



# DAVE & MARGIE STAFFORD

SERVING IN THE PHILIPPINES



JANUARY 2022

Firstly, let us wish you a peaceful and prosperous New Year. We hope you had a blessed Christmastime, in spite of the various pandemic strictions in place wherever you live.

Speaking of restrictions, the Philippine Government is only just allowing **some** back to school, face to face learning for a very limited number of students since March 2020! Six countries have participated in the longest shut down of educational learning, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Panama. All of them, except for the Philippines, had begun to reopen. But now finally, the Filipino Government is allowing 100 public schools to reopen in a pilot scheme. (When education reopened in the Philippines back in October 2020, the education department's solution was a blend of remote-learning options: online platforms, educational TV and radio, and printed modules. But social inequalities and the lack of resources at home to support these approaches have dealt a huge blow to many students and teachers.) One of our colleges, the private Catholic College in Gingoog City, Christ the King, is allowing **some** face to face for some classes for **some** students. So **some** of our young people **may** get to return by the time you read our newsletter. Please pray for a **real** breakthrough because from Elementary School through to College our kids and students are really suffering and going backwards in their education. I suspect fear of the Omicron variant will send shock waves through the governmental system in the Philippines, just as it has done through areas of the western world. (The enemy loves to play the fear card.)



I had planned on a different newsletter for the beginning of the year, but events in December changed that idea! Firstly, there was typhoon (Hurricane) Rai, it's international named, but known locally as Odette once it entered the Philippines Area of Responsibility. Odette intensified as it approached the north eastern portion of Mindanao and the eastern edge of the string of islands that stretches east to west across the Philippines and are known as the Visayas. Landfall was initially made on Siargao Island on December 16th as a category 5 super typhoon with winds of 160mph. It had a major effect on the population. Ahead of the storm, travel restrictions were put in place including air, sea, and road travel. Over 100,000 people were asked to evacuate. At the time of writing on January 8, 410 people have died, a large portion on the severely affected island of Bohol. At least 1,261 are injured, with 80 missing. Damages in the region of \$620 million are anticipated and according to the United Nations, 13 million people are expected to be affected in the Philippines. As an aside, on December 15, militants of the New People's Army attacked troops evacuating residents in Surigao del Sur (North east Mindanao) prior to the storm, killing three civilians!

How did our families, and communities fare, I hear you ask. Well there was lack of power, torrential rains, massive flooding especially in Gingoog City and further south in Cagayan De Oro. We had some damaged homes and one of our family members, Marlon Mendoza, who lives on the island of Leyte had his home completely destroyed. His eldest sister, Evelyn, reported to me he was broken hearted and crying at the scene. (Marlon has since come back to his parents' home in Kimaya) Families in Gingoog City suffered lost roofs and walls. But just as here in the States, some homes were completely undamaged in the same neighborhood!



Marlon's home on Leyte Island



Typhoon Odette Track



Our dear friends Pastor Sherwood and Ma'am Rose Bendoy and family were safe, and apart from trees needing to be taken down, they survived with their home intact. Pastor Labor in Consuelo lost a roof and some of his church family suffered damage but bless God we've had no reports of death or injuries.

I'd like to help some of these needy families out but shipping tarps and supplies, which are taking nearly 4 months to arrive by sea is out of the question. I'm looking to send \$1,000 US to my Pastors for them to distribute to those most in need. If you would like to contribute, a gift of any amount will all go towards helping the poor and needy. (Psalm 9:18)

Speaking of needs I've been strongly encouraged to share with you all the preparations and planning for the coming years gifts. Shipping used to take 3 months but stretching to nearly 4 now. Some of our Christmas outreach items didn't arrive until 7th and 8th of January having left Pensacola the last week of August! To that end, I wish to enlist your financial help. I'm looking to send 5 of the balikbayan boxes in time for Easter outreaches (mid-April). Shipping alone will cost \$540 (worth every penny truly) I'd like to raise around \$2,500 to cover buying and shipping to our 5 main outreach centers.



It's been my way since I began to send supplies to cover things like back-to-school supplies, major outreach times, like Easter, a fall thanksgiving and Christmas. I've also covered other events that are communicated well ahead of time to me in order to seek out the bargains and get them packed and shipped. Things like the anniversary of the Chosen Generation group is usually an outreach event. I've had requests for bibles in Filipino and Cebuano translations and gospels. God does supply all the bargains, trust me, my feet are sore from traipsing Margie around the local stores, but my finances are severely limited and in reality, I want to do more than previously! I may have an opportunity to help in the Muslim areas of southern Mindanao on the Zamboanga Peninsula, through a female Pastor who is 'doing the do'. I may send some photos from her Christmas outreaches in this very dangerous area. But please pray and prayerfully consider investing in what God is calling me to do for the poor and needy of Mindanao.



Yes, somebody lives here in Gingoog City



I'd like to prayerfully consider how we could all play our part in supplying these much needed items to the deserving poor people. But I stress again that our meeting of practical needs is a way to reach these dear people with the good news that God loves them, sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for them along with the declaration that God hasn't forgotten or abandoned them!

I know it's not our usual upbeat and informative newsletter but it's a reflection of real life to the area that God has called us to serve as best we can. I'm (Dave) encouraged as I write to you because you are a constant source of encouragement to me and after all you are Jesus with skin on to a lost and dying world.

Live Loved and remember, that with Jesus You'll Never Walk Alone!

#YNWA

- Dave & Margie Stafford



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