



'Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.'

Hosea 6:3

August 2019

Blessed to serve in such a place of beauty.

by Andrea & James

We have received a very warm welcome from everyone here in The Philippines, both here in Coron & also in Manila. There is a genuine excitement from everyone that we will be here for at least 3 years to serve the community and expand the work of City Gates Church. We have been overwhelmed by the beauty we have seen around us, although we have also seen the living conditions people are living in and feel heart broken and a real burden to know what we can do to improve things for them. In our first few weeks we have seen an island of two halves!

Manila, City Gates Academy

Our first two weeks in the Philippines were spent at City Gates Academy in Antipolo, Manila. We had an amazing welcome from everyone we met there from Ps Glenn and Nadette Isaguirre, all the teachers, staff, parents and church members. We were introduced as not being visitors but family and really felt welcomed! *We warned them that visitors leave but family are harder to get rid of!!*

We had opportunity to speak at the Sunday service in Antipolo, prayer meeting at Living Epistle Church and a bible study for parents at Antipolo. We also attended session 1 of the Alpha

course at City Gates led by Ps Glenn and Ps Saldine, there was food, fun and great discussions.



Sunday service & Alpha

We also spent time seeing how the school and preschool works and helping teachers in class. We have such admiration for how hard the teachers work and the effort they put into preparation. They have a really dedicated and committed team.

A typical day starts with devotions at 7.30am for staff and teachers. These are really wonderful times where someone will share God's word and thoughts for that day, this is then followed by a time of physical exercise. This is great fun and has involved games, Zumba and dancing. It's great to start the day with a spiritual and physical 'workout'.



The teachers, the school and students.

We had opportunity to visit some of the children's houses and see how they live.

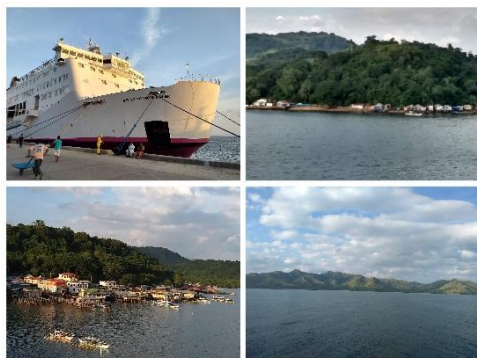
The homes visited gave us an insight into difficult living conditions and how life is hard. For example, one family of four was living in a very small room of a similar size to most bathrooms in the UK. This is where they would cook, live and sleep. Washroom/toilet are outside and shared with other neighbours. Having said this, they always appear happy and don't moan.

We learnt that the cost of living there is often more than they receive in wages if working. If they did not have work then there are no government benefits to support them like the UK, they will then rely on family. The children receive free meals at City Gates which means they will at least have one meal a day.

We were sad to say goodbye to our new friends at City Gates in Antipolo as we headed off to catch a boat to Coron, but we know we will be back to visit periodically.

Coron

We decided to take the boat to Coron as it would be easier and cheaper for the luggage we had. After a short 12-hour delay, we were underway to Coron, it takes 11 hours by sea. The delay meant that we reached Coron in the daylight WOW! was our first impression of Coron and surrounding islands! It is stunning, it is as beautiful (maganda) as everyone said it would be.



City Gates, Coron is about 20 minutes' drive from Coron town. It is so peaceful and has views of the surrounding mountains, trees and even has a little stream running besides it.



We will be looking for a place to rent locally but we will stay on site for the time being and have a comfortable ensuite room here. It will be useful to be here to get a real feel for how things work and getting to know everyone. Church is on the site, so we have no excuse for being late for church!!

City Gates Church, Coron

We had a wonderful welcome from Pastora Riza and the church on our first Sunday and a lovely welcome lunch. It was great to meet the church members and we have started to get to know them.



The church currently has around 25 people attending each Sunday. There are a number of young people and children along with their mothers. There are currently very few adult males attending church and we pray that as we build relationships with those in the local community there will be opportunity to connect and build relationships with some of the men folk. We plan in time to hold a couple's meal and James plans to launch a men's ministry.

Apart from Sunday services there is a weekly prayer meeting which is mostly attended by the youth, which is great to see. There are several young people that are developing their faith and growing. We pray we can get alongside them and help Pastora Riza in the discipleship of them.

There are a couple of home groups meeting in the week. There is always food, fellowship and great opportunities for individuals to grow deeper in their faith.

We look forward to supporting Ps Riza in developing ideas and plans to ensure a solid foundation for current church members and to building the church membership further.

Pre-school, City Gates Academy, Coron



The pre-school in Coron follows the same curriculum as Antipolo City Gates Academy and is a great start to the children learning to read, write, maths and learn through a variety of ways which are also creative and involve play. City Gates Academy, Coron, has been developing a really good reputation and the children have been observed to be ahead of other peers when starting elementary school.

