



Munsons in the Philippines

Christian Counseling, Training,
and Development

Newsletter:
September 2011



A supertyphoon ("Mina") is lashing Baguio City with torrential rains (although we are nowhere near the worst hit). So this seems like a good time to stay home and reflect.

Theme for the Month: Growing Pains

1. **Bukal Life Care & Counseling Center.** Celia, myself, and three of our friends (Joey, Grace, and Anjie) started Bukal Life Ministries less than two years ago to provide counseling and care for the victims of Typhoon Pepeng (October 2009). Since then, change has accelerated. We joined with Shepherd's Oikos in March 2010, to form Bukal Life Care & Counseling Center. In June 2010 we incorporated. In April 2011, we were certified as a training center for CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) by CPSP (College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy). April and May we had 25 graduates of CPE 2011 Batch-1 and several certified clinical chaplains (including Celia). In August we opened up Bukal Life-Manila, in addition to the already existing Bukal Life-Baguio. Presently, we have 27 CPE students between Batches 2 and 3 in Baguio and Manila. Now we are working with PABATS (Philippine Association of Bible and Theological Schools) regarding the possibility of membership. We are also interested in setting up new Bukal Life locations (at least two) in the Philippines, in the next few months (but are we ready?).

It is really awesome to see God work and a privilege to have some part in it. But, being honest here, it can be quite stressful.

→ Bob is working on a policy manual for the counseling center. That's because now that we are bigger, and soon to be bigger still, we need set policies to protect our organization, our members, and our clients. We also need good policies to help new locations get organized.

→ We are structurally reorganizing as well. At one time, there were three of us (myself, Celia, and Rev. Aguirre) who were doing most of the work. But now there are several more of us (Jehny, Dr. Sim, Chit, Joyce, Becky, Tessa, Sr. Sofia and a few more). We need to get our staffing and paperwork system straightened out.

→ We are trying to make our finances work out. Bukal Life is staffed completely by volunteers. We are only using space that is lent out to us (so far) and utilize materials donated to us. But we are still pushing the limits on our financial viability. We are happy for donations (we are having a fund-raising banquet on October 1st), but we don't want to depend on donations. As missionaries, we love to do things for free-- provide free Christian counseling and pastoral care, and free training. But in the long-term, we will not be able to provide free services unless we also charge for others services. The long-term viability of the center depends on it not being dependent on international support.

So it is an exciting and challenging time. We are used to working in a small team doing short-term projects. Now we are trying to learn to be part of a broader administration running long-term programs. Will we be able to adapt? Or will we need to let go, leaving the center in more capable hands and move into another field (such as mission mobilization)? We don't know but will keep praying.

2. **Philippine Missions.** Our supporting denomination is the Southern Baptists (although we work with a number of denominations). The Philippines has hundreds of Southern Baptist churches, along with thousands of other Baptist and Evangelical churches. As such, the Philippines should be more of a mission-sending country than a missionary-receiving country. But with a few exceptions, the missionary potential for the Philippines has not (yet) been realized. However, things are starting to change. Celia is presently at the One Sending Body (OSB) conference in Cebu. It is the first national missions conference of the Southern Baptists, and has close to 300 delegates. Celia and I have been working with OSB on missionary training, evaluation, and counseling. Unfortunately, Filipino missionaries to the world tend to find local churches unsupportive.

Even SB foreign mission agencies tend to be be unsupportive because of the idea that their focus should be on CPMs (church-planting movements) and UPGs (unreached people groups), not on leader development and national missionary sending movements. But things are finally starting to change. The conference is evidence of this, and next month Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary will be breaking ground on the new Philippine Mission Center. It will be used for training in cross-cultural missions as well as holistic national missions. This is a step of faith for the seminary since not all of the funding for the building is there. But we are excited for changes we are now seeing in the Philippines. Yet it is also a time of growing pains. The support system and infrastructure for Filipino missionaries is simply not there yet, and we have talked with many who sacrifice and struggle on a level that we cannot fathom. They need our prayers.

OTHER NEWS

1. Celia has started her supervision to move to the next level in CPE certification. This level is done one-on-one, and she is meeting her supervisor (a CPSP delegate living in the United States) via Skype. Yes... we now have Skype (only took us 7.5 years). Our Skype address is “**munson2046**”.
2. Bob's dissertation has finally made it through the first two big hurdles. It has gone through 2nd reader, and through supervisory review. Now Bob is making three copies to give to ABGTS to distribute for another review. Bob is not sure if this is the final major review, or just another iteration (the process is a mystery to him), but is glad to sense tangible progress. The dissertation looks good and is somewhat readable (no dissertation is highly readable... if it was, it would have to be rewritten, to make it more murky and technical). Once the dissertation is approved, Bob hopes to convert the research into a readable booklet.
3. Joel is finishing his first term at the University of the Cordilleras. He is enjoying it, has lots of friends, and now has a girlfriend (yes, that is another growing pain for his parents... <smile>).
4. Becky and Esther have started school again (8th and 7th grades). Becky is in drama while Esther is in soccer (or “football,” since her coach is British).

Prayer Items

- Bukal Life Annual Board Meeting is on September 3rd, with the fund-raising dinner on October 1st.
- Financial support and continued educational scholarships for our children.
- We hope to visit the US for 4-6 weeks next year (June-July). Prayers needed regarding cost, schedule, in-country transportation, churches to visit, and... well... just about everything.
- Looking into helping organize a Filipino mission training week in Baguio next year.

Thank you for your prayers and support,

Bob, Celia, Joel, Becky, and Esther

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| www.bukallife.org | Bukal Life Website |
| www.bukallife.wordpress.com | Bukal Life Blogsite |
| www.missionmusings.wordpress.com | Munson Mission Musings |
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Joel chillin' at home between college classes



The four of us in Dagupan during our visit to the Special Needs vocational center (AVRC-1). Joel had classes that day (July 2011)