



United News Philippines

INFORM · INSPIRE · UNIFY

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

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January 2004

Manila Church Holds Year-End Outing in Laguna

by Rey Evasco

The UCG Manila Church had a well-attended year-end outing last December 24-25. Almost all those who attend the UCG Manila congregation joined the two day outing at the “Batis ng Makiling” Resort in Los Baños, Laguna some 50 kilometers south of Manila. We had the resort exclusively for ourselves for two days.

The brethren and their children really enjoyed having a private picnic ground eating together, playing games as well as dipping and swimming in the resort’s two swimming pools filled with warm water coming from the place’s natural hot springs. The resort has also a fishpond where some of the brethren tried their luck at fishing. A few fishes were caught which we ate for dinner.

In the evening after dinner, the children were treated to a film showing of that popular Disney movie entitled, “Finding Nemo.” After the movie, the brethren enjoyed



a night of sing-along on video-karaoke to the delight of everyone.

A few among the brethren decided

not to stay for the evening, but the rest stayed on to enjoy the fun and the fellowship until the next day. Everyone who came really enjoyed the year-end outing, commenting that this is one of the rare occasions where brethren can enjoy fellowshiping with one another as a church outside of the Sabbath and Holy day services.

2003 In a Capsule

The year 2003 seemed to have come and gone so fast for us in the Manila Church. It was a trying year for

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Brethren from Manila enjoy swimming and meal sharing during their year-end outing at the *Batis ng Makiling* Resort in Los Baños, Laguna (Photos by Rey Evasco)

Internet Requests Soar 124%

Once again, 2003 was another busy year for the Philippine Mailing Office.

We have received over 4,000 cards and letters through our Post Office boxes in: Davao, Makati, and Cincinnati; plus 2,293 Internet requests; plus 104 SMS (Cell Phone Text Messaging) requests as a direct response to our radio broadcasts; plus 208 SMS requests as a direct result of advertising such phone number in our publications (not to mention Q&A communication); and mailed over 13,000 pieces of requested literature for the year 2003.

Below are some statistics comparing 2003 with the previous year:

YEAR-END REVIEW	2002	2003	% Inc.
<i>Good News</i> Magazine (Nov-Dec Issue)	5,465	5,545	1.46%
<i>World News & Prophecy</i> (December)	54	161	198%
<i>United News</i> (December)	42	25	-40.7%
<i>Bible Study Course</i> (December)	216	396	83.33%
Internet Requests	1,022	2,293	124.36%
Mail Received	2,798	4,766	70.33%
Mail Sent	7,581	13,263	74.95%

Note: The *Good News*, *World News & Prophecy*, and *United News* counts exclude issues that are used for promotional efforts and those distributed directly to members. This explains the seeming decrease in *United News* though all members receive copies directly from their pastors.

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Editorial

by David Baker, *Philippine Senior Pastor*

Teach Us To Pray

As we begin the year of 2004 we have much to be thankful for. God has blessed His work in the Philippines with good growth. We have experienced growth in areas that we can see and measure such as the *GN* circulation, literature requests, membership and income. We are very thankful for this growth. It is my hope and prayer that we have also grown spiritually—an area that is not as easily measured. I hope each of us has grown in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this past year. I hope that we have grown in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. I also hope that as we move forward in 2004, God will continue to bless us with good growth.

Our goal is to proclaim the gospel here in the Philippines and prepare a people—those called by the Father. How can a small group of people with very limited resources fully proclaim the gospel in the Philippines and equip those called by God to grow in the “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?” It is impossible without God’s divine guidance and help!

But notice a statement made by James, the brother of Christ, in James 5:16, “...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” James instructs us that as we strive to understand and follow God’s word; much can be accomplished through fervent prayer. How can our prayers be more effective? The disciples actually asked Christ to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). They observed Christ praying and they also wanted to have effective prayers. So Christ gave them an outline to follow.

Let’s notice His instruction in Matthew 6:7-13, “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” This is a wonderful outline that we should use as we pray to our Father in heaven. I have found this outline invaluable

in meditating before praying and arranging my thoughts during prayer.

William Barclay made an interesting observation on this outline in his **Daily Study Bible Series**... “*We must note the order of the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer. The first three petitions have to do with God and with the glory of God; the second three petitions have to do with our needs and our necessities. That is to say, God is first given his supreme place, and then, and only then, we turn to ourselves and our needs and desires. It is only when God is given his proper place that all other things fall into their proper places. Prayer must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires; prayer ought always to be an attempt to submit our wills to the will of God.*”

Let’s notice some of the things Christ instructed His disciples to pray about. First of all He instructed them to acknowledge God as their heavenly Father and to hallow or revere His name. This reminds us that we have a personal, loving and caring God and we should give Him the glory that is rightfully His. This is also a reminder that we should never use God’s name in a casual, cheap or vain way because His name is holy!

