



# reachbulletin

december 2023 vol. 31 no. 3 | resources, employment and community horizons

## God's Tender Mercy

### **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.

**Equipping People to Become Complete in Christ**

# The Tender Mercy of Christmas:

## Seeing God beyond imperfect models

Were you disciplined harshly as a child? It's easy to confuse God with the earthly authority figures around us. But Zechariah's song in Luke 1:67-79 helps us see God beyond imperfect models.

by David Harlen Brooks

Zechariah's song was personal and prophetic — joyful as a new father and full of wonder as a worshiper. Zechariah, a Jewish priest, served in the temple. His wife, Elizabeth, just gave birth to John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Jesus' ministry as the promised Messiah.

Zechariah's song reminded the Israelites that:

- God keeps promises; He doesn't break them. Jesus was born through the line of King David (Isaiah 11:1) to crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15),
- He comes to His people; He doesn't wait for them to come to Him (v. 68),
- He redeems His people; He doesn't cast them away when they disobey (v. 68),
- He raises a horn (or provides a means) of salvation; He doesn't withhold it (v. 69),
- and He provides safety from enemies; He never abandons His children (v. 71-72).

### Tender Mercy

Twice, Zechariah mentions God's mercy (vs. 72, 78). God's love gift to a rebellious human race came as a baby. Tender mercy, not judgment, prompted Jesus' arrival on Christmas day.

Webster's dictionary defines mercy as "compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone with whom



*Tender mercy, not judgment, prompted Jesus' arrival on Christmas day.*

it is within one's power to punish or harm." God had all the reason to punish humankind and the power to do it. He chose not to.

### To Care or Not to Care

The Bible contrasts God with a wicked judge (Luke 18:1-8) who repeatedly ignored a widow's plea for justice. Her persistence eventually wore him down. He relented without a change of heart. He just wanted to get rid of her. Her justice came without tenderness involved.

However, the Maker of Heaven and Earth is a different judge. When the Israelites worked as slaves in Egypt and cried out, "God heard their groan-

ing, and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (Exodus 2:24). But it didn't end with only concern. He sent Moses to deliver them and return them to the land of their forefathers.

Humanity's suffering under the bondage of sin also moves God — He sent Jesus to free us by shedding his blood on the cross to pay for our sin.

### Turning on the Light

Zechariah said God's mercy "shines on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (v.79). When angels sang peace on earth good will to men (Luke 2:14), they meant more than a world without war.

If we are honest, we long for peace when our inner judge points a finger, condemning us. Strong's Concordance describes peace as quietness and rest. We can stop looking over our shoulder. God doesn't keep records of our failures.

God's tender mercy shields us from judgment, relieves us from suffering and self-inflicted shame, and enables us to become like Him in character.

As we hang our lights and trim our trees, listen to Christmas music, and gather with family, be grateful. Jesus didn't arrive angry, bent on throwing our muck in our faces.

When we receive Jesus' forgiveness of our sins, the benefit outlasts any electronic gadget or clothing found under the Christmas tree. And it fills us more than any Christmas meal ever could.

God hears, sees, and responds to our physical and spiritual needs because of His tender mercy. ■

# Remembering Relly Miguel

August 24, 1951-November 26, 2023



*Relly Miguel's smile, his gentle spirit, and love for God blessed many in and outside the REACH ministry.*

**M**y association with Relly Miguel started about 45 years ago as we started our respective careers. We were both employed at what was then called the Central Bank of the Philippines (CBP), now *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas*.

He was a Certified Public Accountant and passed a very competitive examination test given by the CBP for anyone wanting to become a bank examiner and do supervision and examination of institutions under the CBP/BSP.

A couple of weeks after my employment, I started to share the Good News to my officemates and new friends in the CBP and also co-facilitated bible studies in the Bank that involved employees from different departments.

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by Eduardo C. Jimenez

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Most of the time as I facilitated the sessions, I presented the gospel using the *Bridge Illustration* and quoted scripture.

I first met Relly in one of those bible studies. He got excited that the gospel could be presented in a clear manner and that there was a way to systematically memorize Bible verses. We started to spend quality time together and team up to conduct bible studies in other departments of the Bank.

