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I. PAMAS Mission News

Wendy and Dwayne Harris <wrguptill@gmail.com> August 25:

We don't often get around to writing follow up stories from previous newsletters but here is one we had to write. You may remember a story I wrote 2 years ago while we were in Palawan of a village man that showed up to church one day requesting our help saying, "We don't want any other religion in our village except the religion of Kamantian." (Many people associate our work with AFM's because we work together to reach the Palawano people.) Though we have many requests like this, somehow this one seemed different and it was hard to say no to his urgent plea to start a church in his village. We felt we had to at least go and make a visit. So two of our local Bible workers and I made arrangements and the next week we arrived at the designated meeting place. We were surprised to learn that the village was actually a couple hours hike up the mountain, with 5 crossings of a raging river! Durialan, the village leader who met us told us that many people were waiting for us because they wanted to learn about the Bible. We looked at each other wondering what to do as we were unprepared for a hike, but we decided without hesitation that we must go! We set off on an adventure with homemade walking sticks and with Durialan to help us cross the rivers. We arrived to the beautiful mountainside village with luscious greenery and a spectacular view of the ocean. We had the most wonderful visit with the friendliest, most eager villagers of Karusuan. We shared with them about a loving God who gave His Word to us in a book so we could learn about Him and know how to live. They were amazingly attentive to our stories and health lectures. We asked them if they had ever heard the story of creation or Noah or Jesus but they all said "no", they had never heard any stories from the Bible! When it was time to go, the inevitable question came, "When will you come back?" We had to honestly tell them we had no idea how long it would be. We told them to pray for more missionaries and/or a helicopter that could help make the best use of the missionaries' time and also help with their medical emergencies.

The Rest of the Story

As we suspected, with limited missionaries and with our return back to our other airbase in northern Luzon, another visit had still not been made after 2 years. We had very occasional contact with the villagers throughout the years when we would see them at the lowland market. We told them that we hadn't forgotten them and to keep praying for more missionaries and a helicopter!

The Long Prayed for Helicopter

This last May we were privileged to finally bring the long prayed for helicopter to Palawan! It didn't take long for regular calls to start coming in with requests from remote missionaries with AFM, PFM, and our project in Kabulnukan for medical evacuations. But we did not forget about Karusuan. As soon as we found them at the lowland market we told them the good news about the helicopter and instructed them how to clear a landing pad. We promised to visit them soon, but 'soon' wasn't good enough for them and they persistently called asking when we would come to start a church in their village! They said, "Ma'am, how can we go to church when the nearest church is so far from us and the river is so high!"

First Helicopter Visit

The day finally came for us to visit Karusuan for the first time in the helicopter. The flight is only 5 minutes from our airbase (versus a 40 minute drive plus a 1.5 hour hike if the river is not too high). Many villagers were happily waiting for us! They crowded into a tiny hut near the landing pad and pressed in to hear the continuation of the Bible stories we started 2 years before. Many could not fit in the hut and had to peek through the bamboo walls, and when the rain...
came it was difficult for all to find shelter. We found many people with Malaria and other complaints so we treated as many as we could before we had to leave.

First Shelter Built
With 50 plus people coming and growing each visit, they asked when we could build a church so everyone could listen. We encouraged them to do what they could for a temporary meeting place and they immediately set to work and when we came back the next week, the moderate sized shelter was already half done! We only provided nails. We continue to use that shelter every visit for seeing the many patients that need treatment and for Bible studies.

Waiting for a School and Church
After the first visit in the helicopter Durialan told us "Ma'am, my people have seen your work and your characters and they are really sure now they want your church in our village!" The next visit he pointed to a young boy playing in the dirt and said, "He is waiting to go to your school! He cannot cross the high river to go to school in the lowlands."

Second Answered Prayer
By the third and following visits God had answered the other prayer for more missionaries and we brought our 3 new Filipino LIGHT medical missionaries to help give Bible studies and see patients. Their last visit they taught the people how to use hydrotherapy and massage to treat their illnesses. They visit every week now.

First Sabbath Services
The people continued to request for Sabbath services but until the new missionaries arrived we had no one that was free to go on the weekends. So, this last Sabbath finally two Bible workers were able to spend the long weekend and hold the very first Sabbath services ever to be held in Karusuan! More than 50 Adults, youth and children attended all morning and afternoon services and came back with great interest for more evening Bible studies late into the night!

Pray for a Church
With so many other church plants going on we feel pulled in many directions but we feel this is a special place and due to it’s remoteness that maybe it should take priority. But we need prayers for wisdom and provisions for a church and missionary housing etc.