Next we are to pray for God’s kingdom to be established. We live in a world that is in desperate need of that kingdom. This would be an appropriate time to discuss the problems of our world and the urgency for God’s intervention. Each time we see or hear of terrible suffering such as occurred during the recent mudslide in Leyte, we are reminded of how badly God’s kingdom is needed. We can also discuss the role of the church as we prepare for rulership in God’s kingdom. We can thank God for His blessings on the church and ask Him to continue to bless us with unity, peace and spiritual growth that truly reflects His way of life. We can ask

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2003, The Year That Was ...

by Florante Siopan

The year 2003 is now history and for the Church of God in the Visayas area, it was a year of blessing and fulfillment.

Highlights and progress in the Work of the Church in this area can be described positively in terms of seven people baptized in Leyte, and two in Sabah, Malaysia.

In the middle of this year, we began a Bible Study in Tubod, Isabel located in the western part of Leyte. Presently, we use the house of the brethren as the location of the study. Average attendance in Isabel is 18 including children.

We also serve two congregations in the same island—in Sabang, Baybay and in Tacloban. This makes three trips to Leyte every month to serve God’s people every Sabbath, with only one Sabbath for the Bacolod congregation.



Total attendance for the whole of the Visayas is somewhere between 100 and 120, the majority of this is in Leyte province. Of this number, attendance during the festivals increased due to interested people wanting to know more about the United Church of God.

For the *Good News* magazine, we have requested an increase in the number of copies we receive from the Home Office for the Visayas. Starting with the January-February issue, Bacolod will receive 500 copies and Tacloban 200 copies, respectively.

For the year 2004, we have scheduled our visits to Sabah, Malaysia every three months making it four times a year. In Sabah, the brethren meet every Sabbath for services where attendance ranges from 15 to 18 including children. Because of the difficulty in travel, only six brethren were able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Punta Villa, Iloilo. God willing, many more Sabah brethren will come for the Feast in 2004 to rejoice together with their brethren.

We really appreciate the support of the Home Office and the Church leadership in helping us do our part in preaching the gospel in the Philippines in general and in the Visayas in particular. Most and above all our gratitude and heartfelt thanks to our merciful and loving God for His guidance and blessings for this great work in calling many people for His Kingdom. ■

Bacolod Church Holds Outing

by Beltran Sison

The Bacolod City congregation in the Philippines held its annual church outing on December 22 at the New Mambukal Resort, a 35-minute trip from the city



Bacolod Church members enjoy fair weather and fine fellowship during their year-end outing at the New Mambukal Resort
(Photos by Florante Siopan)

to the foot of Mt. Kanlaon. In spite of the bad weather in the past two weeks, 31 happy and enthusiastic brethren were able to come and were greeted by a beautiful sunny day, which added to the enjoyment of everybody.

Activities included a barbecue cookout, board games, swimming, boating in a beautiful lagoon, a walk in a vast idyllic tree-lined park, biking, bat-watching, and lots of fellowshiping.

All the brethren that came had only positive comments regarding the church outing. We are all looking forward to the next opportunity to have group activities like this. ■

Davao Church Holds Year-end Campout at Eden

by Edmond Macaraeg

As a yearly local church tradition (missed last year), the Davao City congregation hosted another year-end campout. This time, it was at the Eden Nature Park Resort, held last December 27-28, which included members residing in the municipality of Santo Tomas, in Davao Province (about 55 kilometers northwest of Davao City). While a few were not able to make it for certain reasons, the year-end campout registered 78 in attendance.

Eden Nature Park Resort is an 80-hectare facility situated at an elevation of about 2,630 feet above sea level at the foot of Mt. Talomo, which was developed to reflect a natural forested environment—dotted with modern cottages and convention facilities. However, like the United Youth Camp conducted every summer,

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The minimal increase in the *Good News* and other church publication is due to our intensified effort to “clean out” our subscriber database. We have continually been sending out renewals to our subscribers and have been dropping those who do not respond in time. In this way we are able to save our resources by not having to

Northern Luzon Review for 2003

by Serizalinio Dizon

Well up north of the bustling cities of Metro Manila are two congregations. One is the Dagupan City congregation which meets in the nearby town of San Fabian, which meets every first and third Sabbaths of the month.

