

# *reach* **bulletin**

december 2014 vol. 22 no. 4 | resources employment and community horizons



*Merry Christmas!*

May the joy and hope of IMMANUEL (God with us) be the center of your celebration this season and fill your heart throughout the coming year!

From your **REACH** Family

## *Mission:*

To develop disciples of Jesus Christ as whole persons and promote a contextualized holistic Christian discipleship in the developing world.

## *Vision:*

The gospel and God's Kingdom, actively and freely permeating all levels of society in a holistic and contextualized manner.

**Equipping People to Become Complete in Christ**

## A Shadow of the Real Thing

By: Dave Brooks



Before there were iPads, iPods, MP3 players, Walkmans and even 8-track tape players, there was the pocket-sized transistor radio. It created a revolution in listening to music. Music became portable making the transistor radio the hottest gift item under the Christmas tree. One Christmas I received two—one from each set of grandparents. I was thrilled with the first one but asked myself what I was going to do with two after I ripped the wrapping off of the second one.

Thinking about it, the gifts we exchange at Christmas are just a shadow of the gift God gave us in Jesus Christ. Our Earth-bound gifts wear out, break down and become obsolete. That new shirt or dress will be too tight or short when you sit down to eat at next year's Noche Buena. But salvation brought to us by Jesus never malfunctions or fades, it fits all sizes, has no age restriction, and always remains cutting edge.

The gift of salvation is good from day one (batteries not needed). Our residency is transferred from darkness to light. The fog of guilt's hangover lifts as we realize past, present and future sins are blotted out. All the promises of the Bible are instantly redeemable. The Holy Spirit becomes our constant companion, so we're never alone. And we have uninterrupted connectivity to God the Father through prayer that beats the speed of any cellular plan.

Certainly it was the gift-giver's love that placed those temporal gifts for us under the Christmas tree, but that love pales compared to God's love that gave us Jesus Christ. Admittedly, earthly commitments can be fickle. Disagreements easily divide friends, lovers, and a parent and child.

Should we give up on gifts? By no means. Imperfect gifts that lose their luster should prime our pump for the real thing that lasts forever. So, go ahead and enjoy your gifts this Christmas but don't be tempted to replace God's gifts of love, joy, peace and good will with gifts that eventually disappoint and wear out. And if you haven't received God's gift of Jesus, there's no better time than now. ■



# Trusting God without Borders

## *Lessons Learned in my Journey to Graduate School*

By: Charis Mae Tolentino

I celebrated my 25th birthday this year, I asked God for just one thing – that is for Him to increase my faith – nothing more, nothing less. Oh how He answers prayers! The following day I received a rejection from one of my dream universities. I found myself crying after receiving the email. At that time, my mind was filled with negative thoughts – “Why did God allow this to happen?,” “Is He not aware of my up-or-out deadline at UPLB?,” “After responding to Your call back to the Ancient Path, I thought You are bringing me to a new direction for a higher take-off?” A few minutes after crying, I decided to pray and bring this matter to God. I know I don’t have the right to question Him and I know that He is in control.

Little did I know that that was His way of answering my birthday prayer. He is completely aware and His “NO” is His way of saying, “I have the best plans for you, my child. You can trust me in this.”

Here are a few lessons I learned on my journey to the University of British Columbia (UBC).