He also started to attend Metro Manila REACH/Lakas-Angkan activities and involved in numerous programs and leadership functions — eventually becoming our corporate treasurer and member of the Board for a long time. He also initiated several bible studies outside of the Bank (the church he attended, in dormitories, and with employees of banks he was examining, etc.).

Whenever I remember Relly, I am reminded of his (and his wife, Daisy's) laudable values and traits: Relly was one of the most, in fact, the most reliable person I can think of if given an assignment or function. His and Daisy's generosity is beyond measure. They give and respond immediately to various needs presented to them. If they sense that someone was in need, they would take the initiative to offer help, be it financial or otherwise.

Another character trait of Relly that I appreciated so much is his total dependence on God, no matter what happens. I clearly remember visiting Daisy in the hospital after she gave birth to a still-born baby, after having two or three miscarriages. I was negatively affected emotionally to the point of crying and questioning God for His *seeming unfairness* in the lives of Daisy and Relly. In the midst of their grief, Relly was the one who hugged me and calmed my emotions.

I will definitely miss Relly's winsome smile, his gentle spirit, and his child-like faith and commitment to the Triune God. I saw in his life the reality that there's a friend that sticks closer than a brother, and that's Relly.

So long my brother, goodbye for the moment. Rest in peace in the bosom of the Heavenly Father. ■



*When brothers and sisters in the Lord, regardless of age, social status, and nationality meet together, there is no shortage to the free flow of joy, fun, and humor. Fellowshiping, learning, discovering, touring, eating, and building good memories together made the whole activity memorable.*

## First Cross-Cultural Exposure Trip to the Philippines

The Indochina Mission partnership between Reach Ministries International and REACH, Inc. is undergoing a gradual transition. We are shifting our focus from a disciple-making program with Filipino missionaries on site to one that is developing a local-based ministry that is nationally operated and maintained overtime.

On July 23-27, 2023, the first cross cultural exposure trip to the Philippines was held at the University of the

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by Paul Pasicolan

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Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna with intermittent trips to Tagaytay City, Metro Manila, and nearby vicinities.

### Objectives

- Acquainting participants with REACH's distinctives, the BASICS of discipleship, and best ministry practices,
- Familiarize them with Filipino culture and gain a sense of oneness and bonding in the Body of Christ, in particular the REACH disciple-making ministry, and
- Tour them to selected scenic views and historical landmarks in Manila and nearby areas.

It was indeed a wonderful time together with a perfect blend of four Khmers, four Myanmar, three Chinese,



Participants take a break between teaching sessions to taste Filipino food and view Taal Volcano in Tagaytay.

one Filipino American, and eight Filipinos to make a total of 20 participants.

Both the welcome-orientation party and farewell fellowship, served with sumptuous Filipino dishes, were held at the Pasicolan residence in Los Baños.

### Ministry Exposure

The following topics on the BASICs were given on the first day: *The Focus Chart*, *Wheel Illustration*, and the *Word-Prayer Illustrations*. This was followed on the third day with REACH's distinctives, best ministry practices, and the IMP vision and mission strategies. A group discussion for each topic gave participants time to examine and reflect on the substance of the subject matter.

Foreign participants realized the importance of practicing the BASICs for ministry growth, sustainability, and fruitfulness. Likewise, the REACH distinctives and best ministry practices helped them understand the key to organizational stability, longevity, and relevance, especially for a movement with an infiltrative and holistic approach to world missions in developing countries.

A fellowship each night enabled everyone to listen to personal testimonies and country ministry updates. On the last evening, a farewell fellow-

ship was held for sharing challenges, lessons learned, and a way forward.

This was graced by the UPLB-REACH professionals ministry as the host. The participants appreciated the close family relationship among REACH members and noticed how the young professionals at UPLB ministry demonstrated the dynamics of a well-coordinated ministry and body life among the community of believers.

### Cultural Exposure

Field trips were scheduled intermittently with the lecture days. A visit to Tagaytay City gave foreign delegates an overlooking view of Taal Volcano and the lake surrounding it.

Some tried the zipline suspension flight that boosted their adrenalin level as they crossed the 500-meter-long stretch from point of origin to the end of the line and back. The rest of the day included lunch at a Pilipino-Thai resto and shopping at SM Calamba for Filipino native souvenir items to bring home.

