

PRCA FOREIGN MISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

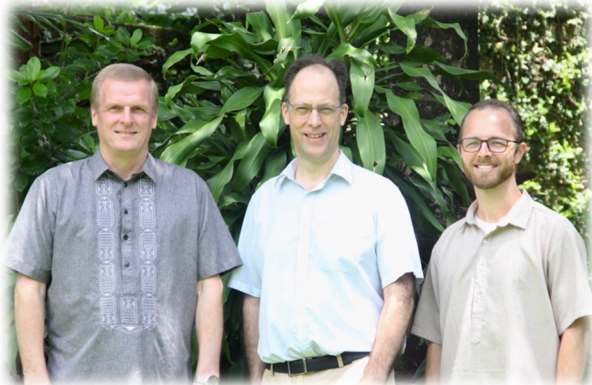
NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ in the PRCA,

Another update from your missionaries in the Philippines. While many of you enjoyed the warm fall colors, crisp cool air, and sweet apple cider, we enjoyed rain, rain, and more rain! This rainy season, one particular typhoon (hurricane) was quite remarkable, to say the least. I will come back to that.

Missionary Labors

Last August, we missionaries began our second year of training men for the ministry of the gospel on behalf of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP). I am teaching Biblical Hermeneutics again and have added OT History. Rev. Kleyn is teaching Homiletics and Church History again and has added Reformed Symbols (the study of the creeds). Rev. Smit is teaching Dogmatics and has added Greek Reading and NT Exegesis. We are teaching a total of 3 seminary students. A few visitors have also been attending or watching our online lectures on Zoom, Skype, or YouTube. It has been a very different format for teaching, sitting in front of our computers in our studies at home and teaching through a webcam. But it is working well enough. We expect to finish the first semester in early December when the students will take their final exams.



Although the Philippine government has been very strict throughout this pandemic, there have been some happy developments recently. In their quarantine guidelines, mass gatherings, including religious services, are now allowed up to 50% of the venue capacity. So, with much

thanksgiving to God, the churches of the PRCP are gradually returning to normalcy in terms of their Sunday worship services.



First year seminarians Jethro Flores (left) and Emmanuel Jasojaso (right) taking a midterm exam.

In other labors, I have continued to pastor the Provident PRC with preaching on Sundays in their sanctuary and teaching during the week on Zoom. We recently completed a very enjoyable and very relevant Bible study on the book of Revelation on Wednesday nights from April through October. I am currently teaching OT Bible stories to the children and Essentials of Reformed Doctrine to the youth. We rejoiced greatly when three of the young women in the Essentials class came before the Council to profess their faith and to ask for approval to make public confession. This they will do, Lord willing, on December 13. I also attend (as advisor) the meetings of the Mission/Contact Committee and Translation Committee of the PRCP. However, Provident's outreach work to two Brethren churches north of Manila was put on hold because the congregations were not gathering during the quarantine. The work will continue, Lord willing, in January. In the meantime, the pastor of one of the churches (Pastor Ronil Domingo) has been attending many of our seminary classes as a visitor.

Rev. Kleyn, in addition to his full-time load of preparation and teaching at the seminary, also continues to preach regularly on Sundays when requested by area churches of the PRCP. He also attends (as advisor) the meetings of the very busy Finance Committee of the PRCP (on Zoom). However, the mission work in Southern Negros Occidental, which is primarily the work

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of Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Smit, has been put on hold due to the tight travel restrictions between the islands.

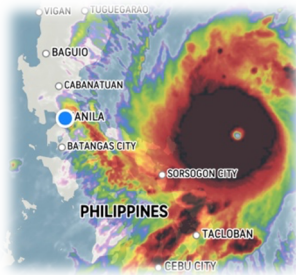
Rev. Smit, in addition to his full-time load of preparation and teaching at the seminary, continues to preach regularly on Sundays mainly for the Maranatha PRC through their Facebook page. He also attends the meetings of the Theological School Committee of the PRCP (as advisor) and devotes a lot of time to theological studies (reading and writing) for a program he is taking at a local Presbyterian seminary.

All three of us attended the Classis of the PRCP (as advisors) on October 31 which is currently recessed and scheduled to continue on November 30.

Typhoon!

On November 1 (a Sunday), a super typhoon passed through the Philippines. Due to the potentially strong winds and heavy rain, Provident's Council decided to cancel the worship services. In the end, though, the storm did not hit Manila very hard or result in much damage. The experience was like so many before. A typhoon comes. It looks menacing on the radar. Then it breaks apart, at least in our area. And we are thankful.

But then came the typhoon of the evening of November 11. The Philippines called it Typhoon Ulysses (the rest of the world named it Typhoon Vamco). At midnight, we lost our electricity. Our fans turned off. Our kids' nightlights went dark and they woke up. The mighty hurricane wind rushed over our house like a freight train in gust after gust. Having grown up in Michigan, far from hurricane territory, I had rarely heard the wind blow like that before. After a night of little sleep, we discovered the results the next morning. A large branch had fallen from a tree in our front yard. One of our neighbor's mango trees fell down. More trees were down in the streets.



But the worst damage was not in our neighborhood, which is up in the mountains east of Manila. The worst, we soon discovered, was down in Metro Manila, in the city of Marikina where Provident PRC is located. The Marikina River overflowed the dike around Provident Village and filled the village with muddy water. The flood waters rose higher and higher, submerging the first story of all buildings and rising into the second story of many, including Provident's church building. Perhaps you saw the bulletin announcement from the Contact Committee of the PRCA regarding this flood. Although all the library books were lost, as well as the sanctuary Bibles and Psalters, much equipment was destroyed, and there was even some structural damage... Although personal property was also lost by some of the five families of the church who live in that area... Yet the congregation is thankful to God for sparing all their lives and comforting them with the precious Reformed faith that they have come to know and love: the truth of the sovereignty of God over rain and drought, riches and poverty, and all things, and His eternal love for His elect and beloved people in Christ, using our light and momentary afflictions to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

As of this writing, the church building is still being cleaned and repaired from the flood damage, but our heavenly Father is meeting the needs of the congregation.

Please remember our Filipino brethren in Christ and us missionaries in your prayers.



We the Holsteges look forward to seeing many of you on our furlough from December 16-June 30, the Lord willing.

In Christ,
Rev. Dan Holstege