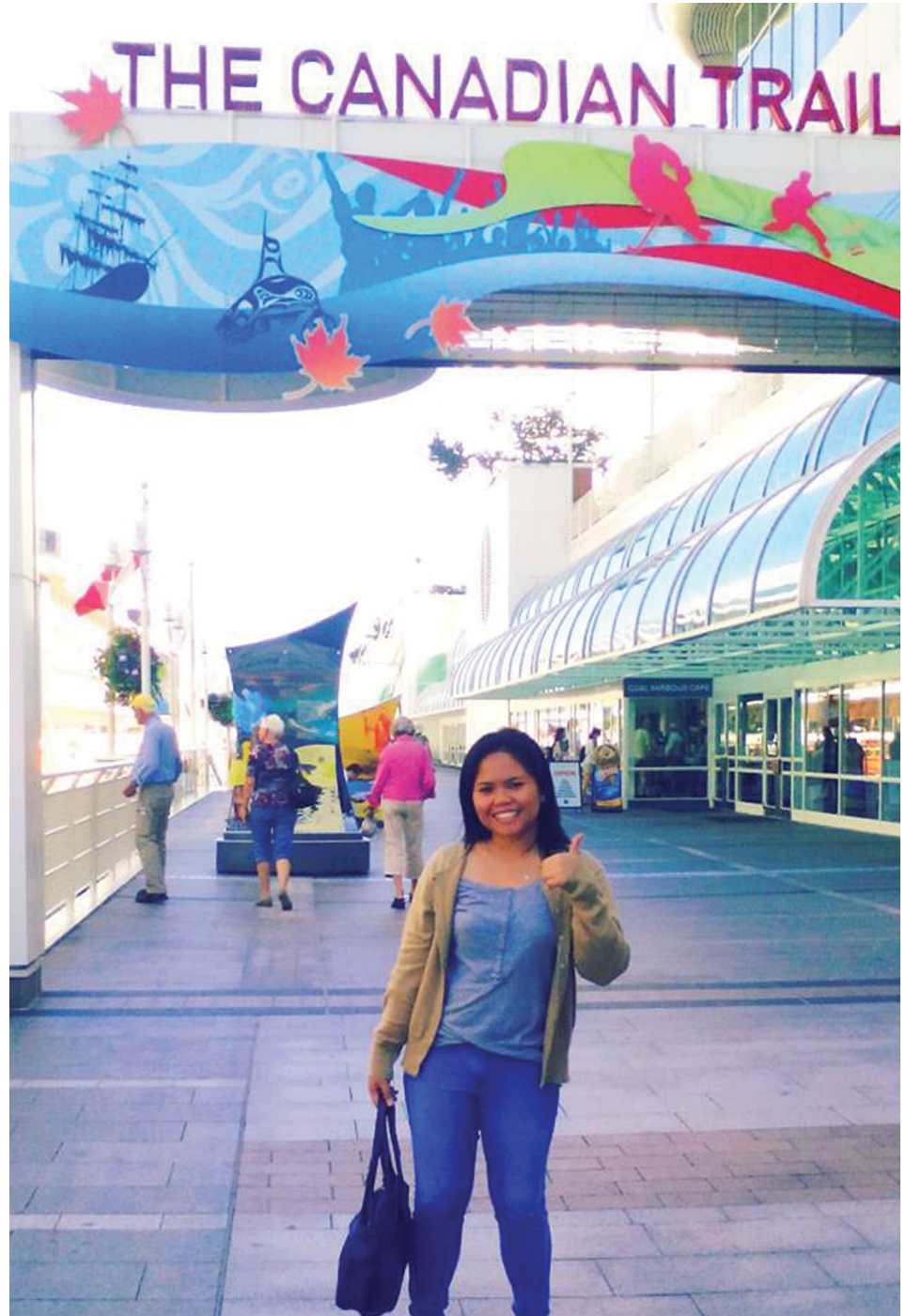
### **God doesn’t know the word impossible.**

It sounds cliché but I have proven this unwavering truth countless times already.

- I was given the opportunity to submit my documents 4 months past the university deadline.
- The department opened a closed online application system for one day, just for me.
- The estimated 13-week processing of my study permit (visa) was shortened to 3 weeks.
- I was sick during my medical examination yet results did not show any sign of illness.

I have learned that I should never look at the temporary troubles I am experiencing, but instead, dwell on the size of my God, not on the size of the giant. After all, the word impossible is not in His dictionary.

**God uses people.** He provided people to support me. If it’s His will, He will make it happen, through His unfathomable ways and



through the love of people.

- I found a mentor/colleague who believed in me, taught me life lessons, allowed me to be a part of his research projects and linked me to the right person.

