

## Southern Philippines August 2005

Carelink readers will have followed the amazing growth of the Gospel in this Moslem area since the conversion of a married couple as a result of our alcohol counselling outreach. The area they are in is partly under the control of rebels who run an autonomous Moslem state under Sharia Law, which includes the execution of Moslems who convert to Christianity within 3 days of their conversion. We brought to your attention the plight of a group of our brethren whose meeting was interrupted by gunfire. We were also aware of the dramatic spread of the Gospel in the area, and therefore brethren Mark Gilbert and Duncan Heaster spent a week in the area recently. Mark spent some time assessing the knowledge of the couple whom Duncan had baptized last year, and was very satisfied at the thoroughness of their instruction and their grasp of the truth.

We found that Moslem persecution is indeed a major problem, violence is an everyday occurrence, and virtually no non-Philippinos venture into the area. An American missionary couple who recently did venture in were kidnapped and the husband executed. We met adults in their 30s and 40s, let alone children, who had never seen white people before. We are grateful for the Father's care of us whilst there. It was a privilege to be able to carry the Gospel of grace to such people, and we were impressed with the power of the doctrines of the Gospel in motivating Moslems to risk so much for the sake of coming to Christ. Some of our brethren from the worst areas have now been relocated to safer areas, but there are others in a very precarious position, although we didn't feel it is actually life threatening for them at the moment.

The Gospel has spread powerfully in this isolated and unstable area. Again and again we find that when the stakes for conversion are high, it seems to encourage people to convert. We are pleased to share with you Br Alfredo's reports of the baptisms of 113 people in the area in the last 10 months, a number of whom we were able to visit and strengthen in the faith. Br Alfredo presented us with carefully kept records of each of them. The wonderful thing is that the majority of these are converts from Islam, running the very real risk of persecution and even execution at the hands of Moslem extremists, who are everywhere present.



Photo:

Inventory of Christadelphian baptisms kept by Br Alfredo.



Photo:

A baptism being performed in the Philippines.

We continued to encourage them in daily Bible reading, distributing copies of the Bible Companion with colour covers, lovingly provided by Sis Linda from Sydney.

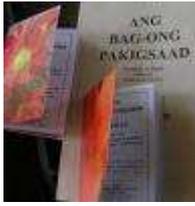


Photo:

The Cebuano edition of 'What is the Gospel?'

The Cebuano edition of What Is The Gospel? has been translated and a few thousand copies produced by the kindness of brethren in Sydney. Thanks to the kindness of brethren in Brisbane, we were able to present a laptop to Br Alfredo and Sis Cecily to expedite further translation work. Much dynamic preaching is underway- here are a few snippets from our experiences with the brethren in this work: Alcohol Counselling

### **Alcohol Counselling**

One abiding memory for us will be being invited by Br Alfredo to accompany him to a construction site over the road from him. The foreman of the site has been baptized, and he insists that his workers spend 2 hours / week studying Bible Basics. So once / week Alfredo says he goes there with his Bible Basics and teaches them a chapter. It was a pleasure to sit amongst those rough men, many of whom have alcohol issues, and watch their careful attention as Alfredo taught them the lesson. He stressed that there is no trinity, only one God, and that our response to that one God demands our all- and therefore, there should be no room left for alcohol. And even when men fail, because the Lord Jesus was of our nature, He can truly empathize with human weakness and is the only way to forgiveness. It was an encouraging and compelling mix of 'doctrinal' instruction and bringing out the practical implications. The men were a mix of Catholics and Moslems and we felt the transforming truth of Christ was indeed being preached to men eager for it.



Photos:

The Bible study group on the building site



### **Personal Follow Up Of Contacts**

But the work doesn't stop there. One of those men is having weekly classes conducted in his home, and we were invited to attend. The whole family and some neighbours were in

attendance as yet again Br Alfredo instructed them from Bible Basics, and we were able to add some teaching of our own.

### **Family Based Preaching**

One thing we learnt from the approach taken here in the southern Philippines is the commendable focus upon converting families, admittedly made easier by the family based culture in the area. Once confidence has been won with one member, and the instruction in the Gospel openly carried out in the family home, it seems to usually follow that the whole family are baptized. This then creates the nucleus for house churches. We spent a memorable last evening with one such family. They clearly knew and loved both their Bibles and their Lord. The mother, older children and some relatives had been baptized, but the father is a migrant worker in Malaysia. But he returned home especially to be baptized and then returned to Malaysia. In fact thanks to this work in southern Philippines, we're pleased to report there are now 2 newly baptized Filipino brethren currently working in Malaysia. This family were Moslems, their neighbours are Moslems [although not fanatic]. One of the older children is a college student in another town, and he described to us how he sleeps in a room at the college with 7 young Moslem men, who conduct prayers in the room and feel their calling is to disciple him back to Islam. Please pray for him and many other such situations. Again and again, we see the power of personal conviction of the truth of the Lord Jesus and a personal relationship with Him as such powerful motivating factors.

### **Radio Broadcast**

The area we're working in is a mixed Moslem-Christian area, hence the tensions and violence. However, our brethren got permission to make an early morning broadcast on the local radio. We turned up there to present the early morning 05:30-06:30 slot, based by Br Alfredo around a chapter from Bible Basics. Free copies of the New Testament were offered- any willing to fund the purchase or reprinting of Cebuano New Testaments are welcome to contact us.

We have been impressed that over the time we've known this group of brethren, there have been no requests for funding. They donate what little they can and do what they can independently, e.g. paying for the radio broadcast. That said there are significant costs involved in production of literature and supporting their preaching, and there are some genuine welfare needs in this very poor area. The economy has collapsed because of the violence and there is little outside investment and meaningful employment.



Photos:

Bible Basics radio broadcast reaching the rebel Moslem autonomous area

### **Future Plans**

We found ourselves very frustrated by the language barrier.



Photos:

Br Mark addressing an ecclesial gathering through translation

In order to try to generate interest amongst English speaking people in the area, we placed some adverts in the local English language newspaper, inviting people interested in a free copy of Bible Basics to write to Br Mark in Sydney. We are prayerfully awaiting the response.

There is a need to re-iterate the basic teachings of the Gospel, in an environment which is safe and unthreatened, where our brethren can concentrate on Bible study without interference. We therefore located a venue in a town some way from where most of our brethren live, and Br Mark Gilbert is looking for support and co-workers to help him lead a Bible Basics conference there in a few months time God willing. His address is c/o Carelinks, PO Box 152, Menai Central, NSW 2234 AUSTRALIA. So we once again find ourselves marveling at the power of the true Gospel and it's amazing power to transform human lives against all odds, and find ourselves looking inwards to ask how much that same Gospel has transformed us amidst all the 'odds' we have to face in our various contexts.

To God alone be the glory.

Your brothers and sisters of the CCM

**Reminder : Carelinks Retreat**

For readers living in the UK, or visiting the UK in September, we'd like to draw your attention to the Carelinks Retreat, to be held in Kendal, in the heart of the very scenic Lake District, September 23-25 God willing. For more details, please see [www.carelinks.net/kendalretreat.htm](http://www.carelinks.net/kendalretreat.htm)