



The Bruce Rice Family

IN THE PHILIPPINES

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February 16, 2017

Dear Pastor and Church Family:

Greetings from the Zamboanga Peninsula in Mindanao Island. This is one of the longest delays I have ever had in sending a newsletter. I was preparing a letter to be sent out in December, when I had to make an unexpected trip to Alabama because of my mother's rapidly deteriorating health.

She was discharged from the hospital the week before Christmas and sent directly to hospice. I rushed home to see her before the Lord took her to heaven. We all expected to have a funeral during the Christmas holidays, but two days after I arrived she began to stabilize and then to improve. Many people were praying for her.

By the time I left the States on January 25, to return to the Philippines, my mother had begun to go down again. The evening before I departed, I spent several hours with her. We talked about what will happen when the angels come to get her and when the "morning" of the resurrection comes. I read Scripture to her and prayed. However, I did not tell her I could not return for her funeral. The last two things I said to her before I walked out the door were, "Mom, I will meet you in the morning," and, "I love you."



As I write this letter, she is nearing the door that will lead her from this world into God's presence. I just talked to my sister on the phone, and she told me our mother's body is shutting down. Hospice said her struggle will be over very soon. I am thankful for a godly mother who prayed for us constantly for so many years.

This situation is similar to when my father went to be with the Lord several years ago. He suffered a massive stroke, so I went home to the U.S., hoping to see him before he died. During the two weeks I was there, he was beginning to improve. However, two months later he was gone, and I was not able to go back for the funeral.

Jeanne and I have had many different experiences during the 31 years we have served the Lord in the Philippines. One of the most difficult things we have dealt with, has been watching from afar as our parents age. As their health deteriorates, we cannot be there to help them. Still, there are no regrets about following the will of God. It is a privilege to be involved in world evangelism.



I arrived home in Dipolog City on Friday, January 27, and by Sunday night I had developed respiratory flu. After going to the doctor on Monday, I spent most of the day in bed. Tuesday, I was back at work because there was so much to do after being gone for a month. Also, we were starting the last quarter in our Bible College, and I had classes to teach.

On Thursday, I drove twelve hours to the other side of the island for a three-day preaching schedule. I spoke to a group of over 200 young people, then to about 30 pastors, and finally to a church on Sunday morning. Since returning from that trip, we have been simultaneously preparing for events and activities in the Bible College, at our new church in Molave, and at the church in Dipolog City. Today I finally have a chance to work on this letter. Tomorrow, the adults from both of those churches will have a banquet together.

The second week in December, I had one of the greatest thrills of my ministry. I preached the fifth anniversary service at Metro Zamboanga Baptist Church, for one of my sons in the faith, Pastor Edomite Hanginan. The building was full, and many visitors received Christ. I just marveled at what God is doing there.

In the early part of 1997, Edomite Hanginan was saved through the ministry of Lapasan Baptist Church, the first church we started in Cagayan de Oro City. Edomite was a nineteen year old college student struggling to find his way in life. His parents' marriage had fallen apart. Edomite and his siblings were living with their mother, and their father was working abroad. When Edomite received the Lord, his life changed dramatically, and he quickly began to grow in the Lord. Not long after he was saved, the Lord called him to preach. He enrolled in Lapasan Baptist College and Institute in June of that same year.

It was evident that the Lord's hand was on Edomite, even as a young man. He became an effective soul winner and a ministry leader while in Bible College. Eventually, I put him in charge of the Sunday morning service for older children. By the time he graduated from LBC&I in 2001, I had resigned as the missionary pastor of the church and was preparing to move to Dipolog City to begin a new church. One of my assistant pastors became the new pastor and he brought Edomite on staff at the church and the college. Edomite served in various capacities in the ministry until 2008, when he resigned so he could start a new church.

Edomite was surveying a city on another island when I called him and asked him to pray about Zamboanga City, one of the largest cities here on the island of Mindanao. It has a population of over 800,000 people and is one of the most volatile cities in the Philippines. There is a large percentage of Muslims there, and many of them are militant. Yet, I sensed in my spirit that the Lord wanted him to go there. At first he was not really interested, but on my recommendation, he agreed to at least take a survey trip. I sent one of my staff members from Dipolog City on the survey trip with him. After two days in the city, Edomite knew that was the place the Lord wanted him to be.

In May of 2008, Edomite, his wife Rangie and their small son Jefferson, moved to Zamboanga City to make preparation for starting a new church. They began Bible studies in their home in September of that year. The work prospered and in December of 2011 the Metro Zamboanga Baptist Church was established. Presently, the church averages almost 200 persons in attendance on Sundays. They have their own property and have built a nice auditorium. They are now constructing a two-story building for Sunday School with an apartment for Pastor Edomite and his family. All of this has been done without requesting help from other churches. They have a strong missions program, supporting foreign missions and also men starting churches in the Philippines.

In the eight years Edomite and his family have been in Zamboanga City, they have seen bombings and threats of bombings. Once, a whole portion of the city was taken over by Muslim terrorists and became a war zone. No matter what has happened, they have stayed with their people and have never evacuated. About four years ago they visited us in Dipolog City. Rangie told me as she cried, "Pastor, I know God will take care of us, but I am just so afraid. At times my heart is full of fear. Sometimes I cannot sleep." She is still there, following her husband, rearing her son, winning people to Christ, and serving the Lord. This is one of the finest couples we know. They are sincere, humble and hard working. We are blessed to know them.



Those of you who have supported our ministry over the years can rejoice with us, because you also have a part in the lives of Pastor Edomite Hanginan and his family. Thank you for your investment in world evangelism. May God continue to bless you and keep you by His marvelous grace.

Sincerely in Christ,
Bruce A. Rice
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