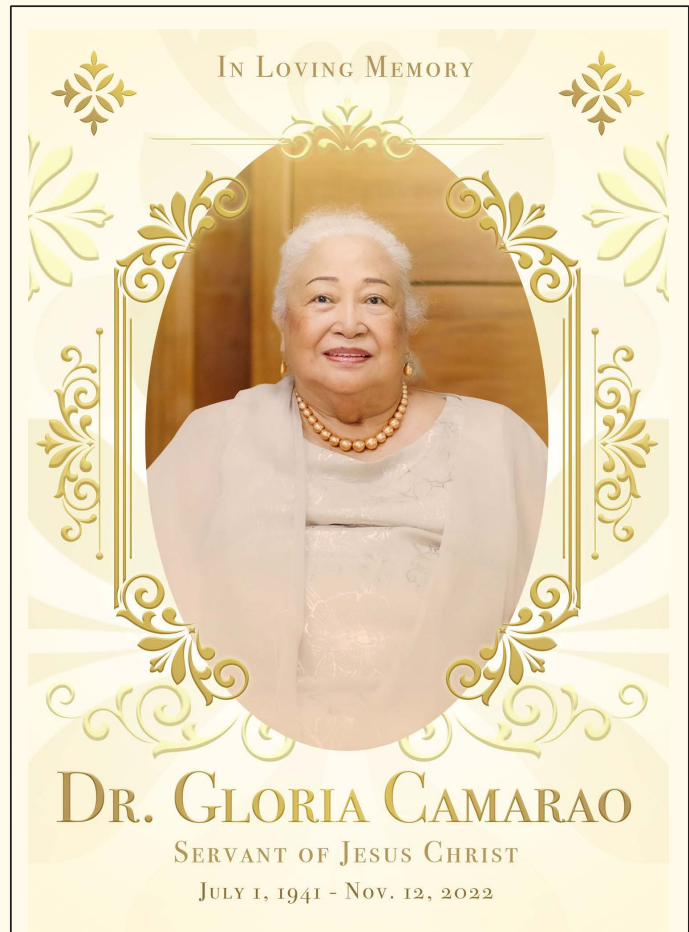
She was like a real mother to me. She continued following me up even when I changed workplaces from the University of Southern Mindanao (USM), Kabacan, North Cotabato to the University of the Philippines at Los Baños. Whenever she traveled to UPLB on an official trip, she took the opportunity to communicate with me.

With Christ as the foundation of my faith, her acts of kindness caused me to grow deeper. What I found remarkable was her persistence, even with others. She also rebuked openly, but gently, a trait she would not compromise if she was highly convicted.

Through her, I was challenged to live the life of discipling others through the verse she gave me, Matthew 28:18-20 — "All authority has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you even to the end of the age."

With Ate Glo now in the glorious presence of Jesus, our family will surely miss her. We love you Ate Glo, and we will always treasure your memories in our hearts. ■

.....
Dr. Teodoro S. Solsoloy is a retired Assistant Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Research and a Conferred Scientist of the Department of Science and Technology. He and his wife, Aida, lead the REACH ministry in Batac, Ilocos Norte.



DR. GLORIA C. CAMARAO is a native of La Union and Pangasinan, later transplanted to Mindanao. She spent 43 years in the academe.

Aside from a doctorate in Entomology from the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Ate Glo had an enduring love for God's Word. She accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord on July 5, 1971, during graduate studies at U.P. For more than forty years, she made disciples at the University of Southern Mindanao, Mindanao State University, U.P. Mindanao, and the Technological University of the Philippines through The Navigators, Lakas Angkan, and REACH, Inc. She was also a member of the Christ Commission Fellowship.

Her inquisitiveness led her to write *The Living Genes* — a verse analysis of REACH's scripture memory program, LAMP 2. (<https://reach-org.com/the-living-genes/>)

By God's grace she and her husband, Fedeserio (Kuya Peding), were instrumental in the first Yutang Saad Conference in December 1984 in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. There they claimed Mindanao for Jesus Christ. It was attended by college and high school students from universities in Mindanao, including parents and siblings.