## “ God is interested in the journey not just the destination.”

- I met an amazing woman/World Bank Consultant/my supervisor and professor who willingly edited my CV, asked her home department if I could still submit application beyond the deadline, helped me in preparing the documents I need, and encouraged me in every step of the process.
- My Tita and Ninang in Canada readily provided me their 4-month bank statements and other documents for me to use in my visa application.
- I received extra money just in time for my medical exam.
- More than 5 people gave me clothes I can wear for winter.
- When my family brought me to the airport, someone volunteered to use his van for free.
- I have free lodging and food c/o my Tita.
- My family and friends keep on praying for and encouraging me.

How blessed I am with relationships! I know it is not an accident that God allowed me to meet them.

**God desires the best for each one of us.** While I was waiting, I realized that UBC was one of my dream schools back in college. Searching for the world's best universities, I found UBC at the top 50, whereas none of those I have previously applied topped that!! Amazing how He provides the best for His children. Indeed, He gives us more than what we ask or imagine!

**God loves to make us run out of options so that our only choice is to run to Him.** This is one of the most recent things I learned about God. When I received the rejection letter the day after my birthday, UBC was my last and only option for graduate studies abroad. He did this so that

I will learn that I can only go to graduate school through Him – His ways, His efforts and never my own doing, never my own efforts. When we run out of options, it's when He steps in and does the impossible so that His power and glory will all the more be displayed.

**God is working even while we are waiting.** For many years, I prayed and waited for my graduate school dream to finally take place. There were many times I thought of giving up. And after numerous rejections, I was beginning to wonder if He is working. Then I was reminded that God never sleeps nor slumbers. He is actively at work. Even when He seems silent, He is doing something. Jesus loves to work behind the scenes. “After all our worries and questions, we'll discover that all along, God had the right thing at the right time for us.”

**I experienced all of these along the way.** If I was admitted without inconvenience, I would never have learned about these lessons. Indeed, God has incomparable ways of turning things around. He humbles us once in a while so that we will know that it is only through His ways, never ours. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8,9)

**These are the lessons in-between the starting point and the destination.** Indeed, “God is interested in the journey not just the destination.” My most significant lesson in this whole process is to TRUST GOD WITHOUT BORDERS – throwing my whole life to Him and asking Him to take charge completely even in the minutest of details. ■

Originally from Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, Charis Mae Tolentino answered God's call to go back to her Ancient Path - Los Baños, Laguna. She is currently pursuing her MA in Asia Pacific Policy Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada while on leave from her teaching job at the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

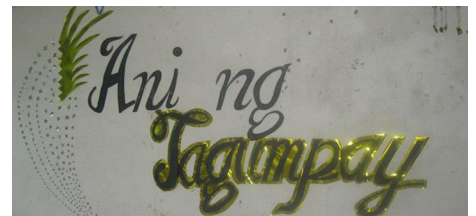
## Ministry Area Updates



REACH Ministry Metro Manila celebrated an early Christmas Party at the REACH Fellowship Center last November 30, 2014.



Members of REACH Ministry Roxas City gathered last November 22-23, 2014 for a Youth Treat as they unraveled the answer to the question Who Am I?



REACH Ministry Batac ended the semester with a theme “Ani ng Tagumpay” last December 11, 2014.



Last December 13-14 members of REACH Ministry Butuan City traveled to Cubi-Cubi Nasipit for a retreat and thanksgiving celebration.



# The Exploration at the Land of Peace and Prosperity

By: Johans Ulfano



Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails". This verse in Proverbs 19:21 led me to the Indochina Mission trip last October 19 to 26, 2014.

Earlier this year, God impressed upon my heart that He wanted me to take an exposure trip to Cambodia. It was then an open talk between me and God. From my perspective, I initially told Him, "There is no way and it is impossible". I just cannot leave my work for almost two weeks. I cannot raise funds for this trip. My parents will not allow me to go on such a tour. My heart is not yet prepared for this kind of adventure. These are my immediate responses to Him when he opened this in my heart. All negatives. A BIG NO to all of the questions He threw at me.