The children are all sponsored to attend the school. This enables the children from poorer communities to have really good head start to their education when they otherwise would not have opportunity.

We will support the teachers in the school with additional reading in English for the 2nd year children on a 1-1 basis.

The Parents of City Gates, Coron



Getting to know the parents of the children has been great, although challenging due to them being very shy and reluctant to converse in English with us! As part of the agreement of their children having a place at City Gates, they work a few hours a week helping with cleaning and cooking etc. It is great seeing how well they get along together and the pride they take in the work.

We have the opportunity to meet with the parents each week to have times of devotions and prayer time. We also had some fun with games or icebreakers. We pray we can develop the relationships and these opportunities to share Jesus with them to develop their faith.

The parents also attend an Alpha course on Fridays, and we have opportunity to join and assist in this. The plan will be to provide more discipleship sessions after the Alpha course is completed.



Food following the alpha session

Reaching Communities



On the way to kid's club on a very wet day!

City Gates Church has a heart to reach out to people in the local communities. There are very poor communities in the area including families with children who live and work on a local rubbish dump site. They have a kids' club and feeding programme established here and 3 other local areas on Saturday mornings where the children and youth can have fun and games plus hear a gospel message.



We are planning along with Ps Riza to visit families at the dump site to build relationships with a view to further spreading the gospel and meeting needs. Ps Riza has connections with a couple of parents of children from the pre-school on this site, please pray that

they can be people of influence who will support us.

There is an elementary school opposite City Gates and there is an agreement that City Gates provides food there each Friday. Before the meal is served there is opportunity to share a short gospel message and develop links with the teachers.

Possibilities for the future

Ps Riza has submitted a request to start Alpha in the schools in the local area. Please pray for open doors for this. During discussion with the local regions school's supervisor there was also interest in us starting some seminars on mental health and well-being for teachers and children. Please pray that further discussions and planning for these ventures will be fruitful.

Language Learning

We are starting to learn the language, Tagalog, and have commenced an online course. We are also learning and practicing our new words each day with the assistance of the staff here, parents and the children. It is not easy, but we are pleased we are making a good start. Please pray for us as we know that speaking the language is essential here for us to reach out to people effectively as English speaking by the locals is limited.

"From dawn until sunset the name of the Lord deserves to be praised."

Psalms 113:3

Culture

It is Filipino week this month and so parents and teachers have been busy making costumes out of recyclable material such as shopping bags, bottle tops, straws, plastic bottles. The creativity is amazing!!

The children will be putting on dancing presentations and the teachers along with James and myself will be doing a dance too, we are busy practising. Should be entertaining!!

Photos in next month's Newsletter.

It is monsoon season so lots of heavy rain has meant some disruption to the preparations, but everyone is doing a great job of getting ready.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

On our missionary journey & ways you can partner with us contact via:

Email: jandareeve@gmail.com

Website:

https://www.elim.org.uk/Articles/500563/James_and_Andrea.aspx

Facebook: Reevesincoron

Food & the Art of Filipino cooking

Since being in The Philippines we have the opportunity to taste several local dishes. We have had days of eating the true Filipino way of having rice for breakfast, lunch and dinner!

I (James) have had the opportunity to cook in the traditional Filipino style over wood. More practice needed!



While in Antipolo we cooked for the teachers and staff, they requested an English lunch, so we agreed and made egg sandwiches with crisps. Knowing we would have very upset teachers in the afternoon if this is all we served so we also cooked Diet Coke Chicken and rice. This went down well due to Filipino's liking their food sweet tasting, from spaghetti to peanut butter!

NEW THINGS LEARNT

Filipinos enjoy games & love to laugh, even when someone is sharing a difficult situation or serious thought – others will laugh & offer them a towel for their tears.



A big lesson since arriving in Coron has been that the 'creepy crawlies' are on a whole different scale! Andrea has been handling it well so far – please pray for her to enable her to not scream the place down at the first sight of one of these!

Praise & Prayer

- We praise God for our safe journeys here to the Philippines and on to Coron and the good early start to building relationships here.
- Please pray for us to continue to settle in and adapt to the new culture and surroundings.
- That we continue to build relationships with Pastora Riza, the staff and teachers, children and parents and those in the local communities.
- Pray for the building of relationships at the rubbish dump site to enable us to help to meet needs there.
- Pray for the planning and preparation for potential future events and opportunities.
- Learning of Tagalog. We are starting to learn using an online course and practising daily with our interactions. Please pray this will come quickly to enable us to minister effectively here.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, we are so thankful for all your support and could not be doing any of this work without you.

Many Blessings

Love from Andrea & James