

NZ Update – 13 November 2013

Warm greetings from Auckland. This week we have been shocked to see the devastation caused in the Philippines by Typhoon Haiyan. The GCI Mission Developer in the Philippines, Eugene Guzon wrote the following to Rod Matthews on Monday:

Hello Rod. Thanks a lot for your prayers and concern. I thought that we were already out of the woods after the Bohol earthquake, but this one is even worse as the super typhoon with winds of about 300 kms per hour stirred some tsunami-like giant waves as high as seven metres. We can just imagine what happens with that. You just cannot prepare enough...

Thanks for your offer for help as well. I will be going to Tacloban this week and to Kalibo. In Kalibo, we have three families who have lost their homes totally, while we have ten families whose homes were severely damaged, especially their roofing. In Tacloban, roads are being cleared although it may take a few more days. Telecommunications are down too. Water and fuel are getting more scarce there and the situation is leading to looting. These are just partial stats.

We appreciate your prayers.

Today he sent this update:

"I am now preparing for my trip to Kalibo and will be there early afternoon to meet some of the brethren. I will have the chance to get to know more specifically what their needs are and how we can help.

Thanks for the readiness of the brethren to help. This is a big blessing to have a big family, and we praise God for that.

While we were meeting yesterday with other ministers, we got some call from Danny De Guia, the assistant pastor and area superintendent for Visayas. He went to Tacloban two days ago and returned home yesterday. He had to walk for three and a half hours in Tacloban before he was able to get a ride home.

Bus lines are beginning to operate going to Tacloban but are still limited. The brethren he was able to contact are alive, though they were weak from being traumatized and had very little access to basic necessities. There are still a few that we have not been able to contact as of this time. We hope and pray that they are safe.

Many of the people there are on an exodus going out of Tacloban City to either Ormoc, Cebu or Samar due to the lack of a safe place to stay and the lack of basic necessities like food, electrical power and communications. Some brethren have done that and are moving either to Cebu or Samar. Because many people are thinking the same thing, it is very hard to find vans or get a boat ride to any of the neighbouring islands.

We got some information yesterday from one of our brethren here in Manila who works with the Bureau of Jail Management that about 100 inmates were able to escape the jails there in Tacloban. They must be the ones orchestrating the looting and hijacking of those vans that are delivering relief goods to the city.

As far as Kalibo is concerned, I got to talk with the pastor there yesterday and they are preparing to meet me today. They still do not have electrical power and food and water is still difficult. Some of the brethren who lost their homes had to go to neighbouring towns to find a place to stay in the meantime. They also find it difficult to charge their phones as they

have to queue in long lines to get access to a house with a generator. They were told that power can be restored maybe in a couple of months due to the destroyed power lines.

I am also asking a pastor in Bicol area to go to Tacloban tomorrow along with staff from the National Office to get more info on how we can address needs in Tacloban. We are exploring setting up a supply centre in nearby Samar for the brethren to have some access to food and other stuff because it is still risky to bring these to Tacloban due to the security situation.

Tacloban is the worst hit, and most publicized, but Samar took a terrible beating as well, and there are several other areas in the Visayas that are also severely damaged, with deaths and victims, but very little access to aid.

Thanks again, Rod. And thanks to our GCI family who are praying with us. It is much appreciated and needed. We will keep in touch!

Eugene

The NZ Church has made an initial donation to World Vision for immediate disaster relief, but we would like to send some funds to our church members in the area as well, so they can apply them locally to help our members as well as others. Each congregation is taking up an offering for this purpose this weekend or next, and some churches are supplementing the collection with a donation from congregational funds. Any donations can be banked directly into the church account, with "Philippines" in the reference field, and this money will be sent to our Filipino brethren.

New congregation: (From Dennis Richards) On the first Sunday of December a new church will begin fellowshiping regularly in Masterton. This first meeting on 1 December is planned as a special celebration of new beginnings and with regular meetings typically on the 3rd Sunday of the month. The group is gathering around Manny & Ruth Ornejas, who was formerly a bi-vocational pastor in the Philippines before moving to New Zealand, and one other Filipino family plus Sonny Kohitolu, who has lived there for many years. Because of Manny's and Ruth's work constraints, services will initially be at 4pm. If you are even in the area, and especially if you would like to join their first service, please contact me or Manny by email or phone. If you would like Manny's phone number, please contact Rex Morgan or me.

Dennis has departed today on his annual tour visiting our members in the South Island. He will be in Invercargill this weekend and Christchurch the weekend following.

Warm regards to all, Rex