Pray for Missionaries
Please pray with us as we're looking into some long term, experienced Filipino missionaries that can stay full time in Karusuan to continue the pioneering work that has begun.

The Work Goes On
Though we have recently returned back to Luzon again, the work will go on with our capable missionaries including Sean and Pris, the directors of the Palawan project who have returned from their trip to the states and have already made a visit to Karusuan. They were also impressed with the eager friendliness of the people. We will continue to pray and support from afar.

The Helicopter a Big Blessing
Our new helicopter pilot, Daniel, is familiar with all the areas now and he will continue to fly the helicopter in Palawan while we continue to develop our other 2 projects and pray for more helicopters. Karusuan is now one of the regular villages he flies to for medical evacuations and missionary visits. It is such a blessing to have the helicopter not only to help open up new areas like Karusuan and Kebgen (a recently re-opened, very remote AFM village) but also because severe Malaria epidemics are prevalent in the mountains right now. Thank you so much for your prayers and donations that help make this aviation ministry possible as a great tool in speeding the spread of the Gospel to the world!

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II. Bangkok Bombing

Adventist Review, August 24:

By James Standish, editor of South Pacific Adventist Record

I was standing on the corner of Ratchadamri and Ploenchit roads in Bangkok. It was hot, noisy, chaotic and, of course, smelly. There's no place on Earth that smells quite like Thailand's capital. The canals. The durians. The drains, curries, exhaust, dried fish, and boiling cooking oil in street-side stands. If you're looking for the ultimate olfactory experience, there's no place quite like it.

I was in the heart of Bangkok visiting one of my favorite shopping sites. And though everything had changed in the years since I was a tween eagerly shopping for music, clothes, and watches on these streets, everything was exactly the same. The modern buildings and even higher overpasses didn't change a thing about the character of the place. Bangkok is still very much the same Bangkok I know.
Sadly, there's something else that hasn't changed: erratic acts of violence.

I was on that corner shopping. But across the street others were worshiping at the Erawan Shrine. And it was there that this week - a week after my little shopping sojourn to the corner - that a dreadful bomb went off. Twenty innocent people lost their lives.

It took me back to one of the darkest memories of my childhood: the night a bomb went off as crowds streamed out of the racecourse across the busy city street from Bangkok Adventist Hospital.

I accompanied my father to the hospital after he got a call that wounded were streaming in. The lobby of the hospital was literally covered in blood, with blood trickling down the front steps.

There are many images I remember from that night, but the one that sticks with me most vividly was a middle-aged woman with a perfect hole right in the middle of her forehead. I suppose she was one of the six people who died that night. No perpetrator for that bombing was ever discovered.

After all this time, what I am struck by is the pointlessness of the attack. What did it accomplish? What was it for? How could someone engage in the level of planning and risk associated with a plot as pointless and as depraved as that? And how do you live with yourself afterwards?

Somewhere in our world today are the people behind the Erawan bombing on Aug. 17, 2015. Somewhere there may be someone who knows about that Racecourse bombing in my childhood. Around the world there are many thousands of people who have pointlessly killed innocent people. They have taken what they can never give back. The ramifications for friends, family, and the families of the victims are irrevocable. How do those with blood on their hands live with themselves?

I don't know. I really don't.

What I do know is that this world, as sparkling and wonderful as it may seem, is in desperate need of Christ's healing and people who are the hands of spreading that healing.

May we, as weak and defective as we are, let the Holy Spirit use us toward that end. In our families. In our workplace. In our society.

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III. Evangelism & VBS in Sarawak
Malaysia in the Review, August 24:
Twist in Malaysia
Local Adventists learn that an evangelism series isn't complete without a Vacation Bible School.
By Teresa Costello, SSD

Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Malaysia started out planning an evangelistic series for adults. They ended up also hosting a highly unusual nightly Vacation Bible School whose wild popularity is credited with contributing to the evangelistic series' 69 baptisms.

Church leaders in Kampung Simboh, a town in Malaysia's state of Sarawak on the island of Borneo, initially focused on adult programming as they prepared for an evangelistic series on Aug. 2 to 8 but soon realized that children's programming was also needed to more fully reach families in the surrounding communities. Someone suggested that they offer a nightly Vacation Bible School for the children, and the other leaders enthusiastically agreed. Although Vacation Bible School is more traditionally used during the daytime hours of summer or school breaks, the leaders quickly discovered that it complimented the adult programming with few adjustments needed.

