



The MENORAH

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES



Bro. Bodge Santos, the First Speaker of the Afternoon Service



IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 JUST DO IT: FOCIM Opens Its Doors For Afternoon Service
- 2 Editorial
- 2 Prayer and Fasting
- 4 Pressing Towards the GOAL: GEN-C Holds Successful Leader's Camp
- 5 I Am Sorry; Thank you; Love You
- 6 Crossing Over: General Assembly, The Menorah, Gen-C, Ushering Ministry
- 8 Gen-C Youth Ministry Launches New Series for the 2015 Vertical Youth Service
- 9 Christians Overseas
- 10 Helping Hands
- 11 Food Review: Fireside by Kettle
- 12 Movie Review: Heaven is For Real
- 12 Book Review: Fixing Delilah
- 13 Album Review: Planetshakers: This is Our Time
- 14 Macau-Hongkong: A Travel Guide
- 17 Enjoying Japan on a Pocket Friendly Budget
- 19 Miracle of Outdoor Fellowship

JUST DO IT: FOCIM Opens Doors For Afternoon Service

By Edward Matthew D. Unite

2015 IS UNDOUBTEDLY a year filled with promise for FOCIM. As a start of better and greater things to come, the Church finally opened its doors for a second service starting in February at 1-3 p.m. every Sunday afternoons.

NEW CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The idea to start holding second services was a product of the Church Leaders' evaluation and planning for the year 2015 to build the Church's identity in the city as a lampstand. It was decided that a need to hold an afternoon service was urgent. As holding another service is something different for everyone including the leaders, it was decided that there would be a five-month experimental run, starting February until June. At the end of the period, the conduct of the second service would be assessed.

Truly having a second service answers several needs of the church. According to FOCIM's Senior Pastor and Ministry Team head Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, there is an urgent need for a bigger space to enable members to worship God in a comfortable place. *"Since we are still preparing to build the Lord's sanctuary, the best approach is to do another worship service in the afternoon."*

Continued on page 3...

No More Excuses; Just Do It!

“Sorry, but I’m very busy.”
 “You know what, I will attend if...”
 “Oh, I can’t. Sunday is my rest day.”
 “Lord, if you’ll grant me my request,
 I promise...”
 “I already have other activities within
 and outside of my work.”

Sounds familiar? You’ve probably used one or two of these lines to excuse yourself from answering God’s calling.
 “I’m just a regular individual; nothing extraordinary.”
 “Who am I, Lord?” “What will I say to them?”
 “What can I do, I have nothing to be proud of anyway.”
 “I don’t know what to do, Lord...”

Sounds more familiar, isn’t it? Sometimes even if we already answered God’s calling, doubts, anxiety, and fears find their way into our heads. We doubt ourselves and question God what qualified us or what our worth is. Worse is we doubt God’s power to create something out of our nothingness ending up in us testing His powers. Our human nature dictates that we want to see before we really believe.

FOCIM Launches Quarterly Midnight Prayer and Fasting

By Mariela Reyes

Prayer is a very powerful tool as it allows us to commune with the Lord to deliver our petitions and at the same time listen to His will. Fasting is abstaining from all or some kinds of food or drink for a period of time. It reminds us that we cannot rely on our own strengths. In the bible, men of faith combined these two to draw near to God and awaits God’s miracles, signs and wonders!

FOCIM believes in the power of corporate prayer. In Matthew 18:19-20 it says, *“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gather in my name, there am I with them.” (NIV)*

This faith underlies FOCIM’s conduct of prayer meeting every Friday with attendance by about 30 members. For this year, the church is taking another step forward by adding quarterly Prayer and Fasting in our activities. Last January 30 marked our first Midnight Prayer and Fasting where nearly 70 members were present. It started with songs of praise led by the Worship Team followed by a series

of prayers led by the Ministry Team members - Bro. Bing Guerrero, Bro. Diwa Guinigundo, Sis. Apple Guinigundo, Sis. Shirley So and Sis. Hilda Lactao. Most of the prayers and petitions were focused on the church’s activities and plans especially the Project Sanctuary; healing for those who are sick, unity within the Body of Christ and national transformation. It ended with prayers of dedication and anointing to members of various ministries such as the Blithe Ushering Ministry, Intercessors, Worship Team and Ministry Team. It ended exactly at 12 midnight.

At some point in our lives we are like a modern day Moses. We make various excuses like, “Who am I, Lord that I should disciple others?” (Exodus 3:11). God comes along and reaffirms our commission for us to feel confident.
 But then, we never run out of excuses and so we say to the Lord, “But what will I say to them. What will I do? How will I do it?” (Exodus 3:13), so God tells us what to do, what to say, and how to do it and reminds us that He will be with us all the way. Exactly what He did with Moses. However, just like Moses, we try once again to find a way out and say, “How will they believe me? It’s just me. I’m practically nothing.” (Exodus 4:1). Yet again, God answers us with miracles and blessings in our lives.

Despite all of God’s workings that we have personally witnessed and experienced, our disbelief persists. We use our weaknesses as a defense. When we doubt our own abilities, we also doubt our God, overseeing the truth that the One asking us to do these things is our God, who undoubtedly has the power to bring everything to pass. Remember how God worked in the people of Israel? They were in bondage and slavery in Egypt. When they pleaded to God to deliver them, God didn’t move right away. He waited patiently until such time that someone who would be His vessel and instrument could effectively carry out His plan for His people. It took a process—lasted one that wasn’t very fast

and easy—that 40 years before God finally revealed His plans for the baby, whom He destined to lead the people of Israel. When Moses finally understood and embraced his destiny, miracles started to happen.
 Most of the time we are too anxious of and within ourselves that we forget to put God in the picture. We give so many excuses, acting like we don’t have enough faith in ourselves, but the truth is we don’t have faith strong enough to trust God. It’s our way of saying, “Lord, I don’t want this. Please choose someone else.” But just like with Moses, God is patient with us. He gives us strong reasons that make our excuses unacceptable.

Now is the time for us to examine our hearts once more. How long have we been Christians? How much longer will we reject God’s call for us to accomplish His purpose for us and through us? Through our Church, Fullness of Christ International Ministries, God has prepared us for an exciting future before us. He has taught us to take the market place and father the next generation. He is continuously transforming our lives that in turn, we too, can transform our nation. Last year, He challenged us to be more like His Son Jesus Christ. Matthew 12:36 says, “But I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.” Our God is saying, now is the time. No more excuses! No more doubts! Just DO it!

Members who attended the event felt the move of the Holy Spirit and the glorious presence of the Lord. They expressed that they were truly blessed. Some members, like Bro. Angel Dionisio, said in his testimony on the Worship Service on the following Sunday, that he was blessed and strengthened by the Lord. In his testimony, he said that during the day itself, he came from a coverage. Even though his day was full of so much work and he was on a fast, he managed to support the event all because of God’s favor and blessings. The young people (mostly from the members of Junior Band) who are first timers in this kind of event were also amazed. Some even suggested doing the same every Friday Prayer Meeting. More are looking forward to the second Midnight Prayer and Fasting.

As they said, a church that is familiar with prayer and fasting is not alien to God’s power and anointing. This is FOCIM, the lampstand to the city and the nation!



Another goal that the second service seeks to achieve is to bring in more people to the Church, with an expected minimum target of at least 100 new members for the year. Albeit daunting, such challenge is feasible said Bro. Diwa: *“to the church through our home church system, this minimum target is more than doable. It’s a challenge to everyone to multiply our number and conquer the kingdoms of this world for the greater glory of God.”*

For better coordination, both services will have the same topic but different speakers, with the afternoon service being headed by the Ministry Team’s second line of speakers such as Bro. Broderick and Sis. Roanna Santos, Sis. Sophie Guerrero, Bro. Angel Dionisio, Sis. Lourdes Unite, Sis. Ethel Arada, and Sis. Hedy Leah Marcelo. During the experimental run, the children’s and adult’s Sunday school will only be conducted in the morning. As a way for all the church members to come together, the last Sunday of the month, aptly called “Love Feast”, will have no afternoon service.