Most of the members there came from a group which has previous doctrinal similarities with our former association. For the year 2003, the attendance ranged from 12 to a high of 24. The congregation is fairly new since it started its regular twice monthly meeting just about two years ago when the group decided to become part of the United Church of God. Last November, two of them were baptized.

About two and half hours toward the north is our Baguio City congregation. The members also meet in the nearby town of La Trinidad, Benguet, every second and fourth Sabbaths of the month. The congregation is basically made up of three families. All of them were long-time members of the Church of God. They joined the United Church of God in the second half of the 90s. The members started having regular Sabbath services when a minister became available in the area. The attendance figure is similar to the Dagupan City congregation.

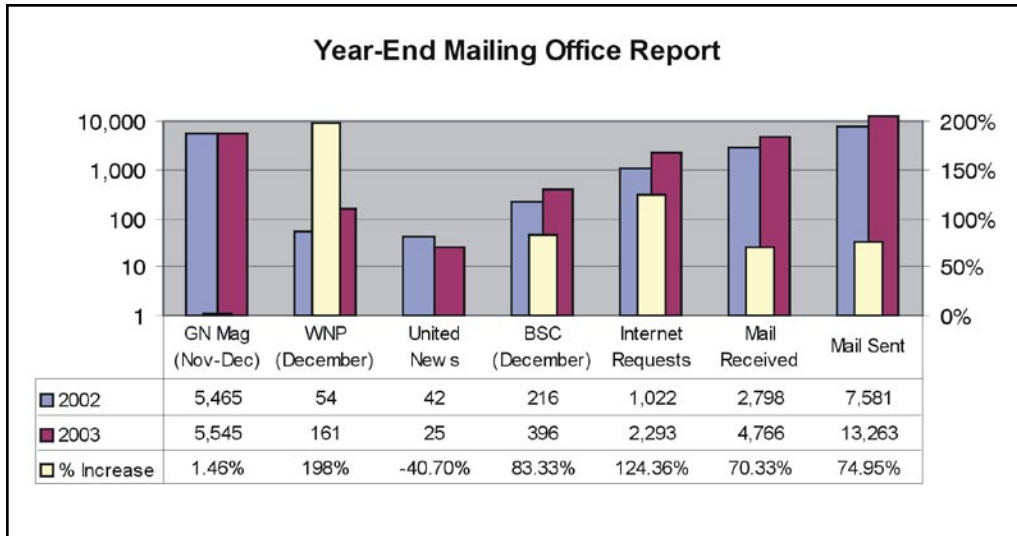
The UCG Home Office has been sending hundreds of copies of the *Good News* for hand distribution. For

the January-February issue we are scheduled to receive 500 copies. Also the Church’s *GN* magazine is advertised weekly in a local newspaper in Dagupan since September. Starting this year there will be simultaneous ads in the two areas every week.

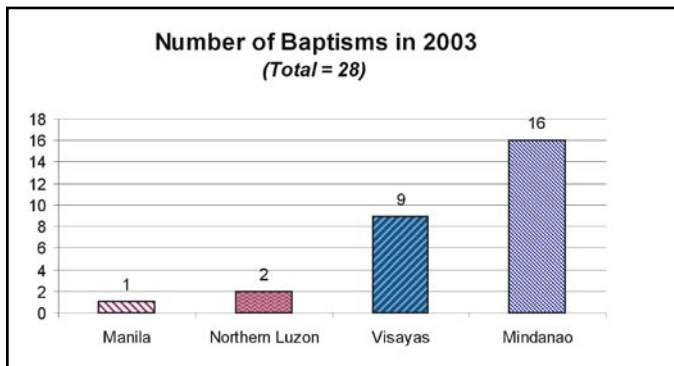
The *Good News* is now being sent to some local city and town libraries here

and eventually to most public libraries in the whole of Northern Luzon. Right now, we have about two hundred subscribers and we hope to increase this number into thousands before the fiscal year ends. It is a tough job but it really is exciting to know that the Gospel is being preached in this part of the world. ■

Year-End Mailing Office Report



Number of Baptisms in 2003 (Total = 28)



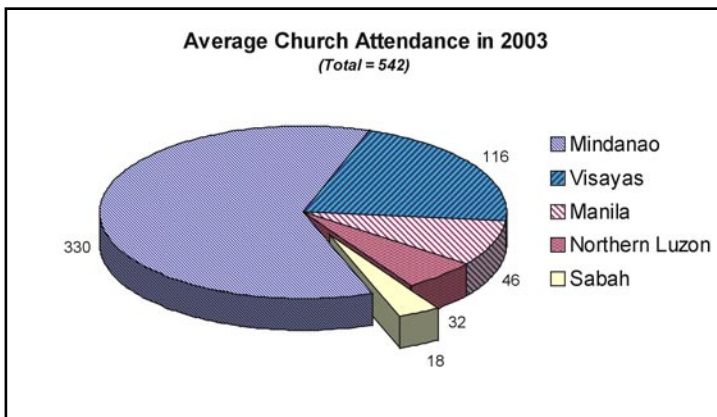
spend for people who do not fully value our literature, and rather give it to those who do.

