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HERALD

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Grace Baptist Mission

COMPELLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

*Church planting in
the Philippines*



GRACE BAPTIST
MISSION



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

'Call the guilty'

If you asked people on the street what they personally need, what answers would you get? When you are at a prayer meeting, what sorts of things are people praying for? When people see the news on TV, what is it that stirs up their compassion and concern? Why do we say that the greatest and supreme need of all people everywhere is the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Paul says that there is nothing embarrassing about his good news (Romans 1:16-17). It is powerful and it is supremely relevant. This good news is, in fact, very good indeed because it reveals the way that God calls wrongdoers righteous—and does so rightly. Romans 1:17 tells us that this righteous status is imputed to believers 'by faith' and 'to faith'. This, Paul says, is a message worth preaching to all sorts of people everywhere. (Don't forget that Romans is, among other things, a missionary support letter, 15:24.)

But why is this needed? Verse 18 begins to answer to that question. Why does righteousness have to be by faith, and what is its relevance in a world full of all kinds of needs? Answer: God is angry. No, this is not like our anger—which is often a weak and sinful emotion. But it is real. Outside of Christ, all men and women without exception are, in the words of one of the most famous sermons ever preached, 'sinners in the hands of an angry God'. This is a truly terrifying thought. What could possibly be worse than making an enemy out of the all-powerful, all-knowing Creator? This is arguably not something we think about often enough. (When did you last hear a sermon on hell?)

However, the Bible is full of it from beginning to end. 'The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies' (Nahum 1:2-3). And no one anywhere ever has any way of escape—apart from the promise of righteousness held out to us in Christ.

What is it that provokes our Maker? According to Romans 1:18-23 it is that fundamental Adamic sin of rejecting the knowledge of God (available through the witness of creation and conscience to all people everywhere) and preferring the worship of created things. This deep-level instinctive hatred of God is wicked, and it underlies every other kind of wickedness.

What evidence is there that God is angry with the human race? He has handed us over to every kind of antisocial behaviour (Romans 1:26-31). Here Paul particularly mentions homosexual sins. The prevalence of homosexual practice shows our Maker's displeasure at his godless image-bearers. But homosexuality is just a symptom. Only God himself can turn aside his own underlying wrath, and he does it through the preached gospel of his Son. In the words of William Gadsby:

*Would we view his highest glory?
Here it shines in Jesus' face;
sing and tell the amazing story,
all you sinners saved by grace:
call the guilty,
call the guilty
this great Saviour to embrace.*

Tom Forryan

GBM exists to help churches support their missionaries worldwide, in ministries of evangelism, church planting, training, compassion and radio

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Mission Director:

Daryl Jones
daryljones@gbm.org.uk

Head of Communications:

Paul Brunning
paulbrunning@gbm.org.uk

Finance Manager:

Andrew Woods
andyw@gbm.org.uk
12 Abbey Close, Abingdon,
Oxon, OX14 3JD (UK)
Tel: 01235 520147
e: infodesk@gbm.org.uk
www.gbm.org.uk

X: @GBMission

Facebook: gracebaptistmissions

Instagram: GraceBaptistMission

Grace Baptist Mission CIO

Registered charity No: 1157506

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Cover: Reuben Saywell, with others from the church plant in Santa Maria, share the gospel and practical Christian love with families living in extreme poverty under the bridge—see pages 4-11.

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The first and most recent GBM missionaries to the Philippines—the Ellises with the Saywells

COMPELLED BY CHRIST'S LOVE

church planting and reforming in the Philippines

GBM has supported missionaries in the Philippines for more than forty years, and the country remains a significant mission field for us. During a two-week visit in January-February, **Paul Brunning** had a taste of the busy life of church planters and pastors

It was a privilege to meet GBM's first missionaries to the Philippines—Brian and Necy Ellis—at their home in Manila. The Lord has prospered the work they pioneered, and today Cubao Reformed Baptist Church is a large and influential church. The ministries it has spawned, including Grace Ministerial Academy and Christian Compassion Ministries (both of which I visited), are continuing to bring the truth of God's Word and the love of Christ to hundreds of people. Brian and Necy themselves, now advanced in years, are well supported by the

church and well cared for in their home.

Most of my time was, however, spent with GBM's most recent missionary family to the Philippines—Reuben and Cathy Saywell—as well as Aries and Jodith Liboro, who have been serving in Valenzuela City since 2002.

First impressions

Having arrived from a British winter, the Filipino warmth was very welcome. The traffic less so! Reuben collected me from the airport and we began our battle through the Manila traffic



Grace Plant Santa Maria meets in Reuben and Cathy's garden





The Saywell family make good use of their tricycle



Cathy homeschools their two older boys



Aries and Jodith Liboro serve in Valenzuela City

(worse was to come on other days!). Santa Maria, where the Saywells live, has its own traffic issues as you crawl through the town centre—motor-tricycles and the iconic jeepneys everywhere, and the streets lined with market stalls.

