



United News Philippines

INFORM · INSPIRE · UNIFY

News of the United Church of God, an International Association - Philippines

Vol. II, No. 3

www.ucg.org.ph/unp

July 2003

Mindanao Pastorate Continues Positive Growth Pattern

At the close of this recent fiscal year, the work of the United Church of God in Mindanao showed a healthy growth pattern. Following are some of the details:

Baptisms: The recently concluded fiscal year (from July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003) registered 23 baptisms—surpassing the previous year’s figure by 44 percent. We had 16 baptisms then—which was in itself equal to the number of baptisms for the past three years combined.

Membership has generally been maintained with a healthy increase of 10.7 percent. Of the 404 total active membership in Mindanao, 140 of them are baptized, 123 are counted as affiliates, while 141 are children.

Congregations: Fifteen congregations have been maintained in Mindanao. There is a positive change in venue for one. The Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, congregation has been moved to meet in Kidapawan City (capital of Cotabato province). The first meeting last June 21 registered 36 in attendance, with 14 unaffiliated Sabbath and Festival-keepers coming for the first time.

Bible Studies: The mid-week youth Bible studies at the pastor’s home in Davao City established over two years ago still continue to this day. These have a usual attendance of about 20-25. Four have already been baptized since January this year, and two more are scheduled this month. These youth Bible studies are in addition to the regular monthly Sabbath Bible studies.

Kidapawan City Congregation: This is a new congregation reestablished since the problems with the previous association developed some eight years ago. They now meet at the Cooperative Rural Bank of Cotabato (CRB) Mini-Auditorium. This new location takes the place of the Bible study in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. Please pray for the success of this new congregation.

Income: Last fiscal year’s income grew by 28.08 percent. The year before that was a very good one with a 30.61 percent increase. In spite of the general economic

downtrend, unrest, and unemployment we face, God still blessed us with an almost 30 percent increase over the previous year.



Neighboring churches combine for Pentecost at the Apo View Hotel in Davao City (Photo by Charles Phillip Macaraeg)

Radio Broadcast: An experimental radio broadcast in the Cebuano language called *Ang Maayong Balitasa Kalibutan Ugma* (“The Good News of the World Tomorrow”) was started over a year ago in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur, by one of our local leaders who acquired an FM radio station. Months later, both an English and Cebuano broadcast with the same title started to be produced in Davao City as well.

What presently brings in the most responses is the English language broadcast in Davao City. This broadcast titled *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* started in Davao City soon after the Feast of Tabernacles last year on a 5,000-watt AM station, and aired early on weekend mornings. That provided the initial incentive to produce the series of radio programs.

After six months, God opened the opportunity to air the program on one of the most reputable FM radio stations in the region, with a power of 10,000 watts. Popularly known as Oldies Radio (100.3 MHz), the broadcast airs at 9:00 every Saturday night. Listeners respond using the popular text messaging technology. The responses to the broadcast have been good.

These are some of the statistics. Let us remember that behind these facts and figures lies the real work of God in individual lives. All credit goes to God. ■

Reported by Edmond Macaraeg, pastor of the Mindanao congregations

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Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

A Matter of the Heart

Each year at Pentecost we are reminded of the Old and New Covenants. It was during the season of Pentecost that God entered into a covenant with the descendents of Israel at Sinai. We refer to this covenant as the Old Covenant. Also on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, God poured out His Spirit on His Church. In Ezekiel 36:27, we learn that God's Spirit is an integral part of the New Covenant. So each year as we observe Pentecost, we are reminded of these two covenants.

In the book of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul informs us that there was a fault with the first covenant and this fault would be addressed in the second or New Covenant. Notice Paul's statement in Hebrews 8:6-8 (NKJV), "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...' Those better promises included spiritual blessings and eternal life.

But what was the fault of the Old Covenant? Paul uses the statement "finding fault with them." The fault of the Old Covenant was not the laws of God but rather the unconverted Israelites. After God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, He stated to Moses, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deuteronomy 5:29, NKJV). God stated that the Israelites did not have a heart to obey Him. This is the fault that God promised to remedy with the New Covenant.

Notice a description of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-33 (NKJV), "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." God has promised to put His law in the minds and write

or inscribe them on the hearts of those who will enjoy a New Covenant relationship with Him.

How will this everlasting covenant be brought about? How will God write His laws on the heart of a people that were once described as not having a heart to obey Him? In Ezekiel 36:25-27, God informed Israel, "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." God has promised to give His people a new heart and His Spirit. God will remove their "heart of stone," a deceitful heart—a heart that is un-impressible in spiritual matters and He will give them a "heart of flesh," a softened and malleable heart, responsive to His word. This new heart is referred to as a "circumcised heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Romans 2:29).