Our goal is to continue to look for avenues to spread God’s truth and promote the *Good News* and other church literature, but at the same time, continually strive to do this in the most efficient

and effective way possible. If you would like to help with the *Good News* Distribution Program in your area, or have ideas you would like to share, please talk to your pastor, and if feasible we will coordinate on this with those in charge in the U.S. ■

—Reported by Charles Macaraeg

Average Church Attendance in 2003 (Total = 542)



Northern Mindanao Brethren Hold Weekend Campout

by Edmond Macaraeg

Dubbed as "A December to Remember," Elbert Gargar, a local church leader and a resident in the capital town of Prosperidad, Province of Agusan del Sur organized a Church Weekend Campout last December 27 and 28 where 34 members in the church areas of Northern Mindanao participated.

Sabbath meeting was held at the Tesoro's Fast Food & Restaurant overlooking the picturesque Gibong River on which the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) has established a major irrigation project. The sermonette that day was delivered by David Obsequio concerning the True Feasts of God (in view of the holidays popularized by main-stream Christianity at that time of the year). The sermon was delivered by Mr. Elbert Gargar on the fact that God is our Healer. The afternoon session was a Bible study on the subject of Gambling, thus clarifying this issue in the minds of our brethren.



That evening, Mr. Gargar slaughtered one of his large *Anglo-Nubian* goat which weighs about 60 kilos to feed the large church delegation which he and his wife Florabelle managed to host in their own residence.

There were some social activities that evening which included a sing-along. But one notable challenge included forming a circle and the first person introduces himself. Then the second one repeats some of the important details in the first person's introduction, and then introduces himself as well. The third one repeats the important points in the previous introductions and includes his own. Thus, it presents a special challenge

to remember the details of every previous person's introduction in the circle as it gets to the end. However, it is a unique and sure way for each one to really get to know each other better.



The following day (Sunday), in the morning, Mr. Gargar demonstrated the technology of handmade paper making, while some enjoyed themselves with horse-back riding.

In the afternoon, most of the group went motorboat riding for a few kilometers along the Gibong River. They passed between towering forested limestone cliffs along the river where wild birds and animals as monkeys were seen. As part of the itinerary, they went to the cave area. One has to crawl for about five meters before one can stand up. Then at about 50 meters more into the cave, one begins to appreciate its size. The youngest member to go inside was five-year old Dave Jan Obsequio, while the oldest was Carlos Mantalaba who has on his 50s. Daisy Mantalaba (wife of Carlos) said this was her

first time to ever enter a cave. Her comments reflected most of the membership in the area as well.

They then proceeded to the next tourist attraction which involved climbing about 50 steps of concrete stairs to reach the swimming pool area. Meanwhile, on the way up, one catches a glimpse of Binaba Falls which has a water drop of about 20 feet. This area is also being further developed as the water source and reservoir for the town of Prosperidad.

Commenting that it was a very rewarding weekend campout for everyone, they dismissed at 5:30 p.m., with the hope that something like this can be organized again. ■

Some brethren in Northern Mindanao pose at a spring (top), inside a cave (above), and at the swimming pool area (left) during their week-end campout in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur (Photos by Elbert Gargar)

“**Davao,**” continued from page 3

the Church chose to occupy the facilities of Campsite I which has its own screened cooking facilities, dining and meeting halls, several bath and comfort room facilities, volleyball court, campfire area, and over a dozen covered tent areas. At such an elevation, its climate is expectedly cooler than the City.

Members assembled at the RELC compound (Regional Education Learning Center, our regular Sabbath meeting place) at 10 a.m., December 26, to board three large jeepneys hired to bring members to the camp site. Upon arrival, members settled in their pre-assigned tents and shared pack lunches.