‘Christian’ religion is clearly a big thing in Santa Maria and across this part of the Philippines. The town’s name points to the prevailing religious culture. The town centre was decorated for the annual fiesta, during which statues of Mary and Jesus would be carried through the streets. Reuben told me that he had known that Santa Maria was spiritually needy, but not until they were living there did he realize just how spiritually dark it is. As well as the widespread Roman Catholic influence, a number of powerful cults exert a strong hold over their members. Some have large and impressive buildings and names that make them sound like they are upholding Christian truth but, tragically, they preach a distorted ‘gospel’ which diminishes the Lord Jesus Christ and is shorn of saving truth. The rest of Bulacan Province is in much the same condition—there certainly is great need for more church planting across this spiritually bleak landscape.

Life in ministry

Reuben and Cathy, and their boys Benji, Micah and Judah, live at the end of a side street that begins with corrugated shacks and junk shops, then has a few higher-standard houses at the end. Their home, owned by Cathy’s mother, is comfortable and air-conditioned. It is not just their home, but also home to the church plant that they have been establishing. On one side is the garden where the church meets on Sundays; on the other side is a car port which is used for homeschooling, prayer meetings and wet-weather services. Their living room is the venue for mid-week Bible studies. The family have a car for longer journeys, but local travel is usually by tricycle—I had many rides on this around the town and beyond. And yes, you can fit six people on a tricycle!

Hosting the church plant in their home helps to foster a close family feeling among the



Sprawling Metro Manila is home to more than 26 million people

group. People stay to chat long after meetings finish. The boys love playing with their friends from church families. They share food and life together. All this is a lovely expression of Christian fellowship. But the intensity of this for the Saywells as a family, and the growth of the group, highlights the need to eventually find a new long-term venue for the church.

A Sunday at Valenzuela

On my first Sunday, Aries picked me up from the Saywells’ home and we drove the half-hour to his church building in Valenzuela City—a district in northern Metro Manila. The children’s Sunday School was underway when I arrived. The ten children, mostly from local non-church families, were being taught by Leslee, a young woman who had been baptized a year or so earlier. Next was the adult Sunday School, taught by one of the younger men. They are going through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, and that week were looking at the chapter on Civil Government. Then followed the main worship service, which Aries led and at which I preached. Everything thus far had been in Tagalog (or sometimes the linguistic hybrid ‘Taglish’); my sermon was of course all in English—slow, simple (and still jetlagged) English—which I was assured most of the congregation would understand. Aries gave a brief Tagalog summary at the end. After this we

had a church lunch downstairs with opportunity to chat to church members, including several enthusiastic young men who are keen to study Reformed theology with Aries. After lunch the church hold a prayer meeting, followed by the youth Bible study—but by then I was back at the Saywells’ home for Grace Plant’s Sunday meetings.

Fellowship at Santa Maria

Sunday afternoons at Grace Plant begin with the Sunday School in the living room and a prayer meeting in the car port. It was a joy to meet this lovely group of believers and to join them in prayer. Some prayed in English, some in Tagalog, and others mixed the two. The prayers that I could understand were warm, earnest and mature. By 5:00pm the garden was a bustle of happy activity, ready for the worship service to begin. One of the men led the service, another read the Scriptures and Reuben preached on Ruth chapter 2—mostly in Tagalog. We sang a mixture of Tagalog and English hymns. The service had started in daylight, but as darkness fell the garden lights came on. We had a few short spells of light rain which didn’t interfere too much—the umbrellas came out, and we soon dried off in the warm night air. After the service we all gathered for the inevitable group photo (Filipinos love their photographs!) and

then food was served—rice, small crispy whole fish (you eat the lot—bones, eyes and all!) and a salsa made with papayas from the garden. It was lovely to start getting to know the people and to hear more about them. Many explained that they come to Grace Plant for the faithful biblical preaching and the warm fellowship—often after being spiritually underfed elsewhere for years. They stayed around chatting for a long time afterwards, until eventually they spilled out of the gates to mount their tricycles and scooters and go home. It was a most encouraging day.

The fellowship shares other times together during the week—some are formal meetings like the Thursday night Bible study and prayer meeting, but at other times they gather simply as friends. Judah's birthday fell during my visit, so that evening the Saywells took me to the home of one of the church plant families. Perhaps a dozen or so others came along as well, and as we sat outside in the warm evening air, we enjoyed a memorable evening of food, conversation and fun—including birthday cake for Judah!

Grace Plant had been launched less than a year earlier, after Reuben and Cathy had spent much of their first year in the Philippines running

evangelistic Bible studies in Santa Maria. Since my visit, in the Lord's goodness, the church plant has been formally constituted as a local church (see GBM Family News, p25). Praise God for this encouraging group that he has drawn together!