She and Kuya Peding have three sons (Nathan, Jun and Warner) all walking with the Lord as they raise Christian families.

Looking back over her life, she once said, "To God be all the honor and glory." ■

Rexmel Telan: Caring for God's Creation



(L.) Rexmel Telan conducting a Biodiversity Monitoring System activity at Minasawa Island Game Refuge and Bird Sanctuary. (R.) Rexmel and others were recognized by the DENR for their dedication to the environment.

Ten years ago, Rexmel Telan started working at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). He didn't know it would nearly cost him his life. On September 19, his commitment to preserving nature was recognized by the DENR during the celebration of Philippine Civil Service Month.

Rexmel hails from Peñablanca, Cagayan. He knows the value of work. As a young boy, he grew up with rigid farm activities and caught game and fish. He felt no shame about his upbringing and took it as a challenge to continue dreaming of his future career.

He studied at Isabela State University-Cabagan campus where he supported his studies by working as a student assistant and in the house of Jun Talosig on weekends. From 2009-2012, he attended one of Jun's Bible studies and participated in the REACH-Cabagan campus ministry. He also served as vice president of the REACH campus organization.

After college, work brought him to Batangas and Quezon provinces, but he keeps in contact with the local ministry from time to time.

Costly Care

Rexmel's line of work is not easy. He and co-workers have been fired upon; and he's received death threats, as well as grenades at his boarding house. He says, Genesis 2:15 drives his dedication to environment and natural resources law enforcement. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

On October 2, 2014, Rexmel almost died after his motorcycle slid off the road in a high speed chase of illegal loggers. He hit his head and remained comatose for a week. But only God knows the number of our days and wasn't through with him yet. God fulfilled His promise for



him just as Rexmel declared to God during his convalescence, "If it is your will, take this cup for me". While in the hospital for 20 days, he did not stop meditating on God words and promises and singing praise songs for healing and a fast recovery.

In 2015, he received a permanent item as Forest Ranger. As such, he continued to fully implement the law within the jurisdiction of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office in Real, Quezon. For his work as a Forest Ranger, he was recognized as one of the best by USAID as one *In the Heart of the*

An Open Door: Cebu Partners with Local Churches to Disciple Youth

Forest. Part of his work is using the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System introduced by the USAID from the DENR. The system is used to monitor forest cover changes, indicate species, and forest and biodiversity threats in order to design management plans for conservation areas. They also use open software for efficient data collection and analysis while patrolling the forest area of southern Sierra Madre forest conservation areas for CENRO Real.

In 2018, he passed the Professional Board Exam for Foresters and later promoted as Forest Technician II. Since 2019, he has served as the officer-in-charge of Minasawa Island Game Refuge and Bird Sanctuary. The area is a five-hectare island in the Polillo Islands in Quezon province. Studies show the area is threatened by illegal fishing, hunting, and unregulated tourism. According to the DENR online publication, *Alagad ng Kalikasan Stories*, Rexmel is also on call for forest protection duty on the mainland.

For Prayer

Pray for wisdom and protection for Rexmel as he carries out his role and that his life would be a witness as he cares for God's creation. ■

Note: Below is a link to a video interview with Rexmel on the use of the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System, developed by USAID Philippines's B+WISER Project and the DENR.

<https://www.facebook.com/usaid.bwiser/videos/rexmel-a-forester-on-patrol/1992715114307853/>



REACH leaders in Cebu help an alliance of churches to disciple the youth. Here, Ronald Golez speaks to the youth about Biblical principles on finances.

Every third Sunday of the month, since June, REACH leaders from the Cebu ministry assist an alliance of churches conduct an afternoon youth program. The youth range in age from high school to college with 70 to 100 youth attending.

The program started last year and meets weekly, but the local REACH team agreed to help once a month. With the number of youth attending, the local churches said the program would be hard to sustain financially and manpower-wise, without the assistance of REACH, says Ronald Golez, REACH ministry area coordinator in Cebu.

Ronald says he is touched by the fruitfulness of the ministry and sincerity of the pastors' desire to nurture the youth.

