

Together

Grace Communion International News

November/December 2009

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Volume 4, Number 6

International News

Catastrophic Floods Strike the Philippines

Typhoon Ondoy's wrath in late September was more powerful than Katrina, which hit New Orleans four years ago. About 400 mm (15.7 inches) of water fell in about 12 hours. That is more than the average rainfall for the month during this rainy season.

The scope of the damage was wide, but most of the casualties came from Manila and Rizal, the adjacent province. More than 80 percent of Manila was flooded. Many of the members were affected, ranging from moderate to heavy damage of furniture, equipment, and church facilities.

Power and water were out for several days. We tried to provide some immediate response, especially food, drinking water and warm clothing. The office was used for a while as a relocation center for those near the office, but they have now been able to go home.

Due to the thousands of people affected by the flood who are now staying at evacuation centers (total of 600 evacuation centers), many people became sick with diarrhea. Small children and elderly



people are the most vulnerable. They need to have immediate medical treatment. It is feared that an epidemic will follow if the floodwaters do not recede in the coming days.

Marikina, Antipolo, Cainta, San Mateo, Pasig and Santa Maria in Bulacan and 16 towns in Laguna were submerged for more than a week. Our church in Santa Maria meets on the third floor, yet the church hall was inundated with water and mud. Four families from GCI Santa Maria lost their houses when the water from the nearby river swelled. Many of the small children at the evacuation centers in Santa Maria are starting to get sick with vomiting and diarrhea. The food in these evacuation centers is severely lacking.

The churches and members in Metro Manila are generally safe and are recovering.

Ministerial trainee Aron Tolentino, who lives in Pasig, had to find temporary housing for his family because the roads leading to Pasig were impassable.

Typhoon Ondoy was severe, but less than a week later, Typhoon Pepeng struck the northern end of Luzon, not once, but three times, again



causing severe flooding and lethal landslides. The damage from that typhoon has yet to be assessed.

Eugene Guzon and Rex dela Pena

If you'd like to help

U.S. members and congregations can donate to the Disaster Relief

Fund, which was established to help our members and perhaps others when faced with such disasters. If you or your congregation would like to help other members and local congregations affected by disasters, please direct your dona-

tion to the Disaster Relief Fund. It exists to help with costs of emergency member needs, including such items as food, water, clothing, and temporary housing, as well as temporary local pastoral salary expenses and other emergency local church expenses. The Fund is coordinated by pastors in the affected areas. Checks should be made out to Grace Communion International, marked Disaster Relief Fund, and mailed to:

Disaster Relief Fund
Grace Communion International
PO Box 5005
Glendora, CA 91740



In this issue...

U.S. News	7
Announcements.	8

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For changes of address, phone 1-800-924-4644.

Editor

Michael Morrison
michael.morrison@gci.org

**Published by Grace
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Living and Sharing the
Gospel

President

Joseph Tkach

Vice President

J. Michael Feazell

**Superintendent of U.S.
Ministers**

Dan Rogers

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To submit an article for *Together*, send it by email to michael.morrison@gci.org, or by U.S. mail to P.O. Box 5005, Glendora, CA 91740. If you want an article or photo returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

South Africa

At the South African board meeting I was able to pass along some sports equipment donated by the Vancouver congregation for use at the South African summer camp. It was great getting the news from Dennis Thibault that the Castlegar, B.C., congregation has decided to fund the travel of our national ministry leader in Zambia to each congregation in that country. Their generosity will be deeply appreciated.

Gary Moore



Gary Moore, National Director in Canada and a Mission Director for southern Africa, delivering sports equipment donated by the Castlegar congregation.

Bangladesh

It is difficult to share Christ's message of hope in Islamic Bangladesh. More than 150 million people are living in a space smaller than Iowa. Muslims constitute 90 percent of the population, Hindus 9 percent, and 1 percent are Christians, Buddhist and others.

Sadly, about 20 fanatics recently attacked and badly damaged our Bangladesh mission center. They broke the security walls and entered the mission compound carrying homemade firearms. They broke doors and windows, and threatened our people. They vandalized the clinic casting out medicines and supplies, plus our books, Bibles, Christian literature and other materials.