Getting the gospel out

My time with the Liboros and the Saywells gave me a taste of some of their regular outreach activities. One day, about a week after I had arrived, Aries took me back to Valenzuela to see more of the area. He showed me the streets around the church, which include some quite large houses in the immediate vicinity, mixed with some more basic homes and a nearby sprawling slum area. This is where the church used to be located, and where most of the members live. Two years ago, much of this slum district was devastated by a fire. In resilient Filipino style, the residents quickly rebuilt and picked up their lives again. But life is tough here; the houses—such as they are—are very small and basic and it is hard for people to earn enough for anything more than bare necessities. Yet the Lord is blessing Aries' ministry and the church's witness, and local people are being saved.



Sunday morning at First Reformed Baptist Church of Valenzuela

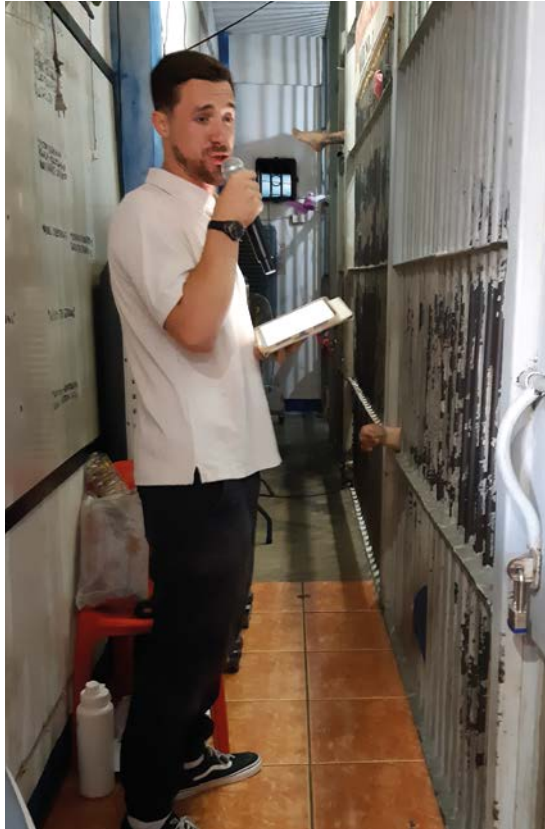


Aries runs a weekly outreach to local children

After lunch back at Aries and Jodith's home—in a housing sub-division (gated community) a twenty-five-minute drive north and into Bulacan—it was time for one of Aries' outreach activities. For many years now, Aries has invited the local children to come for a Bible study. They gather in Aries and Jodith's bamboo nipa hut on a plot of ground opposite their house. Jodith hands round Bibles so that the children can follow along, and Aries teaches them from the Scriptures. As I was visiting, Aries asked me to speak to the children, while he translated. In pre-pandemic days they could have forty children present; Aries has only recently restarted this outreach after covid, and numbers are lower now—that day we had sixteen children present, which still seemed plenty to fit into the nipa hut. Afterwards Aries and Jodith gave out snacks, then the children stayed around to play football. Because of the distance from the church building, this outreach doesn't bring children or families into the regular congregation in Valenzuela City,

but it is a worthwhile opportunity to share the gospel with these youngsters, and to build good relationships with their parents.

The following day Reuben showed me one of his regular evangelistic activities. In the centre of Santa Maria is the police station which contains the remand cells. Sometimes more than one hundred prisoners are held here, in four cells (three for men and one for women). These people are crowded together in very basic conditions and may be held for years before their cases come to trial. Reuben visits every two weeks to take a short service with the prisoners—warmly welcomed by the police officers and the prisoners. At Reuben's request (and with no ID checks or searches!) I was allowed in with him. There is no chapel or exercise area in which to hold the service—we simply stood in the narrow passageway by the cells and spoke to the men and women through the bars. Reuben began by playing a hymn through a loudspeaker, then he prayed, read the Scriptures and preached—all in Tagalog.



It was very moving to see this, literally, 'captive audience' in such harsh conditions. Most of them seemed to be paying close attention and several added 'Amen's' as Reuben spoke. I then gave my testimony with an evangelistic call (in slow, plain English), after which we chatted to some of the prisoners through the bars. Reuben has clearly built up a good relationship with the police and with many of the inmates. They appreciate his visits; pray that they will find true liberty in Christ.

On the second Sunday of my visit, between preaching at Trinity Neighborhood Church in the morning, and at Grace Plant in the evening, I went with Reuben and a group of others for their monthly outreach under the bridge. The bridge in question spans the Santa Maria River in the town centre and provides a 'home' to several families—just shelter from the sun and a place to sleep and keep their meagre possessions. I found it impossible to really imagine living in such poverty. Yet these precious people respond warmly to the interest and Christian love that they are shown. We had a short service, with singing, prayer and Bible ministry, then gave out snacks and drinks and stayed for a while to chat with the people.

Reforming and planting

Although many areas of Bulacan (a province of 2 million people) do not yet have a gospel-centred church, there are other pastors around with whom Aries and Reuben enjoy good fellowship. Some are serving Reformed Baptist churches in Manila or Bulacan and beyond; others are good men who are growing in their understanding of the doctrines of grace and are keen to lead their churches in a more biblical direction. Aries and Reuben have been trying to encourage some of these men by organizing a Bulacan ministers' fraternal. An extra meeting of the fraternal was arranged to coincide with my visit, and although only a few could make it that day we had a good time together. I had taken a



Reuben and the church hold regular outreach in the prison (facing page, top) and under Santa Maria bridge (above and right)



selection of *Serving Today* booklets, and other helpful books and magazines for them, and they gladly received these at the end of our meeting.

Both Aries and Reuben are conscious of the need for more churches to be planted in Bulacan, and had been discussing how this could be done. Not knowing this, but in God's providence, I spoke to Grace Plant's Thursday night meeting from Acts 11 and 13. We saw that the young church at Syrian Antioch was a missionary sending church. I wanted to encourage the Bulacan believers to be outward looking, even though their churches are relatively small and young. Aries told me afterwards about his desire to seek out a family in Bulacan who could host a home Bible study, which in time might become a new church plant. Please pray that the Lord will open the way for this to be done.

Hard but hopeful

Ministry is always hard. Ministry in the Philippines is, in many ways, harder than in the UK. Even for the Liboros, who are Filipino, living and serving in the Philippines is challenging. The Saywells' first two years in the country have been a steep learning curve—contending with the bureaucracy, corruption, traffic, heat, language and all manner of daily hassles. Raising children in this culture and climate is hard, especially for Cathy as she educates Benji and Micah at home. There are very few places where Reuben and Cathy can take the boys to run around in relative freedom and safety.

Yet these faithful servants of God are hopeful. They draw strength from the Lord and are compelled by his love, motivated to keep going by their conviction that the Lord has called them to serve in the Philippines. Your prayerful support is greatly appreciated and, under God's gracious hand, is bearing fruit.

A new culture, but the same faithful God

Philip and Heidi Knight moved to Uganda last November, to begin preparing to support an Old Testament translation project. As they reflect on these early days in a new culture, they see the Lord's faithfulness in many ways



Proverbs 27:1 says, 'you do not know what a day may bring'—and that seems to be especially true in Uganda. Every day is an adventure. For example, there's a little yellow frog in the sink. We're helpfully told that it's probably poisonous, but it escapes behind the sink and can't be removed so we're afraid to use the sink when we go to the bathroom in the dark that night. Another time twelve of us travel in one vehicle on rough dusty roads on a hot day, yet the children go to sleep piled on top of each other. Meanwhile the thirteenth traveller, a live chicken, pecks our toes!

Philip's story

It had never occurred to me that I might one day be called to serve the Lord in Africa, but now I really can't think of anything I'd rather be doing. Settling into Uganda has been a bit like getting into the sea; it's great now I'm in, but the

process was painful. Externally I remained my usual imperturbable self, but inside I was frankly scared, my heart kept racing for no apparent reason and I felt faint and breathless at the thought of going into anything but the most Western looking of shops. But three months later, my heart is its usual stolid self and I've discovered that the local shops sell an amazing selection of goods.

I have also had to revise my preconceived ideas—things that to me appeared to be in urgent need of upgrading are, in fact, the preferred way of doing things. Why cook indoors? Charcoal burners outside work well and it's cooler under the trees. Why have a toilet in the house? That sort of thing is better kept outside. Rearranging the house is far less important than paying for children's education and being able to support the extended family.

The man in front

We are learning to depend on the Lord for all sorts of little things. In response to prayer, the Lord has provided us with practical help with things that are daunting when you first meet them. Help often appears in the form of 'the man in front' just at the right time: the lorry in front demonstrating how to negotiate a complex junction; the car in front that gets stopped by the police so they are too busy to stop us; the man in front in the visa office who unwittingly shows us the procedure for giving fingerprints etc.

The one exception is when we are invited for meals. As honoured guests, we're at the head of the queue for food. It all looks so different and it can be hard to know what to take, how much and how to eat it! Eating with fingers, as is customary, is quite a challenge (though we doubt it was when we were younger).



Rich or poor?

It is strange to find ourselves at the same time both rich and poor. In Ugandan terms we are rich; we have running water and electricity (sometimes) and we can afford to eat out at the most luxurious shopping centre in the country if we want to. At a church we visited, we put 20,000 Ugandan shillings (£4) into the collection, and at the end of the meeting we discovered our contribution was two thirds of the total offering.

