



MINUTE FOR MISSION

July 1, 2007

The Promise of a Mango

Isaiah 55:12

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (NIV)

The notion of the promise is a widespread discussion among Christians in the Philippines. This is a nation whose primary exports are its human resources, a nation that deploys an average 900,000 individuals annually to work abroad. The

discussion centers on the proper approach in addressing hardship, to which the Philippines is no stranger. In a population of 84 million, 75 Filipinos die of tuberculosis every day and 36 percent of the country's six- to twenty-year-olds quit school due to lack of funds. These are just two of a long list of social ills common in this nation shackled by poverty.

Among young Filipino Christians today, discussion is alive as to how to interpret the Promise. Some interpret the Promise from the Old Testament perspective of seeking exodus from a land of hardship to a land of prosperity through migration. Others interpret the Promise from a New Testament perspective of organizing disciples as agents of change in the land of hardship, with the promise that good shall overcome evil through perseverance and struggle.



Many rural congregations like this one in Malabo, in the province of Valencia, Negros Oriental Philippines, have had difficulty raising the \$50 a month it takes to maintain a pastor.



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The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), into which the Presbyterian mission churches merged in 1948, continues to witness and celebrate individual Christians who offer their lives as agents of change in this land of hardship. Professor Ben Bokingo is an agriculturalist of deep faith who served on the faculty of Silliman University his entire professional life. Now retired, he cannot be restrained from acting out his compassion for those small, rural churches that are unable to generate the \$50 a month needed to maintain a pastor.

In the study of his home, he conceived an agricultural plan for rural churches. "Plant a mango tree," he explains with excitement, "and in only four years, and not forty years, we will be out of the wilderness." Bearing grafted mango seedlings he visits rural congregations throughout the region and explains, "Planting this one seedling and giving it the proper care will bear you fruit in four years, enough fruit to support your pastor for two months. "The good news is, plant six seedlings around the church and your pastor can stay with you for the whole year."

People in rural congregations know that when mango trees begin to bear fruit they will bear every year for years to come. This promise of a mango is one small witness in building expressions of hope in the Philippines, a land of hardship.

Prayer: Creator God, we thank you for the compassionate individuals of faith throughout the world who offer their lives and talents to sustaining your church. We pray that expressions of hope in the midst of hardship continue to blossom, enabling your church to grow in strength and faith. Amen.

Carlton (Cobbie) Palm

PC(USA) missionary serving with the Divinity School of Silliman University in the Philippines

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For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

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