Some of the BEA gospel workers (shown below) tried to save mission property, but they were chased and threatened by the attackers. We thank God that none of the gospel workers were hurt except for some minor wounds. Our people have calculated that from this incident, the Mission Center has incurred a loss of more than \$3,000 damage.

Despite this and the persecution of our little Christian outpost, our brave BEA gospel workers take it as a challenge to work for Christ, even though they are persecuted and disturbed from time to time.

The BEA gospel workers are helped and encouraged by your continued prayers and support. By God's grace they remain strong and dedicated to his work. They do firm-

ly believe that our Savior the Lord Christ saves at every step while they share his message to the people of darkness. They earnestly seek your kind prayers in their efforts.

John Biswas

China

For years, we had only one member in Shanghai, China. But in recent years, God has added more to that number. Most of our members in China today got to hear the good news and accept Christ as a result of relationships built by our tentmaking missionaries over the past five years. Most of the baptisms occurred two years ago. Considering the context of this "restricted access" country, we praise God for the ministry that started through the dedication and boldness of Ces, an English mentor, and the very enthusiastic response of young Chinese university students.

Over these past few years, God has been revealing himself more and more to them, as they fellowshipped, studied the word, shared their lives in creative, yet fun ways – like meeting in homes



and parks. There were about 12 all together, but some graduated from university and returned to their home provinces or work in other cities. A core group stays in the city where the university is located, and they have become teachers, too. Most of them have gotten married and have started their own families.

Last year, because of increasing pressure from school authorities, our tentmaker-mentor had to move to another school, but the situation got even worse when a full-time monitor was assigned to watch her every move. As of now, she is strongly considering a ministry in another nation nearby. This situation prompted us to think of ways through which our young converts can continue to be disciplined, equipped and trained for ministry. Our goal is to help these native Chinese believers to become mature Christian leaders, who in turn can serve and equip others.

Last year, I, together with one elder from California whom I invited to teach with me during a visit to China, commissioned a leadership team of three. They have since been meeting together with prospective believers.

In July I visited the members in three cities. One handicap is my inability to speak their language, and their limited ability to express themselves in English. By God's provision, I was able to bring with me a Chinese brother whom I met several months ago in the university where I am enrolled in the Philippines.

He was very thankful when I invited him to join me in my recent visit, because this took him back to his home province, and he got to see his parents, whom he had not seen for three years because of distance and financial constraints.

We taught them leadership principles based on Nehemiah, did a series on parenting, and taught them how to conduct a communion service. During our visit, we were able to have three communion services, with each of the three local leaders taking turns conducting the ceremony.

One of the highlights of our trip was the opportunity to counsel and pray for Lulu, a recent convert, and her husband, a non-believer. Lulu was baptized two years ago, and while they had a civil wedding last June, she asked me to pray over them and celebrate their union with former classmates and converts at the university.

Because of the need to follow-up on equipping, we hope to conduct another visit, especially to train leaders on basic principles of understanding the Bible and to organize the church. I pray for God's provision for this plan.

The harvest is great, and God has been faithful! We pray for more opportunities to participate in what he is doing in China and thank God for his abiding presence and awesome power.

Eugene Guzon

Thailand

The refugee problem along the Thai border with Myanmar is not getting better. Most of the refugees living in the camps within Thailand are ethnic Karen who have previously fled the fighting with the Burmese army inside Myanmar. In one of the camps (actually a town of about 40,000 people), our congregation of nearly 60 continues to meet for worship each week. This camp is one of about ten along Thailand's western border with Myanmar.

The United Nations has made a more concerted effort in the last year or two to resettle refugee families overseas. In this time period, amongst our own group, two families gained approval to resettle in Australia, one in the USA and one in

Norway. Unfortunately, three other families were denied approval to resettle in Australia, in spite of being guaranteed full sponsorship and resettlement assistance from various agencies including the church, and must now seek resettlement in another country.