However, in Western terms our life here is basic, with no hot water, no washing machine, no lawn mower, no fresh milk (and no Marmite!).

How to appropriately use our money is a continual challenge—whether to give to an acquaintance who asks; how much to give to the endless special collections; how to respond to beggars and even how hard to haggle over prices in the shops. These are questions that arise most days and each case seems to need a different answer!

Heidi's story

I find one of the most attractive things about Uganda is the importance of relationships: people come first and extended families stay together and support each other. The people are a happy people. When we went around our local area greeting our many neighbours (there are probably fifty families within three minutes' walk of our house), they welcomed us enthusiastically and laughed with delight at our



efforts to speak their language.

I have been especially encouraged by the opportunities to share Jesus with people. I visited an elderly lady who is unable to stand, and can only sit in the doorway of her little thatched house. She doesn't speak English so, as I approached, I asked the Lord to help me communicate with her. As I greeted her, a girl about seven years old appeared from nowhere. She translated what I said and we were even able to pray together. Our watchman helps me read the Kakwa Bible each day, improving my Kakwa and his knowledge of the gospel. When he lost our gate keys, I prayed with him and they were quickly found.

We see the Lord working. Just last week we heard that a village elder was converted through outreach done by another Ugandan Bible translation team. He publicly burned his shrines and fetishes and following this hundreds of people in the village turned to the Lord.

Encouragement

We are greatly encouraged by the genuine interest of people in the UK and the cheerful support of fellow missionaries sharing funny stories of things they've experienced. We have seen God answering prayers for us in clear and practical ways and we are touched by the willingness of people to keep in contact and pray for us and by their generous giving.

What a difference a day makes

Phil is working on a Bible translation project for a people group in a troubled region of West Africa. During his most recent visit to the country, he was very encouraged to be part of an important new initiative

When our translation project board suggested that we held a one-day prayer conference for pastors of their people group, my initial reaction was: 'That's a lot of work and expense. Is it worth it?' The vision was to help all these pastors deepen their awareness and understanding of our project, so they can pray for it and get more involved in our translation work. While pastors from the different denominations do get together, a truly interdenominational conference hadn't been tried before. Many would have to travel and would need accommodation, meaning a lot of expense and risk.

We decided to go ahead, and planned the conference to coincide with my trip to the country in January. As soon as I arrived, we got to work preparing and printing copies of all the Old Testament books we have translated so far, so that we could give a set of these to each attendee. About fifty people were invited, so we had a lot of printing to do! My colleague



PHOTO BY OLLIVIER GIRARD FOR CIFOR ON FLICKR

'A' worked very hard, sorting out all their travel expenses and accommodation. She also helped me prepare what I was going to say, in their language, to explain how we go about translation and how they could help us.

Drawing from the Psalms

When the day came, we had thirty-four pastors from various parts of the country, plus evangelists—men and women—who are involved in a variety of ministries. We drew a lot from the Psalms during the day, as this is what we are currently translating. The director of the Bible school spoke on Psalm 46, and another pastor led us in prayer for the country using Psalm 31. We sang songs drawn from the Psalms. We also had a short 'testing' session, reading through Psalms 1 and 2, inviting comments and discussion on the translation. This was a good-humoured, but passionate debate about the right words to use. We might

not have got through many verses, but it was clear to everyone how hard translation is, and that it's impossible to please everyone. We made it clear that we need their feedback now, to help us get the Old and New Testaments into the best shape we can get them. It's sadly common that people don't give their feedback until the whole Bible is published, at which point it's too late to make corrections. We now have a WhatsApp group set up which 'A' is using to send questions and gather feedback to help improve our translation.

Valuable fellowship

We had a lot of very positive feedback from the day. One pastor said he didn't know there were any other believers from among their people group. He made a two-day journey to join us, and was really encouraged to see he had brothers and sisters from his own people. Others had only known those within their denomination, and were delighted to be welcomed among the wider church among their people. We had a few national cross-cultural workers—those from other peoples who had learned the language and were planting churches. Many wanted these conferences to become a regular thing. As many of them as were able met in the evening after the conference to pray and plan more together, thinking about how they can reach their people with the gospel.

A couple of days before the conference, I saw one pastor who had travelled in—Pastor D. He showed me some photos of the children's work he was leading in his town, a place out towards the north-east of the capital where displaced people had gathered. He told me he was ill, and

he had to miss the afternoon of the conference to go to the hospital. It turns out he had a very serious condition and, as I was writing this article, six weeks after the conference, I heard that he has died. Please pray for his wife and children, that God would provide for their needs and keep them firm in the faith. Pray also for the believers in that town, particularly the children Pastor D was reaching. Pray also for the other pastors and all believers who knew Pastor D, that they will know God's comfort as they mourn, and that his passing will encourage us all to press on, finish the task, and hear 'Well done good and faithful servant.'