How did the children respond? The first night 89 children attended, and the attendance among both children and adults increased the following day to reach an average of 300 to 350 people each night. The theme, "Kids of the King: a Royal Adventure," seemed to enthrall the children as they learned about God through games, crafts and interactive stories, organizers said.

Vacation Bible School attendance increased each night throughout the week until it peaked at 135 on Friday night. When program leaders invited the children to attend the final program the next day, they weren't sure how many would actually come on a Sabbath morning.

To their astonishment, 179 children showed up, with many of the regular attendees bringing young friends and relatives who had not previously attended.

As surprisingly as this was to the leaders, the responses of the children brought even more joy, they said. The children shared their joy at having this kind of program because it was active and they felt they had a special part. The children expressed hope that a similar program would be organized next year.
"I was happy to share in the joy and celebration," said Joggery Gelu, children's ministries director for the Adventist Church's Sarawak Mission. He said he was amazed that nightly attendance reached 300 to 350 despite people's busy schedules. "Really, though, it is not the attendance totals that are most important," he said, adding what mattered most to him was the children's new "spiritual connection to the Creator and Lord Jesus Christ."

With a total of 69 baptisms from the evangelistic series, organizers said they have learned that family-centered programming with a particular emphasis on children's ministry can be a vital tool in religiously diverse areas such as Malaysia.

Kampung Simboh is located about 23 kilometers from the Sarawak Mission headquarters in Kuching, capital of Sarawak state. Malaysia is a predominantly Islamic country, but Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, various Chinese religions, indigenous religions, and Christianity are also practiced among its population of more than 23 million people. Malaysia's Sarawak state has 28 Adventist churches with more than 5,500 members.

IV. A Widow's Ministry
from Chedalawda's August PRIA Newsletter

Seetharahrnam was a widow who used to minister in a Hindu temple for many years. After her husband's death she wanted to know who Jesus is. Someone gave her a copy of the New Testament. She started reading the beatitudes in Matthew 5. She put the Bible under her pillow and went to sleep. Before retiring she made sure that all her doors and windows were securely shut because her sons often returned drunk and troubled her for money.

Suddenly in the middle of the night there was a bright light in her room. She wondered, did I not lock the doors and windows? why is there a bright light in my room? She opened her eyes and saw a man standing at the foot of her bed dressed in bright white. He called her and said "Seetharahrnam, will you serve me?" She replied, "Who are you that I should serve you?" Jesus replied, "I am Jesus. Will you serve me?" She replied immediately, "Yes, Lord. I will serve you."

True to her promise, she started witnessing to her neighbors. She heard the Sabbath truth and became an Adventist. She visited her neighbors, prayed for the sick, fed the hungry, and shared the Bible truths with them. Soon she had more than 20 people meeting in her house every Sabbath for worship.

The denomination built a church where she continued to serve, growing the membership to 35 baptized souls.

One day she had to leave her home. Her sons took over her house and property. She went to another state to be with her daughter. Even though she did not know the language, people came to her and requested prayers on their behalf. A few years later her daughter died of cancer. Now again she had no place to stay. She came back to Tanuku sick and malnourished. Widow's ministry cared for her until she passed to her rest a few days ago. . . .

V. SULADS Story -- The Power of God through Massage
By John Rey Dela Vida,
Datalkade Literacy Center Tasiman, Lake Sebu South Cotabato

One day, when my partner and I visited all the houses in the village, we came to enter a house where we found a father lying on the bed. He could not stand up because of severe stomach ache. I really felt pity towards the father and so I asked his wife what happened to him. "Sir, he had not been eating for three days now because he could not rise up in bed. He couldn't even move!" the wife said in a sad tone. I offered to massage him and their agreement to my offer made me glad.

Before starting, I prayed to God, asking Him to heal the man for I know that my hands could not heal him. I then massaged him and had him eat the biscuit that I brought. I also cooked porridge for him and he was now able to eat a lot. My partner and I stared at him with joy in our eyes. When we left, his family expressed their gratitude for they felt what it was like to be taken care of.

The next day, a wonder of wonders happened that caught me by surprise. That same man was walking around the village, showing a countenance that he was no longer sick. He came to me and thanked me for the care I showed him the previous day. "Don't thank me for I am only an instrument of the Lord. Give your thanks to God for He is worthy to be praised. He is the One who healed you," I told the father, directing him to God and not to any human agency. He then smiled meaningfully and went home. I thank the Lord for that miracle!
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