

BILL WESTERBERG – DECEMBER 2008 MISSION REPORT TALISAY CITY, CEBU PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES (12-31-08)

Hello again everyone, here is my last 2008 report. In this report I will try to present a general picture of where my house church work stands at the end of 2008. All in all, we had seven baptisms since I began the house church work in February of 2008: four in Linao, one in Poooc, and two in San Roque.

As of now, the house church that is doing the best is the one in Linao. We have a regular place to meet – the house of baptized member Jonathan Echavez. Jonathan is well known in the Linao area, and that helps with the stability of the church there. Some of the WBS students in Linao have been visiting the Sunday assembly on a semi-regular basis, and we have a couple of Bible studies in progress. Baptized members Lorelyn Cordova and Davey Ann Deiparine have been out of town since October, and that has hurt attendance. But Davey Ann plans to return in January, and possibly Lorelyn will follow later. Thus far the Lord has helped us.

The house church in Poooc is in trouble. We haven't had a good meeting place for quite a while now, and that hurts attendance. We often arrive in Poooc on Sundays not knowing where we will meet. That makes it hard to invite people when we cannot tell them where we will be. Two have been baptized there if we count Jed Blanco, who was baptized shortly before the house church work began. But he soon gave in to pressure from his family and went out from us. The other, Gaudiosa Aguana, was baptized in April of 2008. Lately she has shown a lack of commitment to the Sunday assembly, probably due to pressure from her boyfriend, who does not approve of her involvement with any form of religion. Gaudiosa is currently separated from her husband, and I have talked to her about her current relationship with the other man, since Biblically she is not free to seek another. This is something she is struggling with now, and it is not helping the house church effort to move forward.

Another Poooc couple who enrolled in World Bible School seemed like very good prospects at first. They were eager to let us use their house for a meeting place a few months ago. But that situation has completely turned around now. They had an apparent need for money due to illnesses with the wife and kids, but I suspected that the wife was only pretending to be sick. And the kids, all young, never did look very sick to me. I asked to see some kind of written diagnosis or prescriptions from the doctor that they supposedly visited, but they balked at that and have avoided me ever since. Later, Gaudiosa told me that they told her that I lied to them about helping them financially. With things like this happening, the work in Poooc has been hindered.

The house church in the San Roque section of Talisay City has had its ups and downs. We have not had a good, stable meeting place. Many people have shown interest in WBS and the house church, only to fade away. But we have many other WBS students there to work with. Two were baptized in September of 2008. Gaudencio Espinosa moved away shortly after being baptized. Manylin Sagaysay was baptized on September 1st, and after about a month and a half of regular attendance, she found a job which requires her to work seven full days each week. I have seen her only once briefly since then. But others in the neighborhood tell me that she has maintained her spiritual interest, and my best guess is that she will be back with us soon. (Her boss is a slave driver who seems to lose many employees after a short time of employment.) WBS students Allain Abay, Janice Mabanag and Estrella Borces are very interested in Bible study, and with this core group to work with, the future of the house church in San Roque has hope. Thus far the Lord has helped us.

My old Filipino college classmate Salvador Cariaga has recently developed some programs here that are designed to give people an economic boost. For many years, he has raised funds from the USA for church work in the Philippines. But now his plan is to phase that out and work on the local projects that will help preachers and the people in the church to be self sufficient instead of dependent on outside funds. A few of you know him personally, and you know that I am not exaggerating when I say that Salvador is a great leader, he thinks big, he has many resources and he gets the job done. Some of his projects are now available to me here in Talisay City, and in January I plan to get Jonathan Echavez, Manylin Sagaysay and Jenny Parame involved. And hopefully that will only be the beginning. Thus far the Lord has helped us.

Misc. info, prayer requests:

- * I know that the economy in the USA has fallen off this year. For those of you who have supported the work here financially, thank you. If you cannot continue, or must cut back, I understand. I am not presently hurting for funds, so please pray about it and let me know what you will do.
- * We had no baptisms in December.
- * Please pray for the success of the work here. I have many WBS students to work with, and many of them are currently involved in Bible studies. Also pray for the spiritual growth of the baptized members and the success of Salvador's programs.
- * The photos: (1) Me with WBS student Estrella Borces, and (2) a group of kids having a water fight during a heavy rainfall in Linao.
- * I didn't do much for the holidays. Don't worry about that, it's normal for me. I am not a Scrooge; but at the same time, I don't like to be so busy that I am tired and glad when the holidays are over.

Take care and God bless.

Bill "Ebenezer" Westerberg