Making the Word accessible

The other task which I worked on during my short visit, was to continue work on our audio recordings of Genesis and Exodus. One of the pastors has been helping me with this, and recently I was able to launch an audio version of Genesis in our Android mobile phone app. Exodus isn't far from completion, and we then plan to prepare a new batch of pocket radios loaded with the audio of these books, plus the New Testament. Genesis and Exodus are a vital bridge for reaching the community and having them in audio form makes them accessible to many more people. Pray for wide distribution and much good fruit.

Please also continue to pray for the security situation in West Africa. From the few reliable reports we have seen, there seems to have been an upturn in the violence including attacks on churches and mosques. Please pray for an end to the violence, for wisdom for the government, and for protection of the church, foreign gospel workers and all those who want peace.



PHOTOS BY OLLIVIER GIRARD FOR CIFOR ON FLICKR

Middle right: A set of all the Old Testament books so far translated was given to each delegate
(Other images from West Africa for illustrative purposes only)

A letter from Simón Bolívar



Ronny and Rocio Tipismana are based in the Simón Bolívar district of Arequipa, Peru, where Ronny pastors Iglesia Evangélica Bautista de Gracia. Ronny has written to express his appreciation for the prayerful interest of GBM supporters, and to share news of trials and joys in the work

Dear brothers and sisters of GBM, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

It is with great joy that I send my greetings to all of you, beloved brothers and sisters. I would like to thank God first because he allows us to serve him in his work. I also want to thank all of you for your great love and for your desire to see people coming to the Lord Jesus Christ here in our country.

Protected through a great crisis

I would like to send you news of the work we are doing in Arequipa. Each year that goes by, things are never the same, as we can see more and more clearly the hardness of people towards the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the Lord, in his great mercy, is still working in people's lives through his glorious gospel. The church has gone through a great crisis that we had never experienced before. Some people entered our church, posing as believers, as the Lord Jesus had already announced to us: 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves' (Matthew

7:15). They tried to divide us, but the Lord, who cares for his sheep, did not allow it. The Lord used this crisis to make us love each other even more, and to be more united than before. Today our church is very united with a single purpose—to continue announcing the good news of the gospel.

Open hearts amidst hardness

We are evangelizing in Simón Bolívar, which is our community, and also in Tiabaya, which is another community nearby. We have preached outdoors in the markets. Every end of the month, the entire church comes together to knock on the doors of homes and announce the gospel. But people's hearts are no longer the same as they were in previous years. May the Lord help us continue to do his will.

This past year the Lord has blessed us with new believers, including Irene and Roy. They have heard the gospel, and the Lord has opened their hearts. They come from leading very sad, empty lives, but the Lord has given them new birth. The Lord has also blessed us with a family—José Luis and his wife Raquel—who were already believers, but have been looking



PEXELS-WELLY-HUANG



for a church where Christ is preached. They have been faithful in their attendance all year long, and they continue to be so. The Lord has also guided a brother named Victor who was looking for a church where Christ would be preached. Our brother is always helping the church, and we are already using him in different areas.

New opportunities

This year we want to announce the gospel throughout Arequipa. And we want to use all the communal premises in each district of Arequipa to be able to spread the gospel. Every week I spend some time searching for premises. It is not easy. We have to obtain permits and prepare many invitations in order to gather people and teach them about the gospel of Jesus Christ. We ask for your prayers so that the Lord may open doors for his word.

This year we do not want to neglect the church. We want to work more with families. We have seen in recent times many attacks against families and against children. That is why, in the month of March, we devoted more time to families in the church. We are also printing a catechism for children with the help of Pastor David Rivero from Spain, who has provided us with material so that children can acquire a biblical foundation, and parents can fulfil their responsibility to teach their children.

At the beginning of every year, we always have a great concern to prepare new teachers for the children of the church. This is because we have a Sunday School, and the teachers, for work-related reasons, sometimes have to leave the position. We must pray for new teachers and spend some time to prepare them. We ask you to pray so that the Lord may provide us with new teachers.

Continuing to care

There is also a great concern in the church for the elderly brothers and sisters. We have many who are already sick and we have to take care of them and help them. They can no longer attend because of their illnesses, but we cannot forget them. That includes brothers like Rut, Francisco, Benita, Clara and Lucrecia. Yesterday, two of the elderly—Lucia and Eulogio—underwent surgery. May the Lord help us be with them as long as he wills.

Thank you, dear brothers and sisters of GBM, for all your help and prayers. May the Lord help you in this great ministry of taking the gospel to the whole world. In the midst of struggles and trials, may we all remain firm in the work of the Lord.

I send my warmest regards to all of you, and may the Lord bless you.