From January, February and March, I had been negotiating with God. It cannot be. But at the very end of our conversation, I always found myself telling Him "Let your will be done my Dad, not mine". April came

and I attended the Kairos course at Butuan. This was the time when He opened my heart once again to the world. He made me realize a lot of things, i.e., His plan for the whole world, how I will fit myself in the amazing design He has for mankind, how He blessed me to be a blessing to the nation. The course gave me a wider view of Christianity and a wake-up call of my true identity in Him.

Months passed by and my discussion with God about the exposure trip kept on going. In the past, He had asked me to do things out-of-the-box and things outside my comfort zone. And my initial response to Him usually was "No, I cannot do that! There is no way." Now, I understand that this time it was completely different. I have to say "Yes" and if I really desire to know and grow more in Him I have to obey. So, I kept on praying about it -- surrendering everything, throwing away fears, doubts and worries that initially engulfed my whole being and replaced them with faith, peace and love from Him. By June, I confirmed my

participation in the Indochina exposure trip to Tito Paul. After saying "Yes", I felt God put my heart at peace. All went well on the processing of my leave at work, purchasing tickets and raising my funds for the trip. I had proven that He is really a faithful God, true to His promises and words.

As October was approaching, mixed emotions ran within my system. Am I really prepared for this journey? Is my heart ready for what He is going to reveal to me in Cambodia? As I packed my things, I felt excited and afraid. I was thrilled because this will be a trip with my Dad. The moments that I felt closer to God were the times that I am lost. I know this is kind of weird, but this was what I considered as an intimate time with Him. I sensed that I was so close to Him, walking with Him side-by-side during those instances. With that said, my trip to Cambodia was a perfect date with my Father. I was frightened because this would be my first time to travel abroad all by myself. I already went outside the country, but then

I had my friends with me. My mind was shouting, “What if something happens to me?” I just prayed and God calmed the raging storm within me. I figured out I was with Him so there was nothing to be scared of. And my desire to bless this nation was bigger compared to the fear that struck me at that moment.

During my first day in Phnom Penh, Tita Cha showed me the major places in the city, like the market, parks, and museums. On the second day, I explored the land on my own while observing the local people. In the morning, I went to the Toul Sleng (S21) Museum. Here, I had seen the terrible experience of the Cambodians in the hands of the Khmer Rouge. In my heart, I uttered that the people of this nation had already suffered a lot and this should not be repeated anymore. My heart really broke into pieces and my eyes shed tears as I roamed around S21.

In the afternoon, Tita Cha and I went to a small community near the airport area. We visited a group of families considered below the poverty line. I realized that there was a big gap between the rich and the poor in this nation. A gigantic house with a big gate welcomed us in the area; however, at the back of this beautiful house was a squatter district. We engaged some of the families living in this neighborhood and prayed for them afterwards. Their homes were small; the living room, dining room, and bedrooms were all in one place. Even though I only had a little amount of time to talk to them, I observed that this group of people always wore a smile on their face despite their deprived conditions. They were also very hospitable, friendly, and warm. And I really felt their hunger for learning and education as a means to improve their way of life. Here are some pictures of their homes (Botting and Mach family):

During the remaining days of my exploration in the Kingdom of Cambodia, I met three people who wanted me to stay in this nation. On my third day of wandering around the city, I bumped into a Buddhist monk at the Royale Palace.