As members of God's church, firstfruits of His spiritual kingdom, enjoying a New Covenant relationship with Him, we should carefully consider the condition of our heart. How would you describe your heart? In Proverbs 21:2, we are instructed, "Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs [or evaluates] the hearts." How would God describe your heart or my heart? Would He describe our heart as hardened like stone or soft and impressible like flesh? Are we responsive to the Word of God or have we allowed our heart to become calloused and hardened to some aspects of His Word? As we continue our process of conversion, led by God's Spirit, let's reflect the attitude of King David in Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJV), "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting." ■



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Vol. II, No. 3
July 2003
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The **United News Philippines** is published by the United Church of God, an *International Association* - Philippines, as another means to inform, inspire, and unify the churches in the Philippines and their brethren around the world. An electronic version is available for download from our web site at: <http://www.ucg.org/ph/unp>.

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Northern Luzon Pentecost Report

by Serizalinio Dizon

Members of God’s Church today keep His Festivals. It was the late Herbert W. Armstrong who restored the knowledge of these Holy Days. Normally, we have a morning service as well as an afternoon service after lunch. However, there are times when this normal schedule is not followed due to certain limitations and circumstances. Take the case of the Feast of Pentecost in Northern Luzon.

There are only two congregations in the area, Baguio City and Dagupan City. In the Baguio City area, the congregation meets in La Trinidad, Benguet. From Baguio, it takes about 30-45 minutes to reach La Trinidad by public transportation. In Dagupan, members meet in San Fabian, a town half an hour away.

I was scheduled to serve both congregations during Pentecost—Baguio in the morning and Dagupan in the afternoon. With my family, I left very early in the morning to catch the jeep for the bus station. The distance from Dagupan to Baguio City is about 90 kilometers only but it will take about three hours to reach the place where they meet. In Baguio, we had a guest from Boise, Idaho—Dan Jorgensen. He stays with the Binoses and helps in the church services by taking care of the song leading as well as giving sermonettes too. We had a total of 21 in attendance. The main message centered on what the Holy Spirit of God does to God’s people. After a quick but hearty lunch, we hurriedly took a jeep back to Baguio City and the bus station. Normally, buses leave on their own schedule; this time, however, the bus left at 1:30 in

the afternoon. I know that it will take about two hours and a half for the bus to reach the San Fabian town. With the help of cellular phones we were able to communicate our location to the members. Buses normally have scheduled stopovers for driver and passengers alike to take breaks and have snacks. Fortunately, ours only took 15 minutes. I was so anxious to reach the site earlier that I just wished the bus could fly! Finally, we were off again and reached our destination on time.

See “Northern,” Page 4

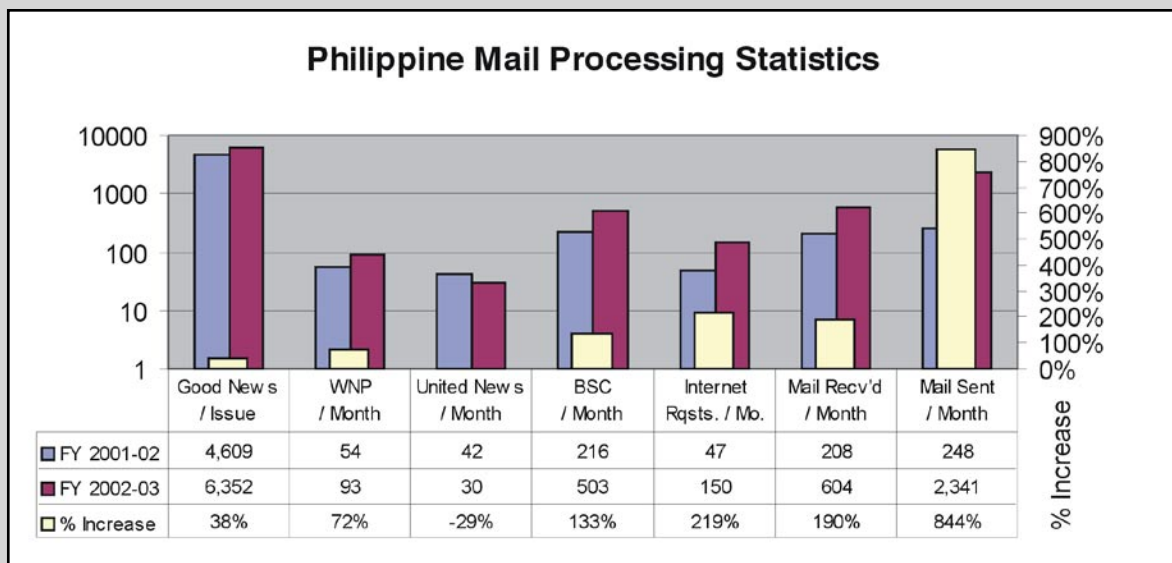
Mailing Operations Register Unprecedented Progress