In July, Malaysian pastor and pastoral coordinator for Thailand, Wong Mein Kong, and I made our annual visit to western Thailand to meet with our Karen pastor. We expected to find a smaller group this year. In spite of it being a Tuesday morning, we didn't! We discovered that while the three families have moved overseas, more families have joined our group. They have come through contacts with our members, including several people from another denomination who prefer our services. One man is a deacon, who is proving very helpful to our pastor, since our deacon was among those who were approved to move overseas.

There are many children there who sang beautifully for us during the service, accompanied by a guitar played by a friend who is not a member of our congregation, and who teaches the children Karen songs. I gave a short message on the love and care that God has for us in spite of our physical circumstances – which





had to be translated into the Karen language as I spoke.

In spite of the UN's resettlement program, which has managed to find new homes for more than 50,000 people in the last year, the number of refugees in the camps is no fewer. In fact, the problem has been exacerbated by the arrival of more refugees to take the empty places. Unfortunately, the new arrivals are mainly



economic refugees who perceive that if they can filter in amongst the political refugees, they might get an opportunity to move to a western country. This has made the job of the camp authorities much more difficult in determining who qualifies for resettlement according to the relative danger they face "back home" in Myanmar. While it is understandable that anyone living in the poverty that afflicts so many people in Myanmar would try to find a way to move to a new home in a more prosperous country, it complicates the situation for the political refugees who have been in the camps in Thailand for decades.

During our visit to the camp, we delivered to our people two boxes of Karen hymnals and coloring books

for children which had been donated by Chogait Garmolgomut, our member in Chiang Mai, Thailand, who, with his wife, runs 11 English language and bilingual schools for children in various parts of Thailand.

Many years ago, Chogait, a graduate of Ambassador College in Pasadena, returned to his native Thailand and eventually started an English-language school for little children, whose parents saw the benefit in their children being bilingual, especially in what is the world's language of business. The one school has now grown to 11, with their newest school opening its doors in Chiang Mai a few months ago. Called the Little Stars Ambassador Bilingual School (ABS), it is already a hive of activity and looking to expand in the months ahead (photo at left).

Chogait and his wife, Amporn, a dedicated Christian who came to be introduced to Christ through her husband many years ago, also host and serve a church congregation in one of their schools each weekend. Recently they had to introduce two different times for services since the meeting room did not accommodate the numbers wanting to attend. Those attending come largely from school staff members and personal contacts. The value of personal example cannot be underestimated in spreading the gospel.

Rod Matthews

Singapore

Wong Mein Kong and I travelled to Singapore for a significant event in the history of the local congregation. It was a delightful occasion to ordain Joe Zachariah an elder, and the entire congregation celebrated. Joe and his wife, Anna, have a track record of serving the church faithfully and consistently in humility and dedication. Pastor emeritus, Yong Chin Gee, who has been struggling for



some years with poor health, was able to travel with several members from southern Malaysia across the causeway to Singapore to join us in the ordination ceremony. It was a great pleasure for him to take part in this milestone event with the local members numbering about 40.

Rod Matthews

Estonia

I returned home from Estonia last night after our fourth summer school in the town of Kallaste, Estonia. The pupils told us that they had really looked forward to this event, and we have become quite close friends with a number of the older pupils. Several have invited me home to their family. So I am already starting to think about next year's summer school. I would like to thank the staff of teachers: Timothy Stähle, Mateusz Kostrzewa (Alhaug), Frederic Clausen, Philip Cifuentes Silbigger and Hendrickje Kehlenbeck, for their service to each other and the pupils.

Among the subjects we taught were: "Keys of success," and "Advanced English," including active communication and what they should do and not do in a job interview. We also taught American football and badminton.

We had around 40 pupils, the same number as last year. In addition to classes, we visited the largest telescope in northern Europe and a large aviation museum. I also held a public meeting for about 35 people.

Carl Aas



Carl Frederick Aas and the volunteers who staffed the summer school in Estonia.



Italy

We held our annual festival July 31-August 3 in the historic town of Ferrara (greater Bologna area). This year we were not able to provide translations in other languages, but we did have about 70 Italian members in attendance (see above). Also in attendance were the pastor of a local Protestant church and a couple of their members. This year's theme was "The Lord Has a Plan for You."