*Johans with Botting and Mach family.*

Although I was all by myself, I managed to capture every wonderful side of the Palace. But then eventually, I needed someone to take a picture of me to capture the lovely surroundings with me. And here came the Buddhist monk in the scene. I asked him to get a picture of me. I had the courage to inquire from him because I thought he was younger than me. I was surprised when he said that he was 28 years old. We had a small chat and I found out that he was still in college. He was very friendly and taught me some Khmer words. He immediately said goodbye after around 15 minutes because he needed to go to school. I wished I had a longer time with him to ask him about their culture, but then he really needed to go. I asked for his number and email address for us to still keep in touch after that short encounter. On my fourth day, I gained two friends, Esther and Nary. Esther was nine years old while Nary was 20. Esther was the granddaughter of the cleaner of the place where Tita Cha stayed. She was my tour guide for that day. We went to the Angkor Thom and then to Dreamland. Dreamland is like an Enchanted Kingdom here in the Philippines. I asked her where she wanted to go and she told me, to Dreamland. We played around and she shared some stories about her mother, father and brother with me. At the end of the day, I asked her what she would like to be when she grows up. She said she wants to read many books, a lot of books. At that time, I realized this young girl was thirsty for learning. She also aspires to go to different places like China, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand. I certainly felt the joy in her while we were together and she thanked me at the end of the day for treating her at Dreamland. My other friend, Nary, was an accounting working student. She worked in the morning and went to school in the afternoon. She toured us around Dreamland and assisted us in some of the rides. Again, I asked for their contact numbers and email address for us to keep in touch.

During my brief stay at Cambodia, God continually spoke to me about my hopes and my dreams, about God’s best in my life and about obedience. In my quiet time, He revealed to me some of the requirements if I really wanted to experience His best in my life. First and foremost, I needed to have an open and willing heart. Before we can experience the blessings of God, we must be open to His love and will for our life. He takes joy in blessing those who love Him. Being open to God’s blessings does not mean just being open to receive something good from Him. It also means being prepared to receive whatever He sends our way. And in some circumstances, He may send something that we did not wish to receive. However, we can be sure that He has our best interest in mind.

Second is obedience. This is the key to receiving and enjoying the goodness of God. Many times the obedience that we carry out is not apparent to others, but God sees. When we take a leap of faith, the Lord always sends His blessings our way. However, sometimes



obedience is extremely difficult. We recognize what God requires of us, but from where we stand, obeying Him looks much too painful. We try to find a way out of it, but nothing works. We must decide whether we will obey Him or give in to recalcitrance. For us believers, there should be only one decision, and that is obedience. True worship springs from an obedient heart. We need to remember that God has always placed a blessing within the things He requires of us.

Third is the ability to dream. God always wants us to look forward to His blessings. When we lose the ability to dream and think of His goodness, it seems something inside us dies. No matter how small our dreams for the future may be, we need to refuse to let go of them. He desires us to dream big since we have a Big Dad up there ready to shower us with the great things of this world.

Sometimes, we have the tendency to steal from the outer perimeter of God's blessings, never recognizing there is an entire throne room waiting for us inside, if only we would seek Him above all else. We need to continuously pray to Him to make us aware of the blessings He has for us. As we seek His will for our life and submit all that we are to all that He is, His wealth of eternal blessings will be ours for the taking.

**Johans Claudine Ulfano** finished her Bachelor of Chemical Engineering Degree at the University of the Philippines Los Banos. She is currently working as a Technical Support Engineer for trouble shooting at Emerson -Fisher Rosemount Systems Inc.

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## Ministry Area Updates



REACH Ministry Davao City during their acquaintance and Christmas party at MerGrande Ocean Resort last November 30, 2014 with a theme *Studyante ka ba?*



The God Encounter Retreat of REACH Ministry Kaban was held December 19-21, 2014.



IMP Board meeting October 25, 2014 at Phnom Penh involving RMI and REACH Inc. Board Members, Missionaries and Youth leaders who went on mission exposure.

## Upcoming Activities

### Leaders' Retreat (Luzon)

Date: January 17 - 18, 2015

Venue: REACH Fellowship Center

Address: #23 Lanzones St., Quirino 2A, Quezon City

### Annual General Membership Meeting (AGMM)

Date: January 18, 2015, 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Venue: REACH Fellowship Center

Address: #23 Lanzones St., Quirino 2A, Quezon City

### RDC General Assembly

Date: January 18, 2015, 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Venue: REACH Fellowship Center

Address: #23 Lanzones St., Quirino 2A, Quezon City

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