

January 2024

Dear Praying Friends,

Happy New Year from “chilly” Dapitan! Just for clarification, by “chilly,” I mean that the temperature has gone as low as 75 degrees Fahrenheit AT LEAST three or four times over the last several weeks. 😊 Believe it or not, I’m only half kidding: you know you’re a “veteran missionary” when the skies are a little overcast, the temperature drops below 80, and your children start complaining that it’s cold!

The last two months have been an absolute whirlwind! So much has happened that I am struggling to decide what news and prayer requests to include in this letter. This may very well become one of the very rare, two-page Morrissey prayer letters.

FIRST A PRAYER REQUEST

Before I jump into the events of the last two months, I’d like to ask you to pray for Ruth’s pregnancy and coming delivery. We expect Joseph William to arrive sometime in late February. This will be our first birth here in Dapitan, and frankly, the medical care here leaves much to be desired. We would appreciate your prayers.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION

I suppose it would be wise to start with the most important news of the last two months: GOD HAS GIVEN US A BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF PROPERTY DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM THE CHURCH at a highly discounted rate! Many of you joined us in praying about this, and many of you helped financially as well. I would just like to say that we are more grateful than you know! I would also like to thank all of you who prayed regarding our need to remove the previous owners from the property. As most of you already know, the reason the property was so cheap was that it was a bank foreclosure. The bank, however, had never removed the previous owners of the property, leaving us, as the buyers, with a potentially volatile situation to deal with. What made matters even more challenging was the fact that the previous owners of the property are related to nearly half of the neighbors on our street, and good friends with the rest. Though we had full legal rights as the new property owners to ask the family to leave, it seemed like a lose-lose situation no matter how we went about it. However, just like everything else related to this property purchase, God was working an incredible plan. To make a long story short, God very clearly led me to give the family a significant financial gift to help them begin building a new house on another family-owned lot right around the corner. It should be noted at this point that up to this time in the story, our relationship with them had been cool at best. We had tried to witness to them back in 2022 when we were preparing to move into our, at the time, brand-new church building; however, they, being of strong Catholic stock with several priests in the family, wanted nothing to do with us. Additionally, due to their location directly across the street from our *open-air* church building, they were more than familiar with my “slightly-less-than-meek” preaching style. 😊

Dividends on Your Investment

This soul-winning story actually began three months ago on Sunday, October 8. My daughter Beth was out soul winning at the Dapitan City Plaza with Gellete Garado, one of our staff girls. There at the plaza, they met a 24-year-old young lady named Carmila. At the time, Carmila was babysitting her three-year-old nephew, but she was very interested in hearing the Gospel. So, Beth took the nephew a short distance away and watched him while Gellete shared the Gospel with Carmila. She listened carefully to the Gospel and then sweetly trusted Christ.

Two months passed, and then tragedy struck! Carmila was at the plaza again, this time at night. It was December 15, and the plaza was beautifully decorated for the Christmas season. I don’t know all the details, but someone had made a mistake with the electrical wiring, and somehow Carmila came in contact with the electric current, killing her almost instantly. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

A little over a week later, I was driving home from church on Sunday night with Beth behind me on the motorcycle. Our route home took us past the funeral home where Carmila’s *haya* (the one- or two-week period of viewing before the burial) was ongoing. I stopped the motorcycle and approached the funeral home. Just outside the door, I met Carmila’s 73-year-old grandmother. We talked for a few minutes, and then I noticed a middle-aged couple sitting off to the side. I approached them and learned that they were Carmila’s parents. There, just outside the door of the funeral home, it was my joy to tell them the story of their daughter’s salvation just two months before. I then asked them if I could share that same good news with them, and they quickly agreed. About 20-30 minutes later, both of Carmila’s parents bowed their heads and put their faith in Christ! In the meantime, unbeknownst to me, Beth was inside sharing the Gospel with the grandmother whom I had met earlier. PRAISE GOD, SHE ALSO GOT SAVED THAT NIGHT!

Contact Information

Email: mike.morrissey@fbmi.org
Web: fbmi.org/missionary/morrissey
Facebook: facebook.com/morrisseymissions

Missionaries to the Philippines

“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” 1 Corinthians 16:9



When I finally approached the husband and wife to discuss their need to move, I really had no idea what to expect. It turned out to be a very pleasant conversation; they made no complaints or demands, and when I told them that I intended to help them with some of the costs of building a new house, they were very appreciative. However, it was when I told them the actual amount that their response surprised me. The wife's eyes widened with surprise, and the husband quickly looked away, but not before I could see the tears in his eyes. The amount God led me to give them was more than I would have given on my own, but God used that to soften their hearts. Over the next several weeks, I had the opportunity to lead the husband, then the wife, and finally their 17-year-old twin daughters to Christ! In addition to all of this, instead of my becoming the "bad guy" of the neighborhood, our relationship with the neighbors has actually improved, opening up other witnessing opportunities. All in all, God took a potentially ugly situation and turned it into a huge blessing!

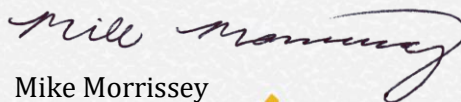
WHAT'S NEXT?

The most common question I have received over the last couple of months has been "What is your plan for the new property?" To be perfectly honest, I really don't know. The entire situation was so completely orchestrated by God that it has caught me completely off-guard! The property comes with two houses: one is mid-sized and built on a cement foundation, and the other is smaller and built of lightweight, native materials. After some repairs, we will be using both of the houses. My plan right now is to use the back portion of the larger house as living quarters for two of our staff ladies, while the front part of the house will provide us with additional Sunday school space on the weekends and a closed-in area for our staff kids' school during the week. The smaller house will eventually become the home of another staff family. Beyond these plans, I really don't know where God is taking us with this new property. However, I do have some ideas. Several years ago, God laid it on my heart to start a Bible institute. I have no doubt in my mind that it was God's will for us at that time, but the simple truth is that I am not a teacher. I am a preacher, an author, and a linguist, but not a teacher. Through a series of very painful events, which I have already discussed in previous prayer letters, we were forced to place our institute on pause in 2022. Since that time, God has made it increasingly clear to me that my future ministry (outside of the regular duties of pastoring) will be very heavy in the area of linguistics. *Anything* related to linguistics is extremely time-consuming, whether it be translation work, creating study resources, or authoring new materials. Consequently, if God wants us to have an institute here, He is going to have to send a true teacher to help us. I believe at some point, God is going to do that, and when He does, we will already have all the space we need.

LINGUISTIC WORK

Speaking of linguistics, over the last 6½ years since coming to Dapitan, I have rarely mentioned our linguistic work because, frankly, I don't think most people understand the incredibly important role that it plays in missionary work. Due to the myth that "ALL Filipinos understand English," linguistic work in the Philippines has been heavily neglected over the years. In spite of the fact that missionaries have been in the Philippines since World War II, it was not until 2010 that we had a good King-James-equivalent Cebuano Bible. Until now, there is still not a good Cebuano hymnbook. The key word in that sentence is *good*. While there is at least one Cebuano hymnbook that I am aware of, it is neither doctrinally sound, nor poetically pleasing! Therefore, over the last 6½ years, I, along with the help of my staff, have been working to create a Baptist Cebuano hymnal, and we are finally about done! We call it *Mga Kantahon sa Pagtoo* ("Songs of Faith"). As we come down the home stretch, I would really appreciate your prayers. This has been the biggest project of my life, requiring thousands of hours of mind-bending labor! The following statement is my effort to explain song translation in a single sentence: "Song translation is an exercise in mental gymnastics in which you must encapsulate the overall feeling of the song while seeking to include as many of the original thoughts as possible by creatively reproducing them in a way that flows naturally within the limits of the available syllables while also maintaining the original rhyming pattern!" As strange as it sounds, I have found out that I love song translation! Please pray that God would bless us as we strive to finish this mammoth project. Thank you for your prayers, friendship, and faithful support.

Yours for souls,



Mike Morrissey



Contact Information

Email: mike.morrissey@fbmi.org

Web: fbmi.org/missionary/morrissey

Facebook: facebook.com/morrisseymissions

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