Besides daily worship services we had several meals together, a praise and worship afternoon, an excursion to a nearby natural park by boat and a guided bicycle tour at night around the walls of Ferrara.

Daniel Boesch

SEP Scotland

Summer Camp went very well with activities including archery, initiative training, sailing, canoeing, netball, football, encaustic art (applying special pigment and fixing it with heat), leatherwork, hill walking, and many more. Campers learned how to prepare and present their



own worship sessions, and participated in interactive classes on practical Christian living. Find out more by checking the website: www.sepuk.org.

Bahamas Mission Trip

They came from far and wide to attend the Bahamas Summer Vacation Bible School, which was actually a mission trip, a Vacation Bible School and a mini-SEP all rolled into a two-week-



The Vacation Bible School staff in the Bahamas, including a group from California (dark shirts) and numerous local volunteers (mostly wearing lighter shirts).

long extravaganza event! Michael and Janet Morrison led a team of 20 from California to run the program. Their hard work and enthusiasm, together with the assistance of local church volunteers, spearheaded by our local VBS



coordinator Gillian Curling, helped make this our best summer program ever. The VBS shared the gospel and games with more than 120 children, more than half of whom came from the Haitian immigrant community.

We plan to follow up with the young persons who attended, and we are hopeful that much lasting fruit will come as a result of our time together. We are thankful to all our members who served this year,

especially our brothers and sisters from California, the Naval family from Haiti and our local members as well. We are hoping to send a good number of our young people to SEP SoCal to gain some additional training and experience for the future, and tentative plans are underway to host another trip in 2010.

Robert McKinney

Jamaica Mission Trip

A ten-member GCI team comprised of two members from Trinidad, one from Florida, five from Ohio, one from Indiana, and one from Scotland, served on the church campus at Christian Pen in Jamaica July 5-9. Besides hosting a leadership seminar conducted by team member David Perry, and a Vacation Bible School that served more than 100 children, the team helped with needed repairs to the campus.

Charles Fleming



Papua New Guinea

Mark Latham, Papua New Guinea (PNG) pastoral coordinator, returned home from a mid-year visit to our congregations in PNG July 26. On this trip, Mark was accompanied by Australian Youth Coordinator Kwan Borden. Mark wrote:

This was Kwan's first trip to PNG, a land of the unexpected, and there was an air of excitement surrounding his visit. The congregations in Port Moresby and Mt. Wilhelm were eagerly awaiting his visit and had prepared an exotic cultural welcome. Dancing and singing were followed by a traditional mumu meal. It was a special and emotional time and showed the genuine love of this community to visitors.

As well as meeting the congregations, work was done on the electrical wiring, concreting the floor, window installation and lining the walls and ceiling of the church building at Mt. Wilhelm. Great progress has been made since last year when just the frame and roof were done (compare the photos at right). The congregations sincerely thank all the donations from Australia for this project. We thank everyone for their prayers of support and for good health and safety. It was greatly appreciated.

A rainwater tank (below right) was also purchased through CarePac, our Australian church's relief and outreach ministry. The tank will enable fresh water to be used on-site instead of members having to carry buckets of water up the hill from a river. A cleaner and more reliable source of drinking and cooking water was needed because the river is also used



Left, traditional Cimbu dancers. Above, Kwan Borden and John Banda.

for bathing and laundry.

The rainwater tank holds 4500 liters and will collect the water off the new church building. At present the rainwater tank has arrived at the village and preparations are being made to connect it. It should be in use in October – in time for the beginning of the wet season.

The congregation is excited to have the tank and thanks everyone who has donated so much. This will make their lives easier and healthier.

A communal kitchen is also planned to help in good nutritional cooking and teaching as well as allowing the community to exercise



their generous hospitality to each other, visitors and the surrounding community. The church is a shining example to the surrounding community and a light on the hill on the tallest mountain in Australasia.

Tour of Israel

The UK church is in the early stage of organizing a Bible tour of Israel for October 7-16, 2010. They will need at least 28 attendees to make the trip viable. The package is designed with church members in mind but is open to anyone. It is expected to include locations such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho and Tiberius. The group will have its own guide, and there will be Bible studies related to the places visited. Accommodation will be in basic hotels.