To address the need for better understanding of the Word, the last two months of the experimental run will see the church modify its services from a primarily English service to a primarily Filipino service. The Opening Prayer, the songs led by the Worship Team, the medium of delivery of the Message, as well as the conduct of the Lord’s Supper, Love Offering, and Closing Prayer, will be conducted mainly in Filipino.

Church Service Schedule

Sunday School: Adults : 8:30AM-9AM

Kids : 9:30AM-11AM

Morning Worship Service : 9AM-11AM

Afternoon Service : 1PM-3PM

Love Feast : No Afternoon Service

THE AFTERNOON LAUNCH

February 1, 2015 marked the launch of the first afternoon service. Being the first Sunday of the month, the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, or “Gen-C”, led the whole program for both the morning and afternoon services. Being a Youth Sunday the congregation already felt the youthful spirit upon entering the sanctuary; they were all joyfully welcomed by the youth ushers led by President Karen Leslie Bello.

Tired and short-handed due to sickness and absence of some of its members, such issues did not become a hindrance for the Worship Team. As the praise and worship portion is one of the most integral parts of the service, it was up to the team to ensure that people were fired up for God. According to Worship Leader Daniel Alberto Guinigundo, *“leading worship for two services is of course draining and tiring as the energy, enthusiasm and power should be sustained in the afternoon.”* When asked about the challenges foreseen by the team in leading Worship for two services and how the team would adjust, he answered,

“... despite the challenges, everyone in the team is aware that the rewards in heaven and the fact that we have the gift and the opportunity to give glory to God outweigh all the sacrifices we have to make. That thought alone and the fact that we are part of the Church’s plan to expand numerically is what makes the team cope with the adjustment.”

To make the second service more exciting for the congregation, the Worship Team came up with the idea to change at least two songs from the morning line-up.



After an anointed praise and worship, many were blessed by an inspiring and powerful message by Bro. Broderick Santos. *“It was a dream come true for me to preach God’s word for the first time on a regular service. I am blessed to be part of the church’s history as God’s first mouthpiece in this new era of expansion,”* quipped the very excited Bro. Broderick. *“I had been waiting, longing, and preparing myself for this day to come. I feel that God has made me to passionately preach His powerful message to the people.”* According to him, there will be new revelation and anointing from the different afternoon preachers every Sunday, encouraging everyone to bring their relatives and friends to the Sunday Services.

ROARING SUCCESS

Since its launch in February, the second service has begun to build momentum, with the Church heavily promoting the afternoon service primarily through social media, such as the newly launched FOCIM website, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Although there is still much room for improvement, the Church has indeed hit the ground running and in no time, the realization of becoming a lampstand to the city, and eventually the nation, is closely at hand.

PRESSING TOWARDS THE GOAL: GEN-C HOLDS SUCCESSFUL LEADER'S CAMP

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young

JUST AS 2014 ended on a high note, as the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, or "Gen-C" celebrated its 10th anniversary with continuous victories, the Gen-C kicked off 2015 by holding the first ever Youth Camp for the ministry's leaders and young professionals last January 15-16 in Pansol, Laguna. The event was spearheaded by President Karen Leslie Bello along with Committee members Anna Pamela Unite, one of the Spiritual Growth Counselors, and Emma Belle Cerveza. All the activities during the two-day event centered around the theme, "Just Do It", as derived from the very inspiring Bible verse found in Philippians 3:14, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."



THE DAY'S ACTIVITIES

From start to finish, every attendee truly found the camp more than fruitful. After the "Icebreaker" session where each team had to perform a short cheer for everyone, Ptr. Hilda Lactao delivered a very inspiring message, emphasizing on the ultimate goal of a spiritual leader: "To live our lives so that others will want to know Jesus."

There were several highlights during the camp. First was the "Faith Walk" activity where the attendees were taught trust and ability to listen as they were blindfolded and led to a series of obstacles by their respective team leaders. One team member shared, "The experience can be likened to us being spiritually blind in real life, and only the total dependence to the Lord will save us and lead us to the right path." Another was the "Memory Verse" game where everyone's Biblical knowledge was challenged as everyone was asked to recite three verses from the Bible. After a sumptuous dinner, the Gen-C leaders discussed various topics on "Spiritual Leadership," such as "Avoiding Leadership Pitfalls" by Michelle Sarmiento, and "Leadership Rewards" by Emma Belle Cerveza.

This year's newly-appointed leaders, John David Dionisio and Denise Cerveza, were also introduced with both of them given the opportunity to share some insights and expectations. The night closed with planning for 2015. Perhaps the high point of the camp took place in the morning as the leaders came together in the last activity entitled, "Self Reflection: Renewal of Commitment to the Lord", where the attendees were asked to spend time alone, in complete silence to meditate on their level of commitment to the Lord, as well as their personal hindrances in serving. On a piece of paper, such hindrances were listed down and as a prophetic act, it was thrown to the fire to signify that from that point on, every attendee would be devoted in giving himself wholly for God. Each attendee also kept a list of promises which was secured in a basket to be re-opened in the next youth camp.

With the undeniable success of the youth leader's camp, a mid-year youth camp is definitely in the works, with plans of involving more participants and future leaders for 2015 and beyond.

A NEED FOR RENEWAL

There was a definite need for the Gen-C to start the year with such an activity as the ministry was newly revamped and revitalized in 2014; thus, the activity intends to renew the commitment of each attendee in order to effectively keep last year's momentum going. In addition, the camp aims to finish the last set of monthly devotions of the leaders. The camp also provided a good avenue for the leaders to have fellowship through different games and activities. Lastly, the evaluation of Gen-C's previous year and planning for 2015 was done during the camp.



“Sorry”

“Thank You”

“I Love You”

*(Or How a
Christian Couple Can Keep
the Embers of Their Love Burning)*

By Elso U. Cabangon



The institution of marriage had been continually under siege. In societies where divorce is allowed, like in the USA, there are statistics showing that marriages starting out today have up to 43% chance of ending in divorce. In the Philippines, there are bills filed and pending in Congress, seeking to add divorce to the means of breaking marital vows such as annulment and legal separation.

The threats to this institution are even compounded by immoral permissiveness on gay or same-sex marriage.

Against this backdrop are efforts big and small, to push back attempts to dilute the meaning, significance, and righteousness of (Christian) marriages.

On Sunday the 15th, in the love month of February, scores of FOCIM Couples upheld the sanctity of marriage, and celebrated their years of married life by reaffirming their wedding vows to each other in ceremonies officiated by senior pastor, Bro. Diwa Guinigundo. Aided immensely by the Gen-C led by Sis Karen Leslie Bello, Maye Reyes, Kristel Dionisio, Ems Cerveza, and Bro. Daniel Guinigundo, the event immediately took on a celebratory mood with the witty emceeing of couple Bro. Bodge and Sis Roanna Santos.

“How Well Do You Know Your Sweetheart?” is a question easily answered by couple Bro. Arnel and Sis Lorie Oreta, when asked the last time they exchanged “I love you’s”. They received a prize for giving the same answer.

Gen-C’s Labyu Serenades also took center stage with the songs of love and romance especially performed for couples.

But the number that raised the excitement level several notches was the dance contest. The dance floor filled to capacity with couples struggling to follow the steps taught and demonstrated by Sis Kristel and Maye.

At the end, Couple Bro. Ruel and Sis Clarizel Caonis wowed the crowd with their Cha-Cha moves. Couple Bro. Roger and Sis Angela Lactao sashayed the Swing, and couple Bro. Francis and Sis Yumi Capalongan glided the Tango gracefully. The event would of course be incomplete without the thrill of the raffling of several prizes to blessed couples and even some Gen-C singles, through the efforts of Sis Vicky Cabangon.

Capping the celebrations was the inspiring message of Bro. Diwa who retraced and elaborated on the biblical precepts underlying the union of man and woman, among which were the passages in Genesis 2:22-24, and Ephesians 5:22-33. In a moving exhortation, Bro. Diwa told the couples to remember always the three phrases the latter need to exchange to help sustain the strength and warmth of their marriage: “Sorry” acknowledges the fault that one commits and the humility that it conveys; “Thank you” expresses gratitude for a favor received; “I love you” is the sweetest music to one’s ears, uttered sincerely with feeling.