God continues to bless His Work by granting unprecedented growth in the mail operations department. *The Good News (GN)* circulation grew by 50 percent if the number of bulk copies shipped directly to the pastors in each region were included.

Apart from the *World News and Prophecy (WNP)* and the *United News (UN)*, all the other categories have dramatically increased. The *Bible Study Course (BSC)* has more than doubled, the Internet requests have more than tripled, and received mail have almost tripled. The largest growth category is the number of mail sent out (an 844 percent increase). This reflects the positive response to the newsstand programs, radio broadcast, and the personal efforts by our membership—and of course, the hand of God in all these.

The chart below reflects the data from our Philippine database subsystem as of June 30, 2003. See the added notes beside the chart. **UNP**

The *GN* figures do not include the additional number of copies bulk-shipped to Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao for local church distribution. Therefore, the actual figures should be much higher. For example, apart from those receiving *GN* copies directly from abroad, local volunteers in Davao City alone distribute an additional 2,000 copies every issue. The *WNP* and *UN* figures stated here reflect only subscribers who are scattered non-members. (To give opportunity to others, the names of those who have not renewed have been removed.) The copies for our membership in local congregations are bulk-shipped to their pastors, and those figures are not included in this count. Mindanao members alone receive 150 copies of *UN* and 250 copies of *WNP*. ■



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Visayas Pentecost Report

by Florante Siopan

My wife and I started our trip on the early morning of June 6 for Leyte to conduct the Sabbath service in Tacloban and the combined services for Pentecost the following day. We arrived Cebu for the first stop of our travel at about 4:00 p.m.

We secured first our tickets for Leyte from the travel lounge at SM City in Cebu, then waited for the boat that was scheduled to depart at 9:00 in the evening.

We arrived in Ormoc early dawn the following morning from the overnight trip from Cebu. We took the bus that brought us to Tacloban, arriving past 8:00 a.m. In Tacloban, we had our Sabbath services in the morning and Bible study in the afternoon. We left Tacloban late in the afternoon for Baybay, Leyte, and spent the night in one of the hotels in that place.

The Tacloban and Baybay churches combined to attend the Pentecost in Sabang, Leyte. The attendance was 46, mostly adults. The messages in the morning were given by Candido Merino and Raul Villacote, both deacons in Leyte. Mr. Merino delivered the first message about the event when the Holy Spirit was first given to the followers of Jesus Christ, while Mr. Villacote spoke on how a person could become one of the firstfruits.

The brethren enjoyed a sumptuous lunch prepared for the occasion. After lunch, the brethren were blessed with the distribution of assorted used clothing, shoes, reading glasses for adults, and toys and school supplies for the children. This was made possible through the donations of our U.S. brethren, particularly in the area where Mr. Clyde Kilough, the Council of Elders chairman, pastors.

In the afternoon service, we took up the Holy Day offering. Two ladies from the Tacloban congregation then performed the special music. I gave the main message about the significance of Pentecost and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit of God. The brethren enjoyed the blessings of the day.

In Bacolod, the brethren enjoyed the whole day services during Pentecost. In the morning, the first message was given by Samuel Siopan, on the subject of "Real Freedom." For the main message, Mr. Roy Holladay spoke on "The Power of God's Spirit" through a video sermon. The brethren in Bacolod also had their share of the donations from the U.S. brethren. Packed lunch was served, followed by fellowshiping.

During the afternoon service, Beltran Sison handled the offertory message, while Norman Julag-ay gave the main message of Pentecost picturing the firstfruits of God's harvest.

From Pentecost of 2002 to the Pentecost this year, we had a total of 14 baptisms in the Visayas and Sabah. ■

"Northern," continued from Page 3

The brethren were patiently waiting for us. Mr. Mogar, a long time member gave the offertory message and I gave the main message concerning the Feast. Aside from my family, there were 19 people who attended. After the service, Benjamin Malbog, one of the members of the congregation, gave some snacks during the fellowship.

