

## Baguio Youth Mission Trip Report (2-13 December 2011)

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2011, the Baguio and Tuao youth mission teams gathered at the budget terminal for our eagerly anticipated mission trip to the Philippines. We were accompanied by our family and brethren, and were in high spirits as Elder Adrian led us in a prayer before our departure. Emotions started to run high as we performed a joint rendition of “Still” before making our way to the departure zone for our Cebu Pacific flight 5J-538 bound for Clark.

After a 4-hour flight, we arrived at Diosdado Macapagal International Airport and were warmly greeted by Brother Mark who had travelled all the way from Baguio to pick us up. After a hearty dinner at Jollibee, both teams split ways and our team embarked on our 5-hour journey to Baguio in 2 vans. We arrived at the Executive Apartelle at 245am and went to bed after a quick debrief.

The next day, Brother Jojo brought us to his home for a lunch and fellowship with his family as well as the Midtown Young People (YP) who would be going to Bokod with us for the weekend. We set off in the evening and arrived at Brother Jojo’s ancestral home in Bokod after a 2-hour ride. The dinner crew comprising Andrew, Clarence, Geraldine, and Gillian prepared us a delicious dinner and the breakfast squad of Irvin, Kevin, and Yang Gin cooked up a storm for breakfast to energize us for the activity-packed days ahead. Amanda, Nicole, Joel, and John formed the clean-up team and worked hard to ensure that we had pristine crockery and utensils to use each day.



On Sunday morning, we worshiped with the Bokod Poblacion and Pened congregation in the house which we were staying at. Clarence and Geraldine conducted the men’s and women’s bible classes respectively, and the rest of us combined powers to keep the children occupied with songs,



skits, and games. After the worship service, the team visited Brother Julio who was wheelchair bound and unable to attend worship that day due to discomfort in his legs. Incredibly, his home was at the top of a flight of stairs, and we were all encouraged by Brother Julio’s positivity and cheer in spite of his circumstances. That afternoon, we travelled to Pito for a second worship service in the house church there. For many of us, this was the smallest church congregation we had ever seen, but what struck us even more was the dedication of these people to learning and obeying the word of God. Although we were not able to

communicate much with the Pito brethren, we were uplifted by their warmth and generous provision of dinner for our team.

The next day, Brother Jojo, Brother Lem and Brother Rick brought us to the Badekbed Hot Spring on the way to lunch fellowship with the Pened brethren. The smell of sulphur permeated the air, but we were all in awe as we enjoyed God’s handiwork amid the mountains. At Sister Corazon’s home, we were taught how to pound the red rice in a huge vessel and had the chance to taste the red rice which was served for lunch. After lunch, the team performed some songs and shared a devotional with the brethren. We then commenced our trek through the fields and came across rice fields, flower plantations and a lonely but fierce cow, before arriving at a small primary school that was made up of one classroom and



seven Grade 1 and 2 students. After an impromptu performance of “My God is so Big”, we made our way back to Bokod where we had an appointment at the nearby high school. We ended the day performing in public twice, once at the parade square of the high school for an enthusiastic crowd of students, and once outside the mayor’s office along the main street of Bokod. For some of us, these were nervy experiences, but we were all thankful to God for the opportunity to proclaim His name in front of so many!

That night, we had a memorable bonfire in the porch of Brother Jojo’s ancestral home. Brother Jojo and Brother Lem shared their life stories, and we were incredibly touched by the sacrifices made by each of them to give up their careers and interests to serve in the mission field. Well-fed both physically and spiritually, we had a good night’s rest before returning to Baguio the next day.

En-route to Baguio, Brother Jojo and Brother Lem made a pit stop at the newly completed Silver Bridge which was suspended over a valley. Most of us trooped happily across the long wobbly bridge, while there were several of us who were afraid but turned to God for courage to complete the walk. We also visited the scenic Ambuklao Dam before making our way to Baguio for lunch fellowship with the Midtown church leaders. Over the next week, the Midtown brethren graciously hosted us for lunch and dinner fellowships and we had a good time getting to know them and their families better. The Midtown YP also put in tremendous effort in taking time out of their work and school schedules to bring us around Baguio for some sightseeing. Some of the places we visited include Burnham Park, Tamawan Village, Baguio Museum, and SM Mall. We also spent a fruitful Saturday morning with the Midtown YP at Camp John Hay with games, bible study, and good food.



For VBS, we put what we had practiced so hard for to good use at the Baguio Pines Family Learning Centre, the San Luis Elementary School, and the Consuello Home. At San Luis, we were suddenly thrown a curveball when we found out that the school did not have a common area that could accommodate all the students and that we had to perform for 1-2 classes at a time at their respective classrooms. After a lengthy discussion, the team decided to split into 3 groups with Andrew, Amanda, Joel, and John performing the skit, Clarence, Geraldine, Gillian, and Kevin leading songs, and Irvin, Nicole, and Yang Gin taking the children for the seed activity. Every member of the team reacted quickly to the change in plans and everyone worked extremely hard and well to execute their duties much to the joy of the children. At the Consuello Home, the girls were a very receptive audience and we were heartened by their earnest chorus of “Yes!” when asked if they would like to seed of Jesus to grow in their hearts at the end of our skit.



The eventful week of activities culminated in the Pasasalamat celebration on Sunday after worship service. This was a special day of thanksgiving the Midtown CoC congregation as they looked back on 28 years of growth in service to the Lord. As part of Pasasalamat, Brother Jojo shared a report on the progress made by the various ministries, and the hard work put in by the leaders and members was evident to all. We also presented a song and skit, and were in turn showered with many thoughtful gifts lovingly prepared by the brethren. This was followed by a lunch feast with over 10 dishes and some of our team members got busy serving food and washing dishes alongside the

Midtown brethren, including the leaders! Thereafter, we had part one of our farewell with the Midtown YP, before splitting into 2 groups based on age for more fellowship. The day culminated in part two of our farewell at the Executive Apartelle and true to their reputation, the Midtown YP gave us a rousing and unforgettable send-off. But this was not the end! After saying our goodbyes for the hundredth time, we finally made our way to dinner with Brother Jojo's family at Rose Bowl. Over dinner, Brother Jojo and Sister Janet shared their testimony with us and sought our prayers for their big move to the USA to further equip themselves with the word of God.



The next day, we said our final goodbyes to Brother Jojo, Brother Lem, Brother Mark, and Sister Janet before making our way to Fontana resort in Clark. After lunch and some shopping at SM Clark, we checked into Fontana for our affirmation session which lasted from 6:15pm to 11:15pm inclusive of a 1-hour lunch break. We closed this with a prayer on bended knee as we gave thanks to God for the experiences gained and lessons learnt over the past 10 days.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, the Baguio and Tuao teams returned via flight 5J-538 to the familiar faces of family and brethren at the budget terminal. We were led in a thanksgiving prayer by Elder Winston, and the warm scene was similar to the send-off we had 11 days ago, but the individuals who have returned from the Philippines have grown beyond measure, in more ways than one. We hope that we have been as much of a blessing to the Filipino brethren as they have been to us.



- Jason & Yvette Mok