As Bro. Bing Guerrero opened the programme with a prayer for its success, Bro. Diwa and assisted by Sis Apple, closed it with an equally powerful prayer and anointing for each couple for them to “always live each day to the utmost”.



Crossing over

Wanted: Menorah Starts the Year Strong through Intensive Recruitment and New Projects

JANUARY 25, 2015 marks an important milestone for the Menorah, FOCIM's official publication, as it conducts its first General Assembly at the Lampstand. Celebrating its second year, the Menorah has been in wanting for more members with the passion and the desire for writing and the arts. With the theme, "Wanted", the Editorial Staff intensified its promotions by coming out with a "police investigation/crime scene"-themed event to entice new recruits for the year. With Sis. Apple Guinigundo as guest speaker and inculcating the importance and the value of writers in the Church and their impact on numerical growth, the Menorah was able to get more than enough writers for each of the three regular issues for the year, represented by different age groups, ranging from Gen-C Youth Ministry members and Gen-C Young Professionals, to adult members of the Church.

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

The Menorah has a lot of things in store this 2015. Aside from a Menorah Calendar, a compilation of the 2014 messages, an Essay Writing Contest, and its regular three issues for the year, the Menorah has been busy in establishing FOCIM's social media presence through Facebook, being handled by Sis. Angelica Dionisio, Instagram, and Twitter, both handled by Bro. Daniel Guinigundo. But perhaps one of the significant milestones of the year was the addition of a fifth member to the Editorial Board, web editor, Sis. Anna Pamela Unite, and the launch of the FOCIM Website, www.focim.com.ph, last February 15, 2015.

With these new projects and the influx of new writers to add more dynamism to the writing style of the publication, it is indubitable that 2015 is a year of reaching new heights and more for this budding ministry.

Gen-C Kicks Off Year with First General Assembly

By Karen Leslie C. Bello







LAST JANUARY 31, 2015, 1PM, Saturday, the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, or Gen-C, held their first General Assembly at the Lampstand with the theme, "Just Do It." With the youth and the young professionals from the Quezon City outreach present, the aim of the General Assembly was to inform the members of the projects for 2015. The event started with Praise and Worship, opening remarks by President Karen Leslie Bello, an inspirational message from one of the Gen-C's counselors, Bro. Daniel Guinigundo, followed by a short presentation per pillar. The event was also a venue for the members to voice out any suggestions, opinions, or concerns that they have in order for Gen-C to have a victorious year.

More importantly, the members were apprised a new structure in project management that the leadership of Gen-C will be launching this year. At the helm of the leadership are the six counselors



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Twitter:
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a New Structure in its



overseeing the Executive Committee, headed by President Karen Leslie Bello and three Committee members, John David Dionisio, Kristel Dionisio, and Aertzah Denise Cerveza.

This year, instead of dividing the members into pillars, which would keep them from being exposed to the other Gen-C projects, the leadership decided to place the members into various committees, such as Programs, Finance and Marketing, Décor and Logistics, in order for the members to get a full spectrum of the activities and projects that Gen-C has to offer. The program ended with closing remarks delivered by Sis. Kristel Dionisio. Refreshments were served afterwards for the members' bonding and fellowship.

The new structure of Gen-C holds a lot of promise and the leadership is expectant that it would further encourage the youth to participate once they are fully immersed in these committees. This would allow them to realize that now is the time for them to do their part to answer the call of God for His church.

The Beauty of the Ministry is in the Heart and the Hands: Ushering and Helps Ministry Heads Successful General Assembly

By Michelle D. Sarmiento



THE FOCIM Blithe Ushering Ministry and the Helps Ministry, now newly called God's Helping Hands, held its first General Assembly last March 1, 2015, 2pm at the Lampstand. This was attended by the 13 regular ushers and helps ministers from Mandaluyong and the Quezon City outreach. Aside from the regular members, eight (8) new recruits attended the activity. Spearheaded by Head Sis. Michelle Sarmiento, with the assistance of Senior Ushers, Sis. Karen Leslie Bello and Sis. Emma Belle Cerveza, along with Adviser Bro. Daniel Guinigundo, the gathering aimed to refresh, update, inform, educate and inculcate the beauty of this ministry. A discussion on the Mission and Vision, the functions, duties and responsibilities of the ministry were some of the very important topics tackled that afternoon. A newly improved and updated Usher's Manual was also launched, care of Sis. Michelle Sarmiento and Sis. Emma Belle Cerveza.

“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”

Psalm 84:10

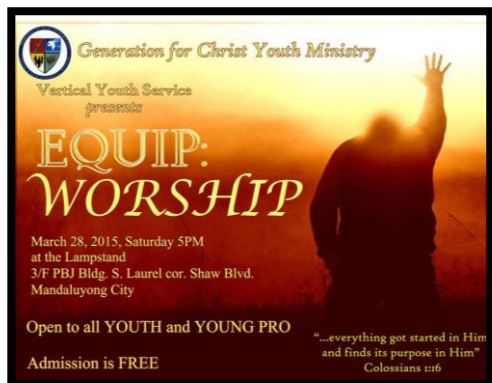
To establish the newly named Helps Ministry, God's Helping Hands, the Ushering Ministry took the initiative to the standards and qualifications of a Helps minister which aimed at highlighting the importance of their ministry. With the goal of being ready and responsive to any needs of the Church, the volunteers were motivated to begin the year by recruiting more members into the ministry.

With the success of its first project this February, much is expected from these ministries by becoming more than doorkeepers, being the heart and the hands of the church.



Generation for Christ Youth Ministry Launches New Series for the 2015 Vertical Youth Service

By Aerzah Denise V. Cerveza



AFTER REVIVING the Youth last 2014, the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry, or Gen-C, launched a new teaching series to be introduced during the Vertical Youth Service this 2015 in order to further fan the flames of the newly revived ministry. Aptly entitled “EQUIP: Growing in Christ, Living with Purpose”, the series is grounded on the verse Colossians 1:16 “...everything got started in HIM and finds its purpose in HIM.” The series will revolve around the five (5) purposes, namely, Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, and Evangelism, introduced in the best-selling book, Purpose Driven Life, by Rick Warren. The book is coincidentally the prime text used in Gen-C’s Youth Discipleship Program.

The first installment of the series centered on Worship occurred last 28 March 2015 at the Lamstand, spearheaded by Sis. Aerzah Denise V. Cerveza, one of the newly appointed Executive Committee members of Gen-C.

The Service began on time, starting with a high energy Praise and Worship, followed by prayer from

The attendees were welcomed in the Opening Remarks by President Karen Leslie C. Bello and an Inspirational Message was also shared by Youth Counselor Anna Pamela D. Unite. The uplifting testimony of Bro. Roberto Yaona enlightened and touched the hearts of the attendees as he shared how he came to know Christ and how it has turned his life for the better. Right after the testimony, an inspirational number was rendered by Sis. Danika Ija Bello and Bro. Danilo C. Bello Jr.

The Word was delivered by Sis. Rhoze Rivera, the Dance Ministry head of the Jesus Loves You City Church. In her message, she encouraged the youth to worship God with “HEART”: H-Humility, E-Enthusiasm A-Attitude R-Respect T-Teachable. Through her life and her experiences during the difficult times, she further challenged the youth to glorify God. To put her message to practice, she personally led an altar call for the youth to freely express their love for God through worship. Following her very anointed message came a surprise special number Sis. Pauline Mae, Sis. Rhoze’s daughter.



It was also during the service that Ptr. Robert Lee Guerrero, the head of the World Ministry, commissioned the new Executive Committee of Gen-C, namely, Aerzah Denise V. Cerveza, Kristel C. Dionisio and John David C. Dionisio by reminding them of their responsibilities and commitment with the Lord to fully understand the calling of becoming a leader. As Bro Diwa Guinigundo closed the youth service with prayer, the Worship Team, along with Sis. Rhoze and her daughter, encouraged the youth to dance to the last songs, “Lord You are Good” and “I am Free.”

With the success of the first installment of “Equip”, with around 110 young people in attendance, the youth, members and visitors alike, can surely expect an overflow of blessings in the succeeding services this 2015.

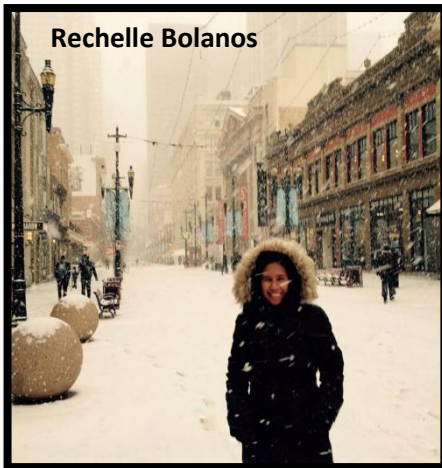


Christians Overseas

By Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

Today, traveling overseas means seeking jobs or pursuing higher education. Among the major concerns that arise when a Christian decides to work or study abroad are those relating to religious freedom and choosing the “right” church.

Two members of Fullness of Christ International Ministries (FOCIM), *Chelle Sarmiento Bolanos* and *Kay Cabangon*, share what it is like to live as a Filipino Christian in a foreign soil.



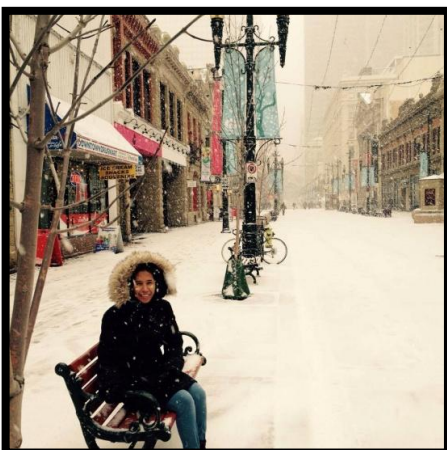
Chelle has not attended church yet but has searched for one through the internet. “*Wala pa akong masyadong friends here, mahirap dito, kahit kapwa Filipino, kanya kanya.*” Chelle says.

“The people are very busy with their work and since *bago ako*, I can’t request to have my Sundays as my day off. That is one thing I’m struggling with. They can grant me some days off once but not always. Attending church is not a valid reason for them,” she says.

Chelle has been based in Canada since 2014 and works as a sales associate in Canadian Tire.

For Chelle who is still adjusting to her new life abroad, “there is no place like home.” Talking about the struggles she has and is continuously facing, she says, “*Iba talaga sa church natin. Dito, hindi pinag-uusapan ang faith o religion.*”

She says that she found a Jesus is Lord (JIL) church but has not been able to attend due to her work schedule.



Kay has been based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) since 2007 and works as a Senior Officer in Operations & Customer Support in Grundfos, a Danish pump manufacturer.

Kay considers it a blessing to live in Dubai, she says, “I’m blessed to live in a country that despite its Islamic roots and laws, still allows religious freedom. We are free to have worship celebrations, fellowships, even concerts.”

Living in another country also has its positive side since it also serves as a forum to share the Word of God. According to Kay, “In a way, being exposed to different beliefs even strengthens one’s conviction more, and it opens up a lot of dialogues and opportunities to share the gospel.”

“There are a lot of churches here in Dubai,” she shares, “each church is active with its ministry work.” Being an active volunteer in

Victory Christian Fellowship Dubai’s multimedia ministry herself, she says that her church even has a ministry called H&M, Healing and Mercy, that goes around hospitals and charities to pray for the sick.

Despite the cultural difference, Kay believes that her faith has gotten stronger over the years. “The most significant experience I’ve had as a Christian here is reaffirming my faith and decision to follow Jesus by getting baptized in the Spirit and water. It’s a bit ironic that I became a full-fledged Christian in an Islamic country, but God can indeed meet us anywhere.”





Helping Hand

By Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

“help | help|
verb [with obj.]

1. make it easier for (someone) to do something by offering one's services or resources.”

The chairs in FOCIM do not miraculously line up together. The carpet does not automatically stay clean and trash free. The corners gather dust just like any other normal corner of a home but because of the helping hands of the silent volunteers of Fullness of Christ International Ministries (FOCIM), the church stays nice and clean.

To lend a helping hand without expecting anything in return—this is what the Helps Ministry has been doing for the past years in FOCIM.

Two women who are often seen tidying up the whole place or serving the church Sunday lunch, share their experience in the Helps Ministry.

Sister Divine Cerveza says that she joined the Helps Ministry primarily because she wanted to help the church. “*Pagdating ng congregation maayos yung church natin,*” she says. She has been with Helps for around five years already. As for Sister Jade de Guzman, who just recently joined the ministry, she simply wants to serve God.



Sister Divine Cerveza



Sister Jade de Guzman

Both of them agree that they are the type who enjoy helping out. “*Mahilig akong tumulong pag-start ko rito,*” Sister Divine says, “*Tinawag ako ni Pastora Hilda, inupo ako, kung gusto ko daw ba sumali sa Helps, hindi ko tinanggihan.*” “*Ako naman, tulong tulong lang nung una on Friday then assist on Sunday hanggang nagustuhan ko na,*” Sister Jade says.

Basically, the work the Helps Ministry does involve everything from Friday Prayer meeting and worship practice to general cleaning on Saturday, serving food and general cleaning after the service on Sunday.

They encounter a lot of challenges in the work that they do. According to Sister Jade, “*Challenge, yung nakaligpit ka na tapos meron pang naiwan, nahugasan na lahat tapos meron pa maiiwan.*”

What they want the members of FOCIM to remember is that people, young or old, must be responsible. They ask that the rules for cleanliness be respected by all because doing so is doing it for the Lord and not for them.

Fireside

by Kettle

FOOD REVIEW

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

COMFORT food has quite a bad rep—a nightmare for dieters and those who dislike anything greasy, oily, or starchy. Comfort food is best eaten sparingly.

Fireside is a neophyte at the newest hub in the metro, Megamall Fashion Hall. Owned by the people who conceptualized comfort food giant Kettle, the food served is no-fuss, no-frills, all heart, and less guilt, as the portions are less overwhelming.

One good thing about Fireside is the ambience. With overstuffed chairs, spacious tables, and soft lighting, the interiors are kept simple and clean. Albeit new, it seems oddly familiar and comfortable. Interestingly, the same can be said about its food.

Starting off, we decided to whet our palate with their truffled potato chips (P199), lightly doused in blue cheese and minced green onions. The potato chips were light and crispy which perfectly complemented the robust flavor of the cheese; a far cry from most homemade potato starters that are mushy and overly oily. For the entrees, we ordered the Buttermilk Fried Chicken Fingers (P489) and their signature Fireside House Burger (P449). The fried chicken, which was huge, mind you, was lightly coated to make a crispy butter

with a kick due to the Cajun spices. Southern food done right by the Pinoy, the dish came with several bite-sized hush puppies, cornmeal doughnuts with honey. Paired together, these are exactly what dreams are made of—fried, golden, and oh-so-good. The same could be said about the burger and its formula for success—juicy-to-the-bite angus beef served with pepperjack cheese and Russian dressing for that tart and smoky flavour. It was an instant hit and was gone within minutes. If there is one thing that Fireside still has to improve on, it's dessert. With a humble selection of only seven desserts to choose from, we decided to go with our server's recommendation—the Fireside Homemade doughnuts served with salted caramel, chocolate, and raspberry sauce (P189). It was a bit of a let down to say the least, coming from the starters and the entrees. The doughnuts, although it tasted buttery, was dense and a tad dry. The concept was creative (the sauces came in small vials for diners to combine flavors at their preference) but unfortunately, it was not able to compensate for the consistency and the heaviness of the doughnuts.



All in all, the meal truly defined comfort food at its best—no pretensions but packed with flavor. With more room to add on their menu, Fireside is a place where diners can kick their feet up, relax (as everything on the menu was reasonably priced, at PHP200-500 per dish!), and enjoy with good friends with even better food—just as you would do by the fireside.