A city tour in Manila rounded out the last day. The visit to the Museum of Natural History showed participants the richness of the Philippines in biodiversity resources alongside the many scenic natural landscapes.

The next destination was the replica of Italy at McKinley, Global City, Taguig. Participants enjoyed touring and taking selfies at the Venetian Plaza along the blue waters of the Venice Grand Canal. We took our lunch at the Sea Food Resto, in which everyone ate with bare hand in a *boodle fight* eating stance. Finally, an eat-all-you-can farewell dinner was held at Cabalen Resto, SM Mall of Asia. It was a wonderful day for everybody that fully satisfied all their senses, from seeing, feeling, to hearing, smelling, and tasting.

### Lessons Learned

To summarize the lessons gained from the cross-cultural exposure trip, the participants learned the following:

1. Though they are of different nationalities and individually unique, being one in Christ makes them secure and spontaneous in relating with one another,
2. When brothers and sisters in the Lord, regardless of age, social status, and nationality meet together, there is no shortage to the free flow of joy, fun, and humor. Fellowshiping, learning, discovering, touring, eating, and building



Top: A Plenary session with the participants. Bottom left: Tess Lozada talks about the growth stages of a Christian. Middle: Loosening up. Right: Ivan and Nan Matu during a ministry update.

good memories together made the whole activity memorable,

3. Most importantly, the food for the soul topped the learning they gained. The BASICs (Word, Prayer, Fellowship, and Witnessing) are fundamental requirements for growth, maturity, and fruitfulness for God's glory and service to the Kingdom. Also, REACH is a strategic discipleship

- and mission movement because of its infiltrative, holistic, and transformational distinctives,
4. Lastly, the participants desired to have more cross cultural exposure trips. Aside from learning more about each other's national and cultural heritage, they developed a stronger sense of family belongingness in the Body of Christ.

For this reason, we look forward to another IMP cross cultural exposure trip to Cambodia in 2025.

To God be the glory for such a wonderful and successful event. Thanks to all who contributed their service and prayer support. ■

# From Uncertainty to Purpose

Roxas City: Maribeth Calinao's Journey

by Angelie Magcanam

In the fabric of human life, some stories show remarkable change. The story of Maribeth Calinao, or Beth, to her friends, is one.

As a student, she describes herself as unfocused and lacking meaning. She faced a void that worldly pursuits could not fill. Within this struggle, she stumbled upon a community that introduced her to Jesus.

The turning point occurred during her third year in college in 2016. Ate Elai Dadivas invited her to talk privately during an undergraduate fellowship. Beth said, "I never imagined walking through a door that only God could open after leaving that room." The encounter sparked a spiritual awakening for her.

Old habits and perspectives faded away. Jesus' teachings of love, forgiveness, and compassion became her guiding principles. Her Ates' and Kuyas' discipleship, generosity, and patience shaped her outlook on life and relationships.

Yet, obstacles filled the journey of change. Beth encountered doubt from old friends and her newfound beliefs were put to the test by internal conflicts. Sometimes she took pride in her achievements and expressed herself using offensive language without realizing it. However, her faith provided a foundation, enabling her

to experience personal growth and a deepening understanding of her faith.

Central to Beth's journey was a supportive community. Her commitment was strengthened by fellow believers in the ministry. They provided a network of encouragement.

Through the guidance of Kuya Jerry and Ate Alma Francisco, the Dadivas family, and others, she became a ministry intern in Roxas City before the pandemic.

She was amazed by God's revelations through relationships formed with high school students in small-group fellowships and the training apartment. These high-schoolers received and professed their faith in Jesus with the grace of God and shared their faith with their family.

Beth's life stands as a testament to the enduring impact of knowing Jesus. Relationships were healed, family needs were met, and prayer became a priority for her. As a result, she could encourage those looking for meaning in life. Despite her faults, heartbreaks, losses, and disappointments, she is excited to see what God will do through her life.



*Maribeth Calinao found old habits and perspectives fading away as God worked in her life through His Word and the support of believers in the REACH-Roxas ministry.*

Her life, once characterized by despondency, now echoes the power of knowing Jesus. Maribeth's faith led her to personal salvation and a sense of purpose that still inspires her journey. ■

**Maribeth Calinao** graduated from Capiz State University in Roxas City in 2018 with a B.S. in Accountancy. She served as a ministry intern from May 2019–October 2020. She is currently a store accountant in Iloilo City.