Ronald, Dynna Golez, and Lito Ouano rotate speaking among themselves. The fellowship includes praise

and worship, games, and a message.

The churches are also using REACH's *Discipleship Family Series* to disciple the youth. The Bible studies are by batch outside the regular fellowship. Batch one is in book 3, batch 2 in book 2, and batch 3 in book 1.

The REACH team also splits the cost of food 50/50 with the churches when the team participates.

The local REACH team also hopes to invite the church leaders to visit them so the church leaders can learn more about REACH's disciple-making approach. ■

The NDT Ministry Visit to Mindanao



1. REACH-Butuan City leaders. 2. Drs. Edwin and Binky Cruzado (Pikit, North Cotabato).

“In some ways, the COVID 19 pandemic paralyzed ministry for more than two years. Since then, a lot changed in our daily lives, including activities in the ministry,” said National Discipleship Team (NDT) leader, Jerry Francisco.

With the government’s easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the NDT visited the ministries in Mindanao to touch base, know the condition and needs of the brethren, and provide opportunity for mutual encouragement. The visiting team included Weng Irizari, Jerry and Alma Francisco, and Lito Ouano. They visited Davao City, GenSan City, Butuan City, Cagayan de Oro City, Cabadbaran City, and Pikit, North Cotabato.

Oct. 8 – Davao City

In Davao, they joined the first face-to-face core team fellowship with Jerry being asked to give a word of encouragement. The team also visited Kuya Peding Camarao where Ate Glo was hospitalized. The Camaraos started the REACH ministry in Kabacan, North Cotabato 50 years ago, according to Lito. Lito, a fruit of their ministry, thanked them for their service to the Lord.

Oct. 9 & 10 – GenSan City

Arriving in GenSan, they visited Josue

Ouano and his family. Josue invited the team to join a feeding program (*see story on page 10*) in Brgy. Batomelong, an intended site for a REACH community development project. He introduced the team and made a courtesy call to the barangay officials. Twenty-five children benefited from the feeding program that day.

Oct. 11 & 12 – Pikit, North Cotabato

In Pikit, the team bonded with Ken Alanis and Drs. Edwin and Binky Cruzado. Edwin won the highest number of votes on the provincial board during the May 2022 election. His history of compassionate medical services, especially for the poor, gave him overwhelming support from many voters. Edwin believes God called him to enter the political arena to be salt and light. And people have witnessed that in his life.

Oct. 13 - Cagayan de Oro City

Upon arrival in CDO, the team

visited MSU alumni, Eli and Aileen Marbas. Eli is a former intern and batch mate of Weng Irizari in the former MSU training apartment.

Oct. 14 – Cabadbaran City

From there, they traveled to Cabadbaran City for a dinner fellowship with Erniejun Zamora and Ronnie and Susan Omambac. During the fellowship, Jerry shared a short message on faithfulness.

Oct. 15 & 16 – Butuan City Saturday

To cap off the trip, Jerry and Alma joined the Saturday Dawn Watch of college students and young professionals in the Abba’s training apartment.

Jerry shared a passage from 2 Peter 1:3-10 focusing on godly living. The apartment has 30 new freshmen students. Some YLTPians who are already professionals stayed in the apartment to help Obet and Cerina Mabination, who own the apartment, to disciple the new students.

An afternoon visit was made to the feeding program conducted by Maxie Tiguman in a nearby barangay.

Sunday

Jerry gave a message during their weekly gathering and met the core team after lunch.



1. Davao leaders. 2. Alma and Lito with Joshue Ouano family. 3. Ken Alanis (Pikit) with NDT. 4. NDT with the Marbas family (Cagayan De Oro). 5. Alma with Cababaran leaders.

Jerry says the ministry in Butuan is a strategic place for expanding the ministry in Mindanao because of its consistent leadership succession and dy-

namics such as the training apartment and utilization of interns.

Please pray that some ministry areas can re-establish their local

ministry after being greatly affected by COVID-19. ■

GenSan Feeding Program Aids Child Development



Twenty-five children participated in the feeding program in a General Santos City barangay where REACH hopes to establish a community development project.

by Wilson Irizari

REACH, Inc. conducted a Feeding Program in Barangay Batomelong, General Santos City in October. It was facilitated by REACH Field Officer, Josue Ouano, in partnership with the barangay council. The barangay head of the health committee and members of the Barangay Health Workers (BHW) helped Josue to identify and invite the children through their parents.

