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FULL HEARTS, FULL TUMMIES: EAT, PRAY, BUILD 2018



Proposed FOCIM Church

By Roanna Lynn G. Santos

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As the nation commemorated the historic Edsