

The Bruce Rice Family IN THE PHILIPPINES



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News from **SALUG VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH** in Molave, Zamboanga del Sur

Church Services Resumed. Our public church services in Molave resumed the first week of June, after being interrupted for seven weeks. The same week, travel restrictions were also eased for some categories of persons, including “Religious Workers.” This allowed us to begin traveling back and forth again to Molave from where we live in Dipolog City. However, travel clearances are required every time we make the trip because we are going from one province to another. Jeanne and Emily just travel with me on the weekends, but I often make the ninety-minute drive 2-3 times per week. We have now passed the quarantine check points so often, many times we do not even have to show our documents.

Home Away from Home. In case you were wondering where we stay while in Molave, we rent a small apartment for only \$115.00 per month, including utilities. The apartment is located in a small private compound where the owners live also. They have been very protective of us, especially during times of high alert when extremists have been active in this part of Mindanao.



Building Expansion (Sort of). Since resuming public worship in June, church attendance in all services has gradually increased to where it was before the quarantine was imposed. Under the guidelines for public assemblies, attendance is limited to half of a building’s capacity. To accommodate all of our congregation at once, we removed the walls on one side of the auditorium and added a tarpaulin as a roof. Obviously, building modification is much simpler in a tropical country than in other areas of the world!

Radio Broadcasts Increased. When the quarantine restrictions were imposed in March, the majority of people in the eight towns in Salug Valley area were forced to stay home. This multiplied the number of persons listening to the radio. We did not want to miss the opportunity for more people to hear the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, so we increased the number of radio broadcasts from one each week, to a total of eight programs on three different secular stations. All three of these stations like our music and now play it on their own at different times during the week. Hopefully, the Lord will one day give Salug Valley Baptist Church its own radio station to help reach this area with the Word of God.

Evangelism Hindered. During the months of April and May, our ministry activities were essentially non-existent. Consequently, for the first time since this work was started here in Molave over five years ago, two months passed by with no professions of faith in Jesus Christ. We are very thankful that the restrictions were relaxed some in June and July. There were 22 persons who were saved in June and another 42 in July.



Progress on the New Property. In January, we made a down payment on a parcel of land for the church. The sale will not be finalized until the process of reclassifying the property is complete, possibly within three months. At that time, the remaining balance will need to be paid. We thank the Lord that sixty percent of the needed amount is in the bank already. That amount has come from many different churches, Christians and pastors, both here in the Philippines, as well as from those abroad. In the meantime, we have cleared the property and have removed most of the coconut trees. Over the last two weeks several of our men have gone up in the mountains to cut giant bamboo for use in constructing the perimeter fence and for our initial church building. It is much cheaper to purchase it from the source than from a supplier here in town. One of our men has a dump truck that we use for transporting the bamboo. Don't worry, the young lady in this picture did not help remove the coconut trees or cut bamboo in the mountains, but she did help clear the undergrowth before we cut the trees.

Emily Finally Graduates. In March, when the nation-wide lockdown was enacted, all graduation ceremonies and commencement exercises for every educational level were canceled. Literally millions of would-be graduates and their relatives were affected. One of them was our daughter Emily. She was scheduled to graduate from high school during our Bible College commencement. In addition to the Bible College, Westside Baptist Church also has an evening Bible Institute program for church members. They decided to go ahead and have their own graduation service for the Institute and allowed Emily to participate in that ceremony. On Sunday evening, July 26, Emily finally graduated from high school and received her diploma. I am not sure what excited her the most – the diploma or the roasted pig (called lechon baboy) that she had been looking forward to for so long.



And Finally, Thank You. With all that has transpired over the last few months, we were preparing for a decrease in monthly support. We know that churches, pastors and Christians have experienced extreme difficulties without time to adequately prepare. We anticipated the ability for them to support world evangelism would be affected. But we were very mistaken. There has been no difference in the amount of our support. That is a testimony to the sufficiency of God's grace in the lives of His people and in the ministry of His churches. Thank you and may God continue to bless you and guide you by His grace.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bruce A. Rice
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