From your brother in Christ, Ronny

Envision

We have opportunities available to serve in the Philippines or South Africa, on Placements that could range from three weeks to a few months.



PHILIPPINES

Your Placement would be based at Christian Compassion Ministries in Manila. It would include working with the children at the CCM homes, in CCM community programmes, and some administrative or practical jobs. You would also be able to visit GBM missionaries serving nearby.



SOUTH AFRICA

Placements can be based in Welkom and/or Johannesburg. In Welkom you would serve at the Morning Star Children's Centre and with Welkom Baptist Church, including Bible teaching and activities with the children, practical jobs, and youth work. Placements in Johannesburg would include similar activities in connection with a Baptist church and their orphanage and school.

To find out more see gbm.org.uk/envision-placements then contact us at supportministries@gbm.org.uk

ANCHORED

A DAY CONFERENCE ON BAPTIST THEOLOGY

Anchored is a study day organised by Reformation Today, open to all who are interested or involved in Reformed Baptist churches across the UK. It aims to bring the Reformed Baptist community together for a careful investigation of our shared theological heritage. We will deepen our understanding of that heritage by studying it exegetically, systematically, and historically, and then apply these truths to our churches today. Our first study day will focus on the doctrine of Scripture.

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

SPEAKERS:

Jeremy Walker • Robert Strivens • Alex Arrell

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Grief and joy in North Kivu

We have long valued radio ministry for its ability to carry gospel truth and hope into very difficult places. **Ian Flanders** reflects on seeing this happen in one especially troubled region

North Kivu, a province in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is currently the theatre of regular atrocities committed against villages by rebel militias. Recent months have seen a marked increase in the number of these acts of terror, and so the number of inhabitants grieving the loss of loved ones, limbs, and livelihoods multiplies. Such meaningless evil, so far as it can be explained, seems motivated by historic tribal and political conflict, and a desire to control the extraction of precious resources like gold and rare earth minerals used in modern technologies.

The Congolese government and the international community seem to lack the willingness and the means to project their power into these inaccessible regions in a way that guarantees the safety of local inhabitants. And so, they feel unsafe and abandoned. Many have fled their homes to take refuge in the relative safety of the cities.

We are in regular contact with several pastors, and directors of Christian radio stations, in the affected areas. We get updates of events and are not spared the horrific details. It is an extremely difficult time for the church. There is much disruption and instability, with many Christians and some church leaders displaced by events. Pastors seek to bring comfort and hope to those suffering grief and trauma. Sickening evil can shake faith to its core and many believers are struggling, asking the perennial questions posed by the Psalms of lament: 'Why?' and 'How long?'

Our radio programmes—*Espérance* *Aujourd'hui*—have been aired throughout North



Amid the fear, grief, and hardship of North Kivu, the church is growing



Kivu by many radio stations for almost twenty years. They have become well known and widely appreciated. Feedback confirms that these programmes help believers to cling on to Christ, in dependence and hope, amid the chaos and darkness.

A limited number of printed copies of our booklets have always found their way into North Kivu. More recently, we have set up two WhatsApp groups, consisting mainly of pastors, who receive a PDF version of one of our booklets, once every three weeks. These groups include over fifty members, who in turn can forward the booklets to other groups or individuals. In this way, these important and valued booklets are becoming far more accessible. It is impossible to know just how many are now able to read them—but again, our desire is to strengthen pastors, believers, and churches at this time of crisis.

Determined to serve Jesus in an area of turmoil, a retired pastor has started to translate

our French booklet *Dieu est Amour* ('God is Love') into the local language, Congolese Kiswahili. A group of church leaders has chosen this title, convinced that this is the message that the inhabitants of their region most need to hear.

Furthermore, we regularly receive reports of people being baptized, and we see the photos of these new believers standing waist deep in muddy rivers, ready to be immersed. The pastor who sends these pictures informs us that candidates are thoroughly prepared, having to attend six months of baptismal classes before taking this step. So, even amid the fear, grief, and hardship, the church is growing. People are thirsty to hear about Jesus and want to follow him.

The words of John 1:5 spring to mind: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' We seek to stand with and serve our afflicted brothers and sisters by pointing them to Jesus, their only source of comfort and hope.

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GBM FAMILY NEWS

From our churches and our Mission

Annual Mission Day 2024

Please plan to join us at this year's Annual Mission Day, which takes place (God willing) on Saturday, 26 October. We will be back again at Friends House in London. Our preacher to close the day will be Jason Murfitt—longstanding GBM missionary who now serves with his wife Andrea as a church planter on the island of Madeira.

The day will include a full programme of missionary presentations and other sessions to challenge and inspire us in world mission. Look out for further information over the summer and in the September Herald. See you there!