MOVIE Review:

By Dan Abraham G. Guinungdo



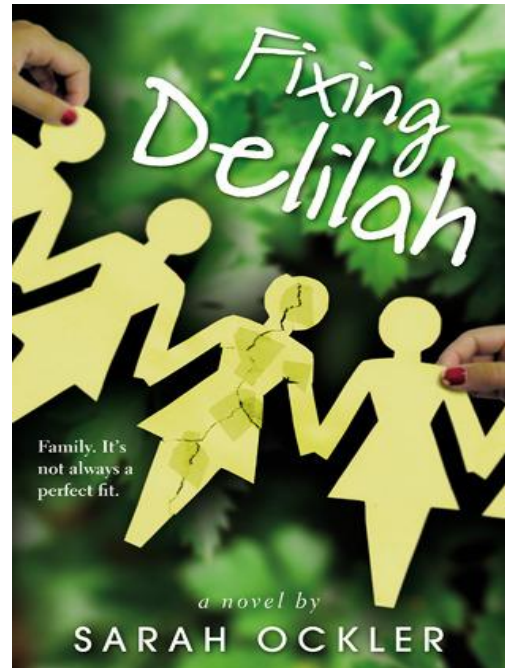
Critic's Rating: 4 out of 5 stars

Released in early 2014, "Heaven is for Real" is a movie adaptation of the world-renowned book written by Pastor Todd Burpo and Lynn Vincent. The film centers on Pastor Todd Burpo's four-year-old son, Colton, who allegedly "sees" Heaven after nearly dying in his hospital bed. During his near-death episode, Colton describes his encounter with Jesus and how angels serenaded him upon his arrival. It is with this seemingly impossible story that Pastor Todd Burpo and his family met controversy and even mockery not only from strangers, but also from their own church members.

While the plot is strikingly similar with the array of stories about people's visions of Heaven, the film manages to present the story through the eyes of Pastor Burpo and his personal battle with his beliefs and his relationships with the people around him. The entire movie deals with the struggle of pleasing the perspective of the majority and meanwhile taking a risk with one's faith and spirituality. The actors do an excellent job of portraying the antagonists and protagonists of the story, which makes the movie relatable to the viewers who may be experiencing a similar dilemma in their lives. The dialogue is very natural and realistic, with the film score gently supporting the rise and fall of the story.

The storyline of "Heaven is for Real" is straightforward but the execution is exquisite. Viewers should expect chilling moments and heart-warming scenes as they are drawn to reflect on their own faith.

BOOK



Review

By Hannah Cecilia S. Luching

Things in Delilah Hannaford's life have a tendency to fall apart.

She used to be a good student, but she can't seem to keep it together anymore. Her "boyfriend" isn't much of a boyfriend. And her mother refuses to discuss the fight that divided their family eight years ago. Falling apart, it seems, is a Hannaford tradition.

Over a summer of new friendships, unexpected romance, and moments that test the complex bonds between mothers and daughters, Delilah must face her family's painful past. Can even her most shattered relationships be pieced together again?

Rich with emotion, Sarah Ockler delivers a powerful story of family, love, and self-discovery.

The story focuses on the grief and healing process that has gone through some much loss. A simple summer novel set in a small country town where Delilah tries to fix old relationships, gain new one and uncover why her family is dysfunctional.

The pace is pretty slow where I actually ended up enjoying the writing more than I did the story. The story is distinctly ordinary and the burst of emotions just fell short for me. However, the romance with her childhood friend adds a much needed dimension that saved the book from beginning to end.

Overall, Fixing Delilah has both drama and romance. The main characters seemed so real to me and the setting is good depicting a Southern country place.

ALBUM Review:

THIS IS OUR TIME

planetshakers™

LIVE

By Nigel John C. Delgado

I strongly suggest that worship leaders give these a try.

The transition from worship back to joyful songs is smoothly done by the song **"It's Your Love"** which is less of a synthesizer rock/pop song. It's like a refreshing throwback to Planetshakers' **"Nothing is Impossible"** album. Next to it is a rock/dance track entitled **"Sing It Again"** which could stand as an ending song, but fortunately for the listeners, it's but a progression to another set of worship songs with verses that reveal the glory and presence of the Lord. These tracks

are **"You"**, **"Holy"** (a free-flow worship song), and a perfect rendition of **"He Touched Me"** by Bill and Gloria Gaither. The songs are followed by Joth Hunt's **"Your Presence"** which will really hook the listener into worshipping God. Up next, is an outro track which sounds very mainstream entitled **"Look To You"** which concludes the live album with a joyous and reminding message that no matter what happens to us, we should always look unto God. A bonus track is added to it with a studio-recorded track **"Abba Father"** that serve as an emotional meeting with the Father's presence, reminding us of what life is all about; it's all about the love of the Father.

I strongly recommend this album to all the worshipers who desire to incorporate a new style of congregational worship in their church, not just for the youth but also for the benefit of the older generation who want to veer away from a more solemn and conservative approach to worship. Truly, and in true *Planetshakers* fashion, **"This Is Our Time"** is yet another album birthed here on earth but formed and sent from heaven.

Australian megachurch Planetshakers is back with their 27th release **"This Is Our Time"**—a 15-track live worship album, released on the 21st of October 2014, the second album of the year 2014 following their **"Endless Praise"** album. The sound of the album is a mixture of *Hillsong's* Young & Free brand of dance/EDM worship, soulful collaborations with renowned composer Israel Houghton, as well as the standard guitar/piano-driven rock instrumentation similar to the musicality of their previous albums like **"Pick it up"** and **"One."** Houghton co-writes with the worship leader, producer and guitarist Joth Hunt also with Co-Senior Pastor Sam Evans. The songs they came up with are **"Covered"** (which is one of my favorites), **"Stronger Than A Thousand Seas"**, and **"Water is Rising"** which truly brings the listener to a new and powerful atmosphere of worship.

The first song **"This is Our Time"** really kicks and triggers the spirit of rejoicing with fat synthesizer sounds and a dancing time signature.

This momentum continues up to the second and third track which are entitled **"Joy"** and **"My Heart Is Alive"** which sounds more like any other dance floor track. This kind of songs is really revolutionary in this day and age of worship. These songs really make a statement that no matter what genre we listen to and play with, we can still honor God with a heart that is acceptable before Him and a spirit connected to His spirit.

After all of the jumpy and dancing songs, **"Leave Me Astounded"** lays the foundation for a powerful worship ambience with a heavy drum backbeat and a strong lead guitar and piano riffs. **"Covered"**, **"Stronger Than A Thousand Seas"**, and **"Water is Rising"** are no doubt anointed and powerful songs of declaration of love, grace, mercy, and the capabilities of God. These worship songs will tickle you from your toes to your head and will surely put you into a spirit of rejoicing because of the wonders and majesty of the living God. All of these songs are sing-able and will definitely bring the presence of God in any congregation.

Macau -

By Emma Belle A. Cerveza

Senado Square



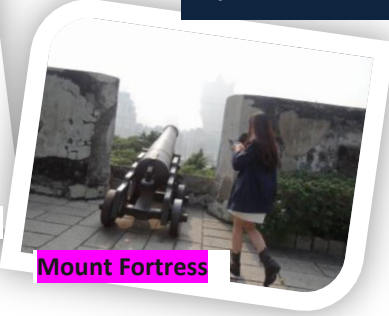
St. Dominic's Church



The Ruins of St. Paul's



Mount Fortress



Macau Museum



A Glimpse of MACAU

MACAU's colonial heritage is evident in its Portuguese-inspired architecture as seen in most of its churches, squares and buildings. Aside from the ancient cathedrals and gargantuan casinos, the following sites make for some of Macau's noteworthy sights:

Senado Square

Cost: Free

The best of Macau's Portuguese heritage is clustered around Largo de Senado (Senado Square), where most of the colonial legacy is retained. It is cited as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as one of the historical centers found in Macau.

St. Dominic's Church

Cost: Free

Just ahead of the north-western end of the square is the Santo Domingos. The church is painted with pastel yellow with magnificent green shuttered doors and windows.