Bed, breakfast, evening meals and flights from Heathrow to Tel Aviv should be approximately £1000 British pounds per person based on double occupancy. For those who would wish to make their own flight arrangements and join the tour, the tour cost would be around £700 per person, based on double occupancy. For more information email James Henderson at james@wgc.org.uk.



Adventure Camp

More than 30 preteen campers from around the country, along with a large group of teen helpers and staff, enjoyed a fabulous weekend of fun August 29-31 at the Well End Activity Centre, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire (photo above).

Children took part in a wide range of activities, including archery, biking, field games and candle making. Adults and children commented

on the great atmosphere. There was a real sense of community with people of all ages, shapes and sizes working and playing together to create a successful event.

Plans are already in place for Adventure Camp 2010. For more information about Adventure Camp visit www.wcg.org.uk.

Kevin Harris



European Twist on Spokesman Club

Life Club, now in its sixth year, is a Christian public speaking club that provides an opportunity for members to develop skills in speech and communication.

The club emphasizes Christian service, networking, spiritual growth, personal and professional development, character and confidence building, friendship, fellowship, life skills development, integrity and enjoyment. It is an ideal way to introduce friends to a Christian environment.

James Henderson



Our church in Botswana was recently registered, which means that our members there can now rent a facility and meet publicly. Until now they have been meeting in members' homes.



News in the U.S.A.

Newark Church to Celebrate Anniversary on December 5-6

The 24-7 Community Church invites everyone to attend their 10th anniversary weekend, on Dec. 5-6. On Saturday evening, there will be a dinner dance at the Newark Club, on the 22nd floor of One Newark Center, a short stroll from Penn Station. Worship services will be held Sunday, at the Gateway Hilton Hotel. Our guest of honor will be Joseph Tkach. The dinner dance costs \$50 per person; \$25 for children 12 and under. For further information contact Oda Freeman, at ofree30@yahoo.com.

her unit may soon be redeployed to Afghanistan.

The photo shows Magen with most of the Living Hope members.

Youths at "Do Hard Things"

Twenty-two youth, parents, and guests of Worldwide Grace Fellowship (Clarksville, TN) traveled to Gadsden, AL, for a Do Hard Things Conference on Aug. 29. The conference encouraged youth to accept hard challenges and strive to do God's will. Youth attending were: (bottom row, left to right) Austin Wall, Ben Grayer; (middle row) Keribeth Williams, Mariel Tomes, Kayla Williams, Alex Davis, and Sara Powell; (top row) Will Peters, Benjamin Owen, Tiffany Hyde, Christopher Davis, Matthew Davis, and Darin Owen. Not pictured are parents, Darlene and Tom Davis, Ed and Sondra Peters, Mark and Lisa Powell, Doug and Pam Tomes and Sue Williams. The outing ended with a trip to the U.S.



Air and Space Museum in Huntsville, AL.

Army Medic speaks in Minnesota church

PFC Magen (Skrove) Saulter, daughter of Wayne Skrove, and granddaughter of Duane and Sharon Skrove, elder and member in Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Champlin, MN, visited the congregation on August 1 and gave a PowerPoint presentation showing her duty station in Iraq. She is a medic with the 1st Cavalry near Baghdad, but



Announcements

Achievements

Scott Queener, a member of Christian Family Church, in Belleville, IL, received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Studies from St. Louis University on May 16. His dissertation is entitled "Obstacles That Non-Traditional Students Encounter While Pursuing An Undergraduate Degree."

Dr. Queener is the son of Pastor Mark and Rhonda Queener, the husband of Cindie Queener, and the father of Hannah and Sophia Queener. He works at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.*

Wedding

Karen Johnson of Northfield, NH, and **Robert Kelley** of Derry, NH, were united in marriage on August 29 in Loudon, NH. Pastor Thom Friedrich officiated. They attend Sonlight Christian Fellowship in Loudon.