## REACH Engages Community in Mindanao



*REACH is assisting a community in Mindanao to assess their needs and work together to solve their concerns and develop local leadership.*

**F**orty-six people registered to join a people's organization (PO) that REACH is establishing in Mindanao. The program entered stage two and aims to empower the impoverished community. Two short-term projects were also identified.

The four stages include entry, engage, empower, and exit.

### Entry Stage

A survey taken by a REACH field worker revealed:

- P4,744 average income per household,
- Lack of employment,
- Garbage poses a health problem,
- Twenty-five households are without a CR (toilet),
- Most residents do not own the lot where they live,
- 90% can read and write,
- 56% graduated from high school,
- and only 7% attended college.

### Engage Stage

To encourage ownership of the

project, residents participated in an appreciative inquiry.

Residents identified a need for more toilets and a replacement of a pitcher pump in a water project.

The field worker said the garbage situation is a combined failure of the LGU to collect garbage and the community's habit of throwing garbage wherever they want.

The empowerment stage will include a values program and leadership training that can reproduce itself in the community. That will indicate when the project is self-sustaining and lead to the exit stage.

### People's Organization

A people's organization is defined as an association, cooperative, or a legal

entity established by members to address community concerns. The benefits will be shared by the members.

Registration is ongoing with the regional office of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) based in General Santos City. DOLE requires having a savings program to provide capital for the people's organization. ■

### Prayer Requests

- Pray that REACH can train the officers of the PO to run the association.
- Pray for the program's receptivity among the people and that they will pitch in to help with its success.
- Pray for wisdom, strength, and stamina for the field worker as he learns the language and guides the association's formation.



# Combating Poverty and Ignorance Through Education



A partnership between REACH and Open Heart Foundation (OHF) is providing educational assistance to qualified students from Cagwait, Surigao del Sur. OHF operates around the Philippines but it partners with local organizations to monitor students outside the National Capital Region.

Here, OHF provides the funds and REACH oversees implementation. REACH Board Chair, Wilson “Weng” Irizari volunteered to coordinate the program in Cagwait. The partnership will continue for at least four years.

The partnership also gives REACH an opportunity to have a spiritual impact in the students’ lives.

Weng screens applicants, monitors the beneficiaries, distributes the allowances, and reports to OHF on the students’ semestral performance and other concerns that arise.

OHF believes that proper education is the key to liberates young



*Top: Students receive checks for their college studies. Bottom: Students meet together during an initial meeting.*

minds from ignorance and poverty.

Aside from financial help, OHF also provides:

- Psychosocial interventions,
- Advocacy on children’s rights,
- Reinforcement/Remediation activities/Tutorial,
- Independent living for young

adults,

- Sociocultural activities,
- Technical assistance for Children and Youth Development Programs,
- Network building, and
- Referrals for medical care. ■

# Romy Martinez Named New Ministry Coordinator in Muñoz



*Romy Martinez takes over as REACH-Muñoz ministry area coordinator.*

## 1. How did you come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

During my college days in UP Los Baños in the early 1980s, a number of Christians and Christian groups, including REACH–Lakas Angkan shared the Gospel to me. But I did not make any commitment and actually shied away from any bible-study groups. It was in 1995 when I started reading the Bible seriously. I cannot remember the exact date when I prayed to God to surrender my unbelief. I saw a rainbow that

day. Remembering the study of the rainbow after the Flood, I felt peace with God (Genesis 9).

## 2. How did you become involved in REACH?

I became involved through REACH-CLSU. Lalac, Rod, Gene, and Ethel were office mates at PHilMech. Ate Oyay was one of our bosses then.

## 3. How has REACH helped you grow in your Christian life?

My family and I had no church affiliation, so most of my Christian activities revolved around REACH-CLSU. It was only in the past two years that we started involving with a local church.

## 4. What is the main lesson you've learned since becoming a Christian?

Becoming a Christian is not a lone-ranger affair. With a personal relationship with the Lord, being in touch with fellow believers is an equally important aspect. Also, one cannot separate one's faith from work. How I work in the workplace is an expression of my faith.