The Ruins of St. Paul's

Cost: Free

"St. Paul's" is the ruins of a 16th century Jesuit church. The church was almost wholly destroyed by a fire back in 1835. The remains however make a remarkable facade. To get there, turn right after the Domingo's church, take Rua da Pahla,

Grand Lisboa



Fortaleza do Monte (Mount Fortress)

Cost: Free

At the top right side of the stairs, climb uphill all the way to the Monte Fort. The platform has a 3-storey tower fitted with cannons along its walls. Nowadays, you get to enjoy the amazing views of the city and the ambiance of the garden itself.

“Of course, Macau is very well known as the city of gambling. However, one need not resort to gambling to enjoy the splendid entertainment, restaurants, shops and even just the overall architecture of the monolithic structures.”

Macau Museum (Museu de Macau)

Cost: 15 HKD/MOP (entrance fee)

To get to know more of Macau, drop by the Macau Museum (right under the Mount Fortress' Foundation) where Macau's history and culture are catalogued.

City of Dreams



Venetian Hotel

Cost: Free (complimentary services at the concierge are offered for those with baggage)

The hotel interiors are extravagant and highly impressive. Its architecture, structure, murals, chandeliers are remarkable. Everything is quite stunning from world class restaurants, bars, cafes and shops. Stroll around the hotel and you will be fascinated by the serenading sounds of Venice as you pass by the Shoppes Canal!

And, yes, the entire canal is indoors! It was designed precisely to simulate the ambiance of Venice (as one would imagine from movies), complete with a gondola ride and singer.

Most of the stores are high-end but there are also affordable shops where souvenirs are in demand.

Pasalubong Treats:

- *Beef Jerky (50-100 HKD)
- *Macau Candy delicacies (50-75 HKD)
- *Souvenier items (the venetian golf ball, casino coins, keychains, etc) (20-100 HKD)

City of Dreams

Cost: Free

They call this the 'House of the Dancing Water'. What stood out in the City of Dreams is the grand tunnel-like entrance lined with bright lights leading towards the casino accompanied by dazzling water and dancing lights.

Grand Lisboa

Cost: Free

It is hard not to get awestruck at first sight of this golden casino. The pineapple-like structure is literally glowing with glitz and glamour. While the Grand Lisboa is one of Macau's oldest casinos, it still remarkable because of its striking façade and exquisite ambience.

Other MUST SEE's:

- a. Sands Hotel and Casino
- b. Wynn Macau
- c. Galaxy Rio Casino



Venetian Hotel

Hongkong : **A TRAVEL GUIDE**

\trav·el\ - to get lost somewhere beautiful



Experience Hong Kong

In a nutshell, Hong Kong reeks of British influence but blended with Cantonese gusto. Being lost in this foreign country is the best way to experience and explore the local beauty it offers. While most of the locals still have trouble communicating in English, one can still get by with using hand signals and facial gestures. But most of all, the food is terrific as much as it is authentic. The culture, as well as the attractions, is seemingly endless.

The Peak Tram

Cost: 12 HKD via Octopus card (25 HKD via Cash)

A perfect glance at the heart of Hong Kong where tradition meets modernization. On a train on top of the mountain, the view of the city lights is fascinating and the cool breeze of the peak is refreshing.

Ocean Park

Cost: 345 HKD (328 HKD - Cheaper tickets are also available from hotels, other stores and online sellers)

Souvenirs: 25-200HKD
Ocean Park is the most famous theme Park in Hong Kong. Come and see the cable cars, the Grand Aquarium, The Giant Panda Adventure and many more. Encounter and learn about many aquatic animals without sacrificing the thrills of a regular theme park.

Madame Tussauds - Wax Museum

Cost: Original Price - 280 HKD (265 HKD online tickets)

The museum is a collection of wax figures of famous celebrities and personalities. Meet Hollywood's biggest and brightest stars and take pictures with them all you want however you want!

Mongkok Night Market and Ladies Market

Cost: 20-120 HKD
The Night market is HongKong's version of Divisoria with a lot of bargain clothing, accessories and souvenir stalls scattered along the streets. The Ladies' Market on Tung Choi Street is a long stretch of stalls for clothes, bags, perfumes and accessories on sale for women of all ages. Just keep in mind that the quality is fairly reasonable for its price.

Hongkong Disneyland

Costs: 500 HKD

Souvenirs: 50-300HKD

Enter a magical kingdom and the world of fantasy inspired by fairy-tale dreams. Explore the different attractions and encounter Disney characters along the way. Lots of places are waiting to be discovered such as Adventure Land, Grizzly Gulch, Mystic Point, Toy Story Land, Fantasy Land, Tomorrow Land and Main Street, U.S.A. As the tagline goes: "Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow and fantasy".

Other MUST SEES:

- a. Nong Ping
- b. Symphony of Lights @ Harbor City



More on TRAVEL Guide!
See next Page!

Food

Local Restaurants/Cuisine: We don't know exactly the names of the restaurants from the neighborhood around Tapia Macau and Kowloon HongKong due to its typical Chinese name and characters.

Chinese Noodles and Dimsum House (Macau and Hong Kong)

Cost: 60-180 MOP

Critic's Remarks: Fully Satisfying! This is authentic, no-frills Chinese cuisine at its finest.

Maks Noodles @ The Peak

The Peak Tram, Galleria

Cost: 45-100 HKD

Critic's Remarks: Fully satisfying. Delicious but with tiny portions and a little on the expensive side.

China Hong Kong City right at the Royal Pacific Hotel, Tsim Sha Tsui

Cost: 88- 200 HKD

Critic's Remarks: Fairly Satisfying. The milk tea saved us from our cravings too.

Senado Square

If you are on a budget but looking for quick bite, the Senado Square is the perfect place for you. Walk along the narrow alley from St. Dominic's Church going to the Ruins. Most vendors will offer a free taste of almond cookies and beef jerky. Get as much as you want! Some may even force you to eat and put it directly into your mouth.

Beef Jerky And Cookies

Cost: Free or Prepare extra MOP for your cravings

*Beef jerky: May vary and may be sold in pound (48-75 MOP/kg)

*Cookies: 40 MOP/4pcs

Critic's Remarks: Fantastic! It is already free, what more could we ask for!

Egg Tarts (one of the more famous and well-known delicacies in the locality)

Cost: 8 MOP/pc.

Critic's Remarks: Bravo! One of a kind. Melts in your mouth.

The Venetian

Most of the restaurants are pricey but there is a food patio readily available just beyond the Shoppes Canal. Fast food chains are also available for a budget-friendly price.

Food Patio

Cost: 75-150 HKD

Critics Remark: Looks like the usual local food courts in the Philippines, only a bit classier.

Burger King

Cost: 75-120 HKD

Critics Remark: Fully Satisfying. We got bigger sized burgers and fries for our extremely hungry belly.

Egg Tart

Cost: 9 HKD

Critics Remark: Fairly Satisfying. It is a little expensive compared to the local ones but it tastes the same.

Transportation

Macau

- **Bus:** Exact Fare is required since change is not provided at all. *Casino Hopping: Free bus ride from the airport and/or hotel to casino transfers.
- **Taxi:** From the airport: 80 -120 MOP going to Tapia Macau.
*Standard Rate: 15 MOP.

Macau to Hong Kong (Macau Ferry Terminal to HK China Ferry Terminal)

Cost: One way ticket – 150 HKD

Travel Time: 60-75 minutes

- **Macau Ferry Terminal:** Shun Tak Centre, 200 Connaught Road Central, Sheung Wan)
Macau International Airport is just few steps away from Macau Ferry terminal.
Most of the hotels also provide free shuttle bus service going to and from the terminal.
Taxis and buses are also available.
- **Hong Kong China Ferry Terminal (33 Canton Road, Tsim sha Tsui, Kowloon, HongKong)**
The Ferry Terminal is just a few blocks away from Nathan, Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

Hong Kong

Octopus Card

Cost: 150 HKD inclusive of 50 HKD for a refundable deposit.