Anniversary

Lyle and Donna Vershowske of Milwaukee, WI, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 12. Lyle married the former Donna Lanke on Sept. 10, 1949 in Milwaukee. They began attending the Radio Church of God in 1958. They are the parents of Todd (Laura) of Lake Wales, FL, and Eric (Beverly) of Trevor, WI. They have six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.*

Obituaries

Lottie Raymond Albrecht, 91, died at her home on Aug. 7. She was born on May 3, 1918 in DeSmet, SD, the oldest of 11 children. On Feb. 7, 1945, she married Theodore H. Albrecht. They farmed for 30 years.

She was a faithful, loving member of the GCI Church of Sioux Falls, SD. She always had a positive attitude towards life, always encouraging and had a great sense of humor.

Survivors include four brothers: Vernon Rydom, LaCresant, MN; Arthur Rydom, DeSmet, SD; Donald Rydbom, Erwin, SD; Albert Rydbom, Windsor, CO, and two sisters: Ann Hayes, Mapleton, IA, and Rose Ann Krause, Rockford, MN. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ted; parents Arthur and Kate (Bosse) Rydom; brothers John Rydbom and Barney Rydbom; and sisters, Ruby Weise and Dorothy Virchow.

Delores Blessing, long-time member of New Life Christian Fellowship in St. Paul, MN, passed away on March 29 after numerous debilitating and lengthy illnesses. Delores was raised in an orphanage and carried a special place in her heart for the disadvantaged. She is survived by her husband Wayne.

Eugene L. Burton, 84, of Lexington, KY, died Nov. 12, 2008. He was born Dec. 28, 1923, in Garrard County, KY, a son of Joseph and Margaret Burton. Eugene married Geneva on April 15, 1949. They were both active members since 1963. He continued serving the members of his spiritual family until a stroke severely disabled him in October 1994.

He is survived by his wife; daughter Debra Burton-Booth and her husband, J. Leslie, of Indiana; grandson Aaron Booth and wife Dawn of Ohio; and two great-grandchildren, Brooklyn and Wyatt. He is also survived by one brother, Wylie Neal Burton of Nicholasville, KY. He was preceded in death by two sisters and five brothers.*

Aaron Cruise, 86, of Winnsboro, TX, died on June 29. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Sara Ingle Cruise; a son, Victor, of Bedford, TX; four daughters: Mary Scott, in Scotland, Ellen Sadovy, Raleigh, NC, and Anne Cruise, Winnsboro, and Tish Cruise,

Athens, TX; eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Nelson Doucet, a long-time former employee, died on August 27. He was hired full-time in 1960 and retired in 1998. For many years, he was the Dept. Manager of Machine Maintenance at Ambassador College in Pasadena, CA.

Donald Ellis Jones, 70, died Sept. 30 of an aneurism. He was a church member for 20 years in Chicago. He is survived by his wife Maddie Jones, nephew Michael Jones, neice Jackie, and Brittany Jones, a daughter from a previous marriage to Elaine Jones.

LaVerna Sawyer, 85, passed away peacefully on Aug. 20, in Lakeport, CA, with her daughter and son-in-law at her side. LaVerna was born on April 28, 1924, in Kirkville, IA, to William H. and Jesse A. Bennett.

LaVerna became involved with the Radio Church of God in the 1960s. She brought her two youngest sons, Harold and Charles, into that church and became an active Christian with Bible study, prayer and fellowship. LaVerna was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Robert. She is survived by her six children, Larry (Linda) Slycord of Tillamook, Ore., Robert (Kathleen) Sawyer of Fresno, Calif., Mary Ann (Jerry) McQueen of Lakeport, Calif., John Sawyer of New Orleans, La., Harold (Margit) Sawyer of Unionville, Conn., and Charles (Bonnie) Sawyer of Bloomfield, Iowa; brothers, Clarence Bennett of Newton, Iowa, and Marion Bennett of Quincy, Ill. She is also survived by 16 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

LaVerna moved to California in 1966 and spent most of her life since then in California. She resided in Lakeport, Calif., since 1988.*

* See www.wcg.org/together/09/nov/announce.htm for photos and more information.