Santa Maria—a plant becomes a church

The weekend of 20-21 April was a joyous and significant occasion in Santa Maria. On the Saturday, at a special service attended by friends from around Bulacan and Manila, fourteen baptized believers from the church plant—including Reuben and Cathy Saywell—covenanted together as the founder members of Grace Church Santa Maria. The newly formed church then officially called Reuben as their pastor, and he was ordained to this ministry. Seven pastors—six local and one from the UK—joined in prayer and laying on of hands: Joel Bigueta (Trinity Neighborhood Church), Andrew Saywell (Grace Chapel, Folkestone), Ismael Montejó Jr. (Cubao Reformed Baptist Church), Ramon Macapagal (Cubao Reformed Baptist Church), Ramen Caliwag (Scripture Alone Baptist Church), Paul Lito Jose (Jesus Christ's Baptist Church) and Rembert Reyes (Jesus the Living Light Baptist Church).

On the first Sunday as a new church, they had the great joy of baptizing Mark, who had come to faith through the Bible studies and witness of the church plant. Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Please continue to pray for this new church, and for Reuben and Cathy's continued ministry in Santa Maria.



New co-pastor at Prettygate

Prettygate Baptist Church in Colchester recently had the great joy and privilege of welcoming Matt Hodson as our new co-pastor. Matt has come to work together alongside Peter Shirtcliffe, equipping and enabling the church family to develop existing ministries and grasp new opportunities among our growing, increasingly diverse church family and wider community. Matt,



Rebecca and Esther joined us in November, having worked for three years at St John's Wood Road Baptist Church. Matt's welcome service was on 13 January.

As a church we've already seen the benefits of a shared ministry. Please pray that this might be a healthy, effective and fruitful partnership as we seek to reach the lost and make disciples.

Peter Shirtcliffe



New church building in Arequipa

Arequipa is a beautiful city with a population of over 1.3 million, overlooked by the active volcano Misti. We have regular earth tremors and a history of earthquakes—the last one in 2001. We have served the Lord in the Baptist church in Cayma, a district of the city, for around seven years. Our former meeting place was flimsy; a drywall construction with

corrugated roofing, inadequate and unsafe in a seismic area. For ten years the church was unable to seriously consider constructing new facilities due to a lack of funds. We began to pray and, due to one particular providence (the sale of a church property in the UK, in which the trustees donated a sum of money to the project), we saw the Lord's hand leading us to commence the project.

We started building the new church facilities in August last year, and in April this year we completed them—after some very timely provisions from the Lord when the funds were almost gone! But the builder and workers never stopped for a day, as the Lord answered and provided through prayer until the work was done. 'This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes' (Psalm 118.23)! Now we are

looking forward to the greater work of the Holy Spirit in building his church and saving many in the community to the glory of God.

The facilities also provide living space for a future pastor and family, with plenty of space for various activities and future ministry. We are grateful to our home church (Southport) and the few who gave large donations to the project which pushed us over the line. We are planning a weekend of ministry for the inaugural Thanksgiving service, when other pastors and friends will join us in giving thanks to the Lord for his provision. Many who live nearby have watched the construction over the months, so this will be an excellent opportunity to reach them with the gospel.

Anthony Green



Rebekah Jones



Phoebe March

Envision in Eastern Europe and Colombia

Rebekah Jones has now completed the planned two years of her Envision Apprenticeship in Eastern Europe. By common consent, her time in the country has been greatly appreciated and all parties would love for her to be able to remain. In discussion with her sending church in Darlington and the missionaries she has been serving alongside, we have therefore extended Rebekah's Apprenticeship for up to a further six months. This will allow Rebekah more time to find work—either in the country (Lord willing), or back in the UK. Rebekah has already received an extension to her residency permit, which now runs until March 2025. Please pray for

Rebekah—this is an uncertain time for her. Suitable jobs in the country are few and far between. Pray that the Lord might lead her to the right position or, if not, that he will give her peace about returning to the UK and finding work here.

Give thanks for Phoebe March from Bradford, who is due to go to Colombia in August for a one-month Envision Placement. Phoebe will serve at *Centro Educativo Belén*, a Christian school in Montería (see *Herald* May 2023), as well as helping the churches around the city. Please pray for Phoebe as she prepares and then serves in Montería. If you would like to contribute towards her expenses for this Placement then you may give via GBM, marking your gift for Phoebe March.

Mission Council

Please prayerfully remember the men and women of Mission Council, who are the trustees of GBM and have oversight of the Mission. In March they met for a two-day Council conference which gave them extra time to discuss and pray over a number of strategic ideas and opportunities. The next regular Mission Council meeting will be on 10 June.

Could you or a member of your church serve on Mission Council? To find out more please contact Daryl Jones (Mission Director) or Tom Forryan (Council Chairman) via GBM Mission Centre in Abingdon.



Council member Peter Shirtcliffe closed the Council conference with warm ministry from God's Word