About 25 children were brought by their mothers to the center. BHWs helped prepare the food and distribute multivitamins. The event was witnessed by national and regional officers of REACH.

The feeding program is meant to address impaired growth and development due to poor nutrition. It continued through December. According to

UNICEF, a third of the children in the Philippines are stunted. The Philippines ranks fifth among countries in the East Asia and Pacific Region with the highest stunting prevalence and one of ten countries with the highest number of stunted children in the world.

According to the World Health Organization, childhood stunting is “one of the most significant impediments to human development, globally affecting approximately 162 million children under the age of five years. It is largely an irreversible outcome of inadequate nutrition and repeated bouts of infection during the first 1000 days of a child’s life.” Children who are stunted do less well at school and earn lower wages as adults.

One of REACH’s commitments is helping individuals in a holistic manner, including children. ■



Barangay Health Workers helped the REACH worker identify and invite needy children and prepared food and distributed multi-vitamins.

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Wilson Irizari was a youth campus ministry leader in MSU Marawi, a ministry intern, and former REACH Executive Officer. He and his wife, Lety, are now farmer/entrepreneurs in Cagwait, Surigao del Sur. He is also a member of the National Discipleship Team.

Freshmen Welcome Treat at CLSU



CLSU ministry welcomes freshmen students.

It was supposed to be a welcome treat for the freshmen but we were a bit too late in the start of the semester, so we named it a Mid-semester treat, says Anja Martinez.

The purpose was to revive the campus ministry in Central Luzon State University, starting with these freshmen students. We had a short program with a testimonial speaker, Jaypee



Estigoy. He shared his life as a student and how God helped him through out his journey up until now. ■

— Reported by Anja Martinez. Photos by Kenji David Estigoy and Anja.

Fellowships Meet Once Again at the Solsoloy Home



Face-to-face fellowships have resumed for students from Mariano Marcos State University at the home of Drs. Teody and Aida Solsoloy.



Teody and Aida Solsoloy are ministry leaders in Batac, Ilocos Norte. They are amazed how the Lord graciously uses them even in their older age to bringing souls to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 46:4 is particularly mean-

ingful to them: “I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.”

In response, Aida says, “By His wonderful grace, our place now is

filled with students who are captives to the saving grace of Jesus. May this batch of students be successful in their fields of specialization as they find themselves also being immersed in the deep knowledge and joyful worship of God.” ■

REACH Sponsors Feeding Program With Butuan City Pastors' Group

REACH Project Coordinator, Rev. Maxie Tiguman, belongs to *The Good News Butuan* (TGNB) that recently sponsored a feeding program for children in conflict with the law (CICL) and their parents.

TGNB is a group of pastors in Butuan City seeking to partner with local barangays to bring about social transformation. The group sees spirituality as an important component for instilling values in the community for a better society.

REACH, through Maxie, is one of the sponsors of the feeding program that will continue to meet with the youth and their parents.

Among the services that TGNB proposes are supplemental feeding, values formation for parents, and marriage counseling. They also offer free mass weddings for unwed couples through Article 34 of the Family Code. ■



Top: REACH in conjunction with a local pastors' group feeds troubled youth and their parents physically and spiritually. Bottom: Maxie Tiguman, REACH Project Coordinator, gives encouragement to parents.

reachbulletin
december 2022 vol. 30 no. 3

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an imaginative
use of resources
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of the gospel

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Disciplemaking in the Developing World

REACH Ministries is developing disciples of Jesus Christ as whole persons in the context of the developing world. Specifically, it seeks to maximize the growth of disciples and disciple-makers in the face of complex social and economic environments in the developing world. Toward this end, REACH is committed to the following: the whole person; indigenous leadership styles; the poor; and disciplemaking through—staff development; ministry enhancement; socio-economic development; high school and collegiate outreach; developing contextualized materials; and practicing godly administration and management.