Stored smart card value for electronic payments for public transport and select stores for convenience in purchasing tickets and fares. It is available in all MTR Stations.

MTR Station

Octopus card is mainly used in all stations.

Book a hotel within Kowloon; the cheapest accommodations are along Nathan Road and Tsim Sha Tsui. No need to travel by bus and taxi since attractions are just nearby and MTR stations are just a few blocks away from the hotels.

Disneyland

You can't bring your own food inside Disneyland. Hence, you have no choice but to grab a meal within the area or from their food patio.

Foods Stalls

Cost: 35-50 HKD

Critics Remarks: Satisfying: Quite pricey for an ordinary hotdog and sandwiches.

Food Patio

Cost: 88 HKD

Critics Remarks: Fairly Satisfying. Expensive but everything tastes good when you are hungry and tired from all the walking.

Documents needed

- Passport
- Proof of Identification
- Airfare (Cebu Pacific)
 - Book an airfare (promo or a year or 6 months before your flight
- Hotel Booking
- Macau
Cost: 76 USD/person (1 Double bed Room – 152 USD)
Hongkong
Cost: 81 USD/Person (1 Double Bed Room – 162 USD)

Pre-Departure Fees

- Terminal Fee: 750 Php (NAIA Terminal 3)
- Travel Tax Fee : 1, 620.00 Php

Enjoying Japan on a pocket friendly budget

By Rhodora C. Faune

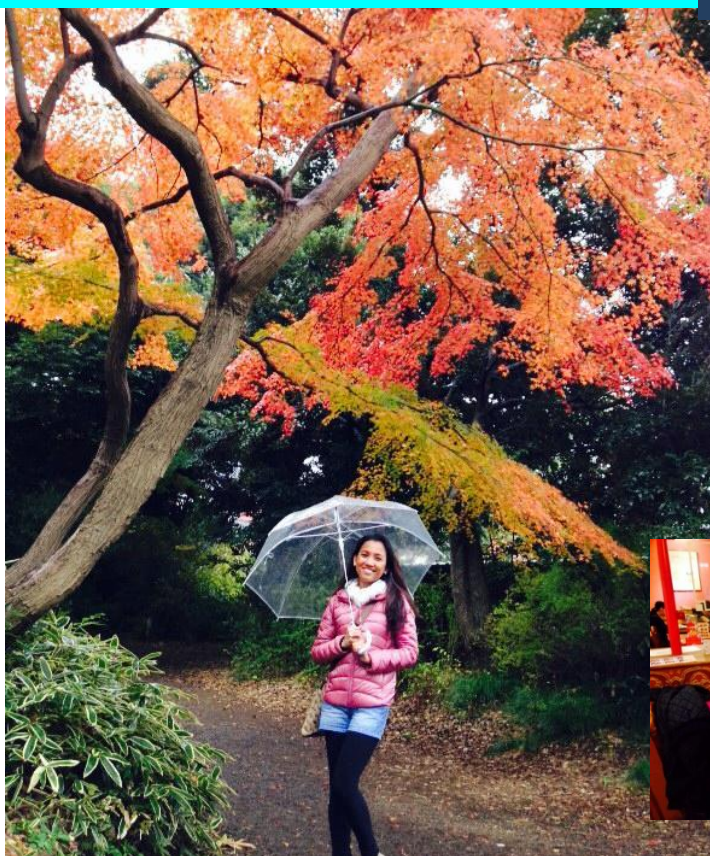
I was in High school when I first saw the beauty of Japan on one of Samantha Brown's travel shows. Since then it's been my dream to visit Japan and experience its beauty, culture, weather, and food. Japan has always been in the list of the most expensive travel destinations in the world; that is why I never imagined that I'll be able to visit it sooner than I thought. All glory to God for his faithfulness, for according to Psalm 37:4 "Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart."

Day 1: Touchdown Tokyo!

TIP: If you want to stay connected and you're traveling with friends and it's a do-it-yourself trip, I highly suggest that you rent a portable wifi; it will help you a lot especially on navigation. Because offline Google Maps doesn't work in Japan, it's highly possible that you'll get lost and free wifi is not widely available there. As per the cost, it costs around Php400.00 per day and it can accommodate 10 gadgets. So if you are 10 in a group it will just cost you Php 40.00 per day. The signal was strong in most of the areas but it weakens when it rains

Going to our Hostel:

Going to our hostel via train was a memorable and enlightening experience. I have experienced the railway system of other countries but Japan's railway system is an extensive and complicated one. You really need to be sure if it's the right train before getting in because one to four train lines pass on 1 railway and not all of it will stop in the same stations. So in our case, we got confused and we got lost. When we got tired getting in and out the trains, we decided to get out of the subway, have our lunch and take a taxicab to our hostel.



NOTE: The Japan railway system is extensive and complicated, so study your itinerary well. Read the signs before going inside the train. Be sure it is the right train because if it's not, it might lead you back to your original station. Use Hyperdia for timetables and the best routes of the railway. That is why I highly suggest to rent a portable wifi.

DAY 2: Exploring Asakusa Area and witnessing the beauty of illuminated autumn leaves in Rikugien Garden at night.

The beauty of having your accommodation in Asakusa is that most of the tourist spots are just a walking distance away. Also the area was just so refreshing, clean and you could still see old Japanese architecture. So, I highly recommend looking for a hostel in this area if you're visiting Tokyo.

Asakusa is most famous for the Senso-ji temple and the Nakamise-dori shopping street, where much of Japan's culture and architecture has been preserved.

You can still see a lot of Japanese wearing Kimonos anywhere in Japan.



The famous Kaminari-mon Gate and Large Red lantern



Nakamise-dori Street



Interestingly, we had our lunch at this local Japanese restaurant where all the signs and menu are in Japanese. How did we manage to order?? We did it the Filipino way --“turo-turo”, using their fake food menu display outside.



After we had our lunch, we headed to Don Quijote to check their pre-loved designer’s bag, per my cousin’s request. Don Quijote or Donki for short is a discount chain store which is open 24 hours. The store is packed with a lot of distinct and interesting items. This is a must visit store since most of the items on each shelves are interesting.

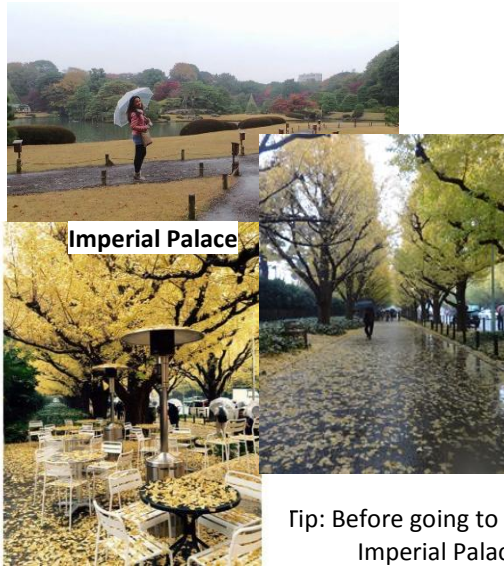
The illuminated autumn leaves of Rikugien Garden:

We witnessed the autumn leaves in the illuminated garden of the Feudal Lord in Rikugien Garden. The entrance fee was 300.00 Yen (around Php120.00). It is a must-see when you visit Tokyo during autumn but expect that the whole place will be crowded and you might have to fall in line before you can enter the garden, but it’s worth it.



DAY 3: Garden and more gardens!

Rinkugien Garden in the morning: Lovely!



DAY 4: Odaiba Area

Statue of Liberty and the rainbow bridge



DiverCity Tokyo Plaza

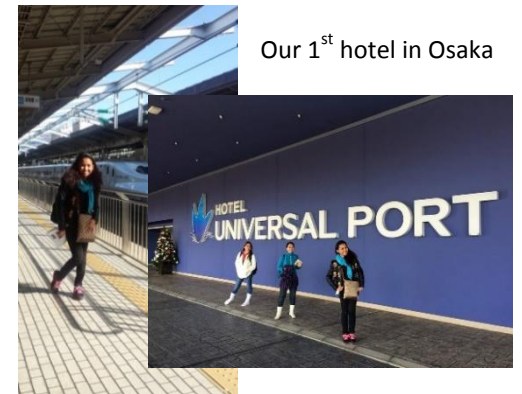
Note: You can watch the full size Gundam statue performance day and night. You can see its head move and the mist spray performance at 12:00, 3:00 and 5:00pm and watch it rise at night at around 8:00pm and 9:00pm.