## 5. What is an interesting thing about you that we might not know?

I love playing chess. And I would really love to learn to play drums. I already bought a used electronic drum that I haven't assembled yet. Hopefully I will be able to soon. ■

**Romy Martinez** recently retired from the Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization (Philmech) after 37 years of service. But he is still very much involved organizing the Philmech Christian Fellowship every Saturday evening online, regularly attended by 20 – 30 participants. His wife, Lalac, still works at Philmech. Their daughter, Anja, started working at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños in November.

# Welcoming the Freshies



*The ministry apartment and center in Butuan hosted the welcome fellowship for new students.*



*Top: Old and new CLSU students join the welcome treat to kick off the ministry activities for the new school year. Bottom: A follow-up time together. L. to r. Jayvanne Estigoy, Shainah Bustos, Ronel Lambino, Mark Glendil Martinez, Marc Leobert Toquero, Zyrhik Manglicmot, Rachel Anja Martinez, and Lemuel Joshua Ubiña.*

## Butuan Ministry

As the 2023-2024 school year started, REACH Butuan Ministry initiated a welcome fellowship for the new members. Most are freshmen students of Caraga State University (CSU), residing at ABBA's Home — the fellowship center of the REACH-CSU campus ministry.

The welcome fellowship was held on August 30, 2023. It kick-started the campus ministry activities and fellowships. Through the activities, the REACH-CSU students reach out and bring people into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

ABBAS Home, is a boarding house owned by Cerina and Obet Mabination.

The REACH National Director, Jerry Francisco, was visiting ministry areas in Mindanao and arrived in Butuan City on August 28. Since the kickoff was approaching, the ministry core group seized the opportunity and invited him to speak.

He encouraged the students to join and experience God in the ministry instead of joining a fraternity. ■

*Reported by Yolly Rosales*

## Muñoz Ministry

To kick off the activities for the revival of the REACH-CLSU campus ministry, a welcome treat for old and new students was held at the Caparino Apartment roof-top activity hall on August 10, 2023.

Engr. Christopher Pascual, a faculty staff of the College of Engineering at CLSU, now pursuing his PhD. in the US, shared virtually his life journey as a student to attendees of the fellowship. About 25 old and new students joined the treat.

After the welcome treat, a group of CLSU students met at a cafe for follow-up and acquaintance. Joshua Ubiña and Rachel Anja Martinez led the small group. ■

*Reported by Rodski Estigoy*

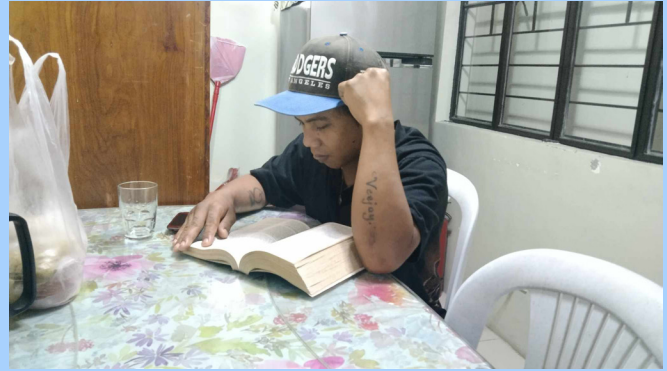
## Bible Study with CICL Men

**A** bible study is planned for young men living near the REACH office. They formerly belonged to a government program called Children in Conflict With the Law (CICL) and were connected to REACH through the barangay. Most of them have jobs, and that makes finding a common time to meet together for bible study difficult. REACH's Financial officer, Kim Cabatingan, is meeting with one of them during lunch break. Some started attending REACH-Metro Manila's monthly online fellowship.

The ages of the men range from 19 to 25. Those employed found work as vegetable or meat vendors, tricycle drivers, gasoline station attendants, and in a carinderia. Others are pursuing vocational training. Some are working on the REACH office roof deck to construct a roof covering so the deck can be used for ministry activities.

### Prayer Requests

- Pray for a common time for bible study,
- for God's Word to impact their lives,
- and for someone to meet the wives for bible study.



*Above: bible study with one of the CICL men. Left: guys raise steel beams for constructing a covering for the roof deck at the REACH office. The building fund as of October 31 stands at P3,892,505.53.*

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an imaginative  
use of resources  
in the extention  
of the gospel

reach

## 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.