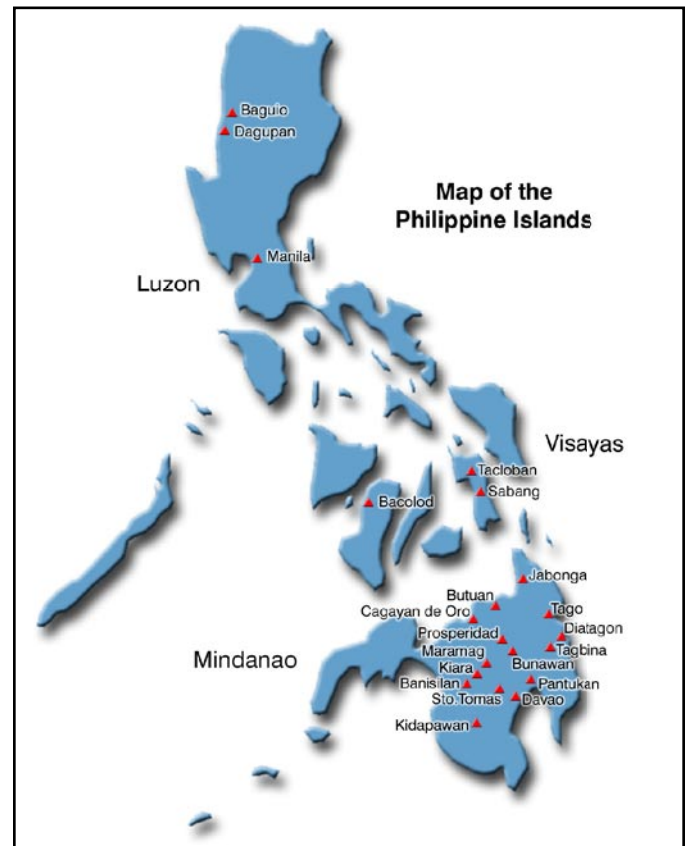
I hope that for next year we could have a meeting place right in Baguio City so that we could have less time traveling and have an earlier start in the Dagupan area.

It was a very long day but I know that all around the world, God's people want to serve one another. It is an honor for us to be able to contribute in serving God's people. ■

Pentecost Attendance Figures

| Church Areas | Attendance |
|-------------------|------------|
| Northern Luzon | 40 |
| Manila | 71 |
| Visayas | 72 |
| Mindanao | 273 |
| (Combined) | 456 |

UCG Congregations in the Philippines



Schedule and meeting place of local church services are posted on our web site at <http://www.ucg.org.ph/chinfo.htm>

Dear God

by Daniel Roy Macaraeg

Editor's Note: This essay on the theme, "What God's Church Means to Me," won a gold level award in the Y.O.U. Journalism Contest in 1991.

I don't know exactly how far away You are—how many light years Your throne is from where I am. I just know you are somewhere behind those brilliant, beautiful stars in the sky tonight. Maybe farther. But I



am so happy that I am not cut off from You, unlike most people in the world right now.

The gentle wind blows cold out here in the open. It is so quiet, I cannot hear a sound but the chirping notes of the crickets.

Almighty Father, the world is getting more and more evil and dangerous with each passing day, although it seems to be very peaceful and quiet tonight. I wonder how most people feel, unaware of Your Master Plan. But I know many think the world is marching slowly into the path of a chillingly dark, ominous future. I can imagine people struggling to stay afloat in a Herculean vortex swirling the world down to its deepest, darkest trench.

I could very well be one of those people, were it not for the calling you have extended to me through my parents. And so, we know that even as the world trudges closer and closer to its apparent destruction, it also draws closer and closer to that hopeful, climactic time of Your return to this earth, to usher in the most awaited time since the beginning of the world.

I treasure, beyond words can express, this privilege You have given me, to qualify to help call those living in the Millennium, and beyond. It is, to me, an indescribable feeling, more than unspeakable joy, to be chosen from about 50,000 people, and prepared for a position of rulership and service in that soon-coming world.

This realization often makes me wonder: "I am a nobody." There are people, like my classmates back in school, who are more rich, more popular, more handsome, more powerful, and more intelligent, than me. But even if it were possible, I will not trade this priceless opportunity for riches, popularity, looks, power, or intelligence.

I realize it is perfect character that You are after. With your Spirit leading me to understand Your plans, purposes, and truths, I am striving to overcome and resist Satan, his present society, and my human nature.

Probably Satan snickers every instant I would slip, but I will never give up. I am preparing for that time when Your Spirit will finally be *dwelling* within me, after baptism, to strengthen me to do Your will, and to develop Your perfect character.

As the days grow more and more evil and dangerous, please remember Your Church, Your called-out ones. Please give us the drive, the means, and the urgency to support the preaching of the gospel of Your kingdom to this sick and dying world. Finally, please abundantly bless Your Work through the increasingly difficult times ahead.

In three more hours, a new day will dawn. Please help me, Father, to make this day—and every day—a day of preparation and growth toward Your glorious kingdom. ■

What is Real Success?

by Audrey Ruth Angcos

Success—this is the goal we all desire. This is the reason why we are spending a great part of our lives in school. This is the reason why our parents are working so hard. But with all the effort we are exerting, do we really understand the true meaning of success?

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines success as the accomplishment of an aim or purpose—the attainment of fame, wealth, or social status. Analyzing this definition has made me realize how materialistic human beings are. They would do anything just to reach



this brand of success. But what are the fruits? Many marriages fail, children become drug addicted, and countless millions don't have any time for God. But let's say they get the fame, wealth, and social status they were aiming for—would they then be contented? Would they be happy with a broken family and addicted children? Amazing how they would sacrifice all of these things just to reach worldly success, but in the end, it would all be forgotten—they would have to leave all their belongings, money, jewelry, cars, and houses behind. Yes, money can buy many things, but it cannot buy a happy marriage, neither a happy family nor responsible parenthood. Sadly, human beings have been blinded by worldly standards because of greediness and selfishness.

See "Real," Page 6

Comments from



Our Good News Readers

I am thankful for having copies of *The Good News* magazine regularly. They really give me a lot of understanding towards our day to day events. Little by little, I am trying to apply some of the guidelines I picked up from the magazine to have a happy family and a happy home that is blessed by God!

J.R., Davao City

Not only can you get knowledge and insight from this magazine, it's also free! Where else can you get two things for the price of one? What a good deal!

Text Message

...I think it's wonderful reading material and I surely enjoy reading it! ...

S.D., Cavite

I am reading your magazine at a hotel while waiting for a friend and I found the March/April issue informative.

Text Message

...I am very thankful and happy indeed to receive *The Good News*... I really find it very informative in all aspects in life, may it be spiritual or physical. Reading *The Good News* is truly beneficial in the sense that it guides and leads the people to the right track and to the brighter side of life—not to mention the biblical insight and understanding it gives us with regards to all world events...

F.O., Manila

In reading your March/April issue, I am highly moved by your synchronization of biblical prophecy to the nations that fulfilled those end-time events like the king of the north and king of the south in Daniel 11:40, as well as the soon turning point of the United States as a superpower.

E.M., Davao City

Church Literature

Bonjour! I've been reading the booklet, *Transforming Your Life*. At this very moment, I found this booklet is great! It's just amazing to think that it enlightens me in dealing with pressures!

Text Message

Good News of the World Tomorrow Broadcast

While listening to last night's FM program, I do well concur with the speaker saying: "the trouble with false prophets or some preachers is that they literally change the Bible!"

Text Message

Davao Youth Bible Studies Bear Fruit

by Cheryl Lynn Macaraeg

The Wednesday night Bible studies are often the highlight of the week for most of the church youth here in Davao City. It's a time when they can take a break from the pressures in school to receive spiritual instruction and to fellowship with other youths of like mind.

For the past two years, the regular Bible studies have continued to bear fruit among our teens. Attendance has grown from five to 25. Five teens and young adults were baptized since we began, and more are considering baptism counseling.



Daniel Macaraeg talks with the youths about integrity (Photo by Richard John Macaraeg)

Daniel

Roy Macaraeg, who usually conducts the weekly studies recounted, "We started out really small, just my siblings and I and a few church friends in the living room. I'm amazed at how dedicated our young people are—they keep coming back week after week, even when it's raining really hard! It's a real blessing to see the group grow—in numbers, in personality, and in spirituality."

The lessons of salt and light are well being lived out, bringing glory to God in heaven. Truly, the lights of God continue to shine even in this dark and blinded age! ■

"Real," continued from Page 5

As Christians, we should have a *different* focus. Why not exert more effort in seeking the Kingdom of God? Of course, parents have the responsibility to sustain their family. Children also need to be diligent in their studies—but not to the extent of bartering their moral values and wisdom for money and fame. On our journey, we will experience persecution from the world. But let's remember that for every good thing we do, there will be a corresponding reward from God, since we are seeking to glorify Him and not to please worldly people. Our main goal, then, is not fame, wealth, nor social status, but to be in the Kingdom of God for all eternity. Now that is *real*, undying success! ■

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