We bought some of our pasalabong in Daiso for only 100Yen per item. We became excited and felt like a kid again when we visited this Hello Kitty shop.

DAY 5: Sayounara Tokyo! Konnichiwa

From Tokyo to Osaka, we rode the bullet train or Shinkansen, which is the high-speed railway line in Japan. Tip: Make sure to sit on the right side of the train to get a better glimpse of Mt. Fuji en route to Osaka.

Mt. Fuji.



Our 1st hotel in Osaka

We had our lunch at Pomme-no-ki and tried their different Omurice. The food was great and we were all satisfied about the food that we ordered. If you have a small appetite, like me, you can order their kiddie meal. Actually in most of the restaurants in Japan, you can choose the size of your meal to small, medium or large. So, you really don’t have an excuse not to finish your food.



Shinkansen –Shin-Osaka Station

Our Train from Universal City to Osaka station



Tip: If you want to have affordable meals, buy food in any super market at around 8:00pm to 11:00pm. Most of their ready-to-eat meals are 50% off. You can also buy food there for breakfast. Bread is also at the discount price.

DAY 6: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Japan (USJ)

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter

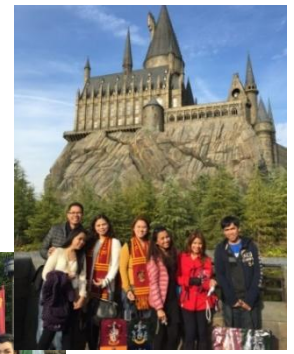


Universal Studios Japan



It will save you from the long lines and it will give you more time to enjoy the whole theme park. You are allowed to bring food inside the park so bring a lot of snacks and drinks. There's a Lawson convenience store at the Universal City so you can buy your food there before going to the park.

Tip: If you are a big fan of Harry Potter, I highly suggest, aside from the 1-day pass, to also buy an express pass.



DAY 7: The Amazing Race Kyoto



DAY 8: Going Home to Manila

Before our flight back to Manila, we had our last stop at the Osaka Castle.

This 8-day experience in Japan was actually an 8-day experience of God's love and faithfulness in my life. So I'm bringing back all the glory and honor to God for making this trip possible.

More tips on how you can prepare for a pocket friendly vacation to Japan:

First, find the most affordable airfare. You can get as low as Php6, 800 for a roundtrip airfare (Manila to Tokyo) including baggage allowance during the Cebu Pacific Peso Sale. My suggestion is to subscribe to Cebu Pacific alert to get the best deals on fares. Be careful in booking your flight. Be sure to uncheck add-ons that you think are unnecessary. Also, to apply for Japan Visa you have to go to one of the accredited travel agencies. You can visit the official website of the Japan embassy here in the Philippines for the list of accredited travel agencies.

Second, look for affordable accommodations. In Tokyo, you can find a lot of decent, clean and affordable accommodations. Backpackers' Hostel rate can range from Php 1,100 to Php 1,800 per night per person. My suggestion is to find an accommodation that is near to a train station and tourist attractions to save you time, energy, and especially money. Third, in doing your itinerary, find tourist attractions that have inexpensive or free entrance fees.

Or if you already have the list of places that you want to visit, at least find the most affordable way of getting there because transportation in Japan is expensive. Taxis start at Php 250.00 depending on the area and additional Php 120.00 for every 1km. Minimum one-way ticket on local transport costs around Php 55.00. My suggestion is to visit Hyperdia.com or download its app to find the most efficient and affordable way to get to your destinations. Also you can save time and money if you use JR Pass, PASMO or Suica card; they are prepaid travelcards that you can use in moving around and shopping in Tokyo. Check online for more details about it. Another tip is to use Google earth to be familiar of the vicinity of your hotel and places that you want to visit.

Fourth, before going to Japan, make sure to know the dos and don'ts. Like don't walk while you're eating. If you are walking on the street or on escalator, always stay on the left if you are in Tokyo and right if you are in Osaka. You can check online to know more about the dos and don'ts when visiting Japan.

Miracle of Outdoor Fellowship: Bonding and Fellowship Out of the Four Corners of Your House

Good bye to cool, cloudy and rainy weather and say hello to the sun because summer is definitely here! If you feel that the heat is getting to you and your home church, why not try a few of these suggestions:

1. **Day trip to Tagaytay** - Tagaytay is a popular place because it's very close to Metro Manila. There are a lot of things to do like, hiking Taal Volcano, having a picnic at the Picnic Grove, and if you love animals, they also have horseback riding. If your members love to eat, try Eli's famous barbecue where they serve an eat all you can sit down buffet.
2. **Move your body** – For those who like to keep things active, head over to the nearest park like the Quezon City memorial circle where you can exercise or play sports. But If you don't like to sweat, you can go to San Mateo, Rizal where there's a lot of reasonable priced swimming resorts.
3. **Road trip** – For those who love to travel far, we recommend Baguio. Not only can you enjoy the fresh air but you can also enjoy the smell of the pine trees, visit museums and enjoy fresh strawberries and ube jam.
4. **Dine out** - If you want to stay near, you can hold your sessions at Razon's, Chowking or Max's. There's nothing like eating Halo-Halo to refresh you!
5. **Sing your heart out** – Because who doesn't like singing? Belt out your favorite song or grab a partner.

By Anna Patricia D. Unite



Why do outdoor fellowship?

Indoor or outdoor, it is the fellowship that is most important. This is the essence of the church: "they continued daily in one accord...breaking bread from house to house...they ate food with gladness of heart and simplicity of heart." Acts 2: 46. Let us hear some of our brethren's:

Sis. Gellie Arada: *"We get to know each other in a relaxed environment without the pressure of time while enjoying the view / surrounding. It also improves our relationship with one another. It is also good for the body (walking). It generates new ideas because talking in a serene environment encourages creativity."*

Sis. May So: *"Through fellowship, mas nagiging united at matibay ang relationship ng mga church members, Bukod sa spiritual relationship pati sa personal (bro. & sis. Rel.) din mas nagiging matibay. At mas nakikilala din namin ang isa't-isa like yung likes and interests nila sa buhay pati goal."*

Sis. Mitch Sarmiento: *"We enjoy and have fun with each other's company. Dahil sa mga palaro o activities na aming ginawa, lalo namin na enjoy ang presensya ng bawa't isa. Ang simpleng laro, tawanan, kulitan, pagbibisekleta, pamamasyal, paglalakad at walang humpay na kainan ang ilan lamang sa mga dahilan kung bakit nais naming makasama ang bawa't isa. It also makes us more excited. Dahil sa fellowship na ginagawa namin di lamang sa loob maging sa labas, mas inaabangan namin ang Huwebes upang makita ang mga kapatiran at matutuo sasay sabay ukol sa Salita ng Diyos."*

How to plan your outdoor fellowship:

- 1. Plan ahead** – Planning an outdoor fellowship is usually done ahead of time so that the members can free up their schedule and prepare financially. When you're planning for your home church activities, put it in your list of priorities. Also, take note of the upcoming holidays and maximize it.
- 2. Know your limitations** – Before we go out, we should always factor in the following.
 - a. Location** – We should consider if it's safe, convenient and if all members will enjoy.
 - b. Budget / Affordability** – The home church leader should know how much the member or the home church is willing to spend as this will be the basis on where you can go. If not, you can suggest to have a saving schedule (ex. 10Php / week / person).
 - c. Transportation** – We should also consider how the members will go to the venue. Check with your members if they want to rent a vehicle, commute or if someone is willing to lend his car. The important thing is to go there together.
- 3. Think outside the box** – In and out of the house, there are a lot of ways to fellowship. Despite the limitations, we should think out of the box and be creative. A simple dinner or late coffee meet up goes a long way!



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