Sabbath services started at 2:30 p.m., and the sermonette was delivered by Daniel Macaraeg on the subject of Enthusiasm. Special music with the title “Amazing Grace” in the form of a trio was the initiative of teenagers Princess and Shawn Balugo, and Meryl Macaraeg. The camp sermon was delivered by Edmond Macaraeg on the subject of Re-Viewing the Work of The Master Potter in Us. (Please read the related article ‘Eden: A Return to the Potter’ for more details.) Not in a hurry to beat traffic and go home, there was the rare opportunity for more relaxed fellowshiping in camp.

Evening meal preparation of marinated charcoal-grilled chicken barbecue and chicken sausages was shared by lots of kitchen volunteers. After a leisurely dinner accompanied by good dining music, and after clean-up, members listened to the regular FM radio broadcast, *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* with the broadcast title: “The Paganization of Mainstream Christianity” where it was shown that even in so-called “Christian”



One of the common sights at the park (photo by Cheryl Macaraeg)

nations, all the names of the days, months of the year, and reckoning of time (in view of the coming “new year” celebration) all came from ancient paganism. Even popular so-called “Christian” celebrations came from ancient paganism as well. Thus, it was conclusively shown that instead of pagans being Christianized; mainstream Christianity instead was paganized. The booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God’s Sabbath Rest* was also advertised.



Davao Church youths pose at lunchtime during their campout (Photo by Edmond Macaraeg)

An informal campfire program was held after the broadcast, and an impromptu fireside chat exclusively with young adults was held after the campfire.

The following morning saw some helping in breakfast preparation, others jogging and exercising to benefit from the oxygen-rich mountain air, while others

took more time to catch up on sleep in the quiet and cool camp environment. After breakfast, some went strolling and sight-seeing, while others simply preferred to relax in camp. Some took the rare opportunity to counsel with the Church Pastor in succession until lunch while in camp.

In spite of basic food shortages in the supermarkets prior to camp, it was miraculously found that there was more food by the end of camp than previously anticipated! So,

after another sumptuous lunch with soft dining music, and more games and relaxation, members began to pack and break camp at 3 p.m. The hired jeeps for the return trip were there at 4 p.m.

Once the members arrived in down town Davao, the rains came again as it did the previous days which caused flooding and landslides in other parts of the country. All can clearly see that God has been good to His people by blessing them in every possible way! ■

And Yet HE Cares...

by Meryl Lynn Macaraeg

*I know He loves and cares for me,
Although I cannot see;
But I can feel His presence and,
It fills my heart with glee.*

*I may not be that close to Him,
Sometimes I fall away;
But one thing I can always say,
He’s with me everyday.*

*Some people often think that I’m,
A sinful mortal soul;
But deep inside my hopeful heart,
I’m struggling to my goal.*

*Though there may be some trials sore,
Which come across my way;
I’ll try to overcome it all,
And that’s what I can say.*

*The God that I look up to has,
A tender loving heart;
That even if I fall he’ll nev’r,
Forsake me in the dark.*

Eden: A Return to the Potter

by Cheryl Lynn Macaraeg

There was once upon a time, when all was fair and well, when the skies were bluer than it could be, and the clouds fluffier than a white cotton candy, and the weather was perfect—that was the original Eden at its best. Now, gray clouds started to come along, gloomy skies took over the spectacle of blue and white, and the cool wind made a little shiver of uncertainty on what the day was about to bring—this was the reality of our present Eden.

Our present story starts at around two in the afternoon of December 27, 2003. Some loathsome raindrops once again marked the recovering Eden trail which the happy sunshine of yesterday healed from its muddy state. Eden as you would imagine was painted green, and the lush of it would just make you want to stay in it forever. The smell of rain though made the nature-setting more compatible with the mud! Yes, the mud made it more appropriate, as everything, every detail of the picturesque place would then tie-in with the main message that each one was about to receive that afternoon; and yes, even up to the rest of the stay in the camp, and onto the remainder of our lives.

Oh, you would probably ask, ‘Any church members on the scene?’ I would say, ‘Yes, there were in fact 78 happy church members, grateful for the cool climate which was set for the theme of the outdoor Sabbath services underneath *anahaw* roofing material with bamboo pillars and some bamboo benches.’ Since the services were to start at 2:30, it meant leaving home two to three hours earlier to be there at the appointed time. An intended overnight camp-out was planned as a year-ender for each family to get out of the ‘forest of mundane living,’ and see such ‘forest’ from a distance—from the perspective of The Potter’s eye, from a higher level or point of view.

The Potter’s eye? Yes, The Master Potter, the One Whom we call our Father and God. Our Eden was believed to be the best place upon which to reflect and meditate concerning our lives, and rekindle warm-hearted fellowship with one another, as brothers and sisters in Christ. This idea of ‘The Potter’ was taken from the sermon given that afternoon by Mr. Edmond Macaraeg, who gave a very inspiring, moving, and unusually hilarious yet sober delivery of viewing from a distance our lives as Christians. It portrayed a life full of trials and never-ending problems; spontaneous and

unexpected events, which you have to accept and be trained to roll with. And yes, we related with everything that he said because everything about the delivery was spontaneous; which included the improvised lectern, coping with a flying bug trying to compete with the microphone, and other unusual events taking place which drew out laughter from the brethren. What would

you expect? It’s a Sabbath service out in the woods! But still, everything was under the supervision of the Master Potter—I would say because every word and principle sank in.

Blessings in disguise occur often in our lives, while trials

and tribulations are ways to toughen us up. Ironically also, to soften our rooted hard-hearted nature of rebellion and sin into a malleable and more tender form which the Master Potter could mold and perfect according to His ultimate design for each of us. The sermon touched on the multi-step progression from raw, smelly, useless, and dirty soft clay; to a nicely formed piece of usable hardened earthen vessel. But depending on the will of the Great Master Potter, He could polish some and repeatedly bake them in the oven of sore trials, and in the process incorporating and melting the various colors

and overlaid golden designs to become a beautiful and tough ceramic or porcelain masterpiece for His Kingdom!

Mr. Macaraeg also pointed out the role of water in the process of molding any piece of earthen-ware. Without the use of water while forming it, the raw material will crack. It is the same process with our lives, which our

Intelligent and Wise Creator has designed. Without His Holy Spirit, we will just simply crack. We cannot do it on our own way, on our own will, on our own strength, nor even with all the intelligence that we could muster in this world. We cannot be like an expensive porcelain ware for the Kingdom if it is not for God’s continuous supply of water and the right amount of heat to tenderly form us to what He wanted us to be.



“Eden,” continued from page 7

He further illustrated to us also the lesson of the ant. In the light of goal-setting, we must look back and consider our ways and review the things that we need to change and incorporate into our lives. This needs hard work and careful planning of charting our lives to be ready at all times and for the future—like the proverbial hard-working ant.

A remarkable observation was the fact that the young people, yes, including the children benefited much from the sermon and not only the adults. Wide-eyed, eager young ears were absorbing as much as they could understand of what was being said.

A later highlight not to be overlooked: A campfire was held after a sumptuous dinner of marinated charcoal-grilled chicken and chicken sausages, side-dished with pickled papaya (*achara*), and with rice, of course. This campfire was after dinner, clean-up, and members have congregated to hear the local regular Saturday night broadcast of *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* on the “Oldies Radio” station (100.3 MHz).

Following the broadcast, the campfire’s crackling golden fire provided warmth to the souls seated around and enveloped in the cold night Eden air. Side by side, children and parents sat around, alternate with the older youths, and also of the older brethren still strong enough to be awake to join in the fellowship and light-hearted entertainment of songs and games. There was singing, there was laughing, there was delight, there was unity, and summing it all up, truly there was love.

As expected, the fire dwindled into the night. The golden embers of the remaining burnt logs and twigs which struggled to stay alive were now barely providing heat. It all continued deep into the cold December night, when all the children were sent off to the tents with their parents and all the ones left were the young adults with Mr. Macaraeg. It was a gathering of at least twenty people and with each one engrossed in listening to each other’s life story concerning struggles, triumphs, how God called them, which solicited worthwhile pieces of advice and encouragement from everyone present. If I were to describe the feeling while sitting there, I couldn’t help but appreciate each one, be closer to them, and just be proud that I am with a bunch of young people striving to live God’s way of life. The dedication, the fervor, the openness, the sharing of struggles each one is going through, couldn’t be exchanged that night for any other thing in this world. It’s priceless. Here you have individuals called of God, and I am proud to call them, young as they are, ‘Christian Soldiers’ battling perverted

society and each waging a war against principalities and powers and the influences of the unseen evil ones. No doubt, God was in the midst. The presence of God was evident such that I personally couldn’t feel the cold of the moment. I think there wasn’t a dry eye that night. While I couldn’t speak for the guys, but really for the girls, I know each one was teary-eyed. The campfire chat lasted for three hours or so until it was late and everyone agreed to adjourn to sleep but not really wanting to.

The rest of the following day was a day of fun and activity. Early in the misty morning air, some were jogging, strolling, preparing breakfast, while others were catching up on sleep in their tents. But the sleeping didn’t last when the call for a hearty breakfast was sounded.

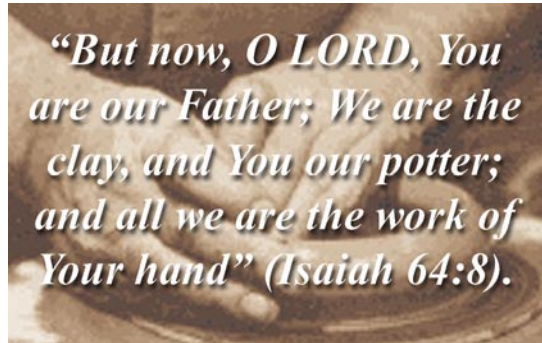
It was a fun, fun day throughout anyhow with everyone participating in serving and in eating food, washing the dishes, cleaning

the dining area, chatting, and singing. Some of the singing was creatively done with the knack of superb voice ingenuity among some with all the sound effects and harmonious blending of voices. Playing games like Uno, Stack-O, ‘Shaggidy’ action game, and ‘Simon Says’ was participated in by the young, and those young at heart. Most of the older ones enjoyed talking among themselves.

To sum up the days at Eden—where the sun used to shine but was overcast by clouds resulting in gray skies; where a heavy downpour was expected but only a drizzle was allowed; where food was expected to run out (because the shopping malls ran out of stocks due to the Christmas rush) but food was instead multiplied; where the mud in camp never did get in the way of any activity but served as an example to demonstrate the Potter’s work; where every bad thing was envisioned but everything turned out to be good—Who’s work was that? The Potter’s Hand? I would definitely say so.

So as we look forward to another calendar year (of course not in God’s reckoning of time), let us remember where we came from, the material that we are made of and will return to—but beyond this temporary sojourn, God is building in each one of us, an indestructible, majestic masterpiece (greater than clay) that will live forever in His glorious Kingdom...

Simply trust God that He knows what He is doing with our lives and may we courageously say: ‘Indeed, I count it all joy when I fall into various trials for it is by this reason that I am conformed in Him and therefore, polished and perfected.’ ■



“Editorial,” continued from page 2

God to open more doors for the preaching of the gospel and ask Him to call more laborers for that work – around the world and specifically here in the Philippines.

Thy will be done... we need God’s help in understanding and accepting His will. Jeremiah wrote, “O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). We should ask God for his guidance and direction in our lives and for other members of the church.

Christ also instructed His disciples to pray for their daily bread. We should also remember to thank God and ask Him to continue

to supply our daily needs both physically (adequate income, protection, good health, etc.) and spiritually (more of His Spirit, inspiration and strength

to manifest the fruit of that Spirit, better understanding of His Word, wisdom and guidance as we face the decisions of the day, etc.). This is a wonderful time to remember the needs and desires of others as well. It is interesting that Christ used the word “daily.” When God fed the children of Israel in the wilderness, He provided a daily portion with the exception of the Sabbath. Sometimes we can overly worry about a weekly portion or a yearly portion. It is important that we plan for the future but Christ instructed His disciples to pray about their daily portion.

Next Christ instructed His disciples to pray for forgiveness of sins and for help in extending forgiveness to others. A couple of important scriptures to remember in this context are Mark 11:25-26 and Matthew 5:44. We should pray for our family and those we love, but we should also pray for those that we might consider as enemies. We can ask God to have mercy on an enemy and help them to grow and develop spiritually. One day the vast majority of “enemies” will enter into the family of God as brethren.

We must always remember to ask God for His protection against Satan and his influence. We live in a captivating world filled with wrong images, lyrics, slogans and attitudes. Ask God for the power to resist temptations and overcome weakness that we battle against.

Finally we can conclude by remembering God’s power, glory and kingdom. This last statement that Christ used as He taught His disciples how to pray is similar to a passage in David’s prayer of thanksgiving recorded in I Chronicles 29:10-11. It is appropriate to conclude our

We should remember to thank God and ask Him to continue to supply our daily needs both physically and spiritually.

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the Philippines as a country. As a result, some among the brethren could not help but feel the effect both of the economic and political crises resulting from the destabilization caused by the failed military coup attempt and terrorist attacks perpetrated by Muslim extremists.

However, we are all very grateful to our merciful and loving God for always keeping His promise to help us during trying times. Yes, 2003 was a difficult year but God in His mercy, nevertheless, has blessed the brethren in Manila spiritually. The attitude of loving concern and cooperation is very evident among the brethren.

The average attendance for Sabbath services in 2003 was 46 and for Holy Days, it was 70. Because of distance and financial limitation it was not always possible for some brethren to attend Sabbath services on a more regular basis.

Some small efforts were also put forth in the area of promoting *The Good News* by the distribution of the *Good News* subscription brochures. Plans, however, have now been made in the area of preaching of the Gospel by promoting the *Good News Magazine* through a news stand program and continuing and increasing the volume of the brochure distribution program as well.

With 2003 gone, with God’s help and direction, we hope to continue on in 2004 in taking an active part in this great work of God to which all of us have been called into.

UCG Manila Plan for 2004

The United Church of God in Manila is gearing up for 2004 with some plans to contribute to the efforts of the Church towards the preaching of the Gospel and preparing a people. In a meeting called last December 14, plans were made to organize a *GN* news stand program as well as a brochure distribution program. Requests were already made from Home Office for additional copies of the January-February 2004 issue of the *Good News* magazine and a replenishment of *GN* brochures for the program.

The Manila brethren are very excited to be able to take part in these programs. Suggestions were given on how and where to display our *Good News* magazines as well as our brochures.

In the effort to minister to the youth in the church, plans are likewise being drawn up to start a Sabbath School program and teens Bible study program early this 2004. The materials to be used will be those downloaded from the UCG website designed specifically for our church youths. Of course, we are all looking to God to provide us direction as well as success as we do our part in doing His work. ■

Comments from Our Good News Readers



I just recently read the September-October 2003 issue of *The Good News*. I am very much thankful that my younger sister handed me the magazine because I have learned so many things upon reading it; most especially the article of Mr. Rex Sexton entitled "Some Things Are Better Than Money."

May I request for a copy of *The Good News* for the next issue. Likewise, I want to enrol in your free 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*. Also, I want to understand more, the incredible truth about destiny (*What is your Destiny*) and kindly send me a copy of the booklet, *The Ten Commandments*.

Your kind response to this request is very much appreciated. More power to you and to the people behind this wonderful magazine.

A.G., Tagum City

I received *The Good News* magazine dated 26 November 2003 at 4:30 PM. It was handed to me by my daughter... I was very much delighted that your good office had given importance to my request.

I really appreciate your magazine because it gives very interesting lessons, understanding with wonderful meaning.

Please enlist my name as one of your proper, permanent and avid subscribers of your magazine...

I hope you will continue sending me *The Good News* magazine as long as God gives us the breath of life.

T.F., Davao City

While at Loma Linda Market last June, I had picked up some old copies of *The Good News* magazine. I was so much blessed just by reading them.

Everyday, I thank God that I am now, together with my husband, a Sabbath-keeping, honouring Christian.

J.E., Japan

The Church Literature

I am so blessed by your wonderful works of service for our Living God. More power and to God be all the glory! Godspeed!

P. S. I would be glad if you could provide me a study Bible. Thanks.

K.B., Davao City

I thank you so much for the booklets you had sent me. I am very much blessed, not only that but they surely widen my knowledge of the truth about our

Almighty God. If there are other booklets aside from *Transforming Your Life*, please include them in your mail... Again I say, thank you and God bless you!

E.G., La Trinidad

I will just want to request my first Bible lesson to begin to discover the Bible's answer to life's questions. And I hope you will help me with this. Thank you.

E.J., Caloocan City

I got your mail just today containing the following: *God's Holy Plan, Managing Your Finances* and *The Ten Commandments*. I just wanted to thank you for the free copies. Hoping that I could request for more after reading the three. Again, thank you and more power!!!

A.M.C., General Santos City

Text Messaging* (Cellular phone)

Today, I admit God enlightened my knowledge of truth, through our text exchanges. You have the mind of God revealing His words. I thank and praise God for you.

G.C., Dagupan City

Thank YOU. Hope you continue spreading the good news to the public, for it will help us be guided to the right path.

C.A.L., Davao City

Good morning. I read your *Good News* November-December issue. Please start my free subscription to the *Good News*! Also a free copy of the booklet: *Making Life Work* and free literature *United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy, Transforming Your Life*. Thanks.

J.D.L., San Pedro, Laguna

* Text abbreviations have been edited to reflect proper spelling

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prayers thanking God for His power and greatness. We should also thank Him for His mercy and forgiveness, for the sacrifice of His Son to pay the penalty for our sins, and for His wonderful calling into His family.

Over the years I have found my personal prayers to be more effective by following this outline. I don't think Christ intended this outline to be followed with every prayer and in every situation—but it is a wonderful tool He has given to effectively communicate with our loving and caring Father in heaven. Brethren as James wrote, "...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." With the great work that we have before us, let's utilize our prayer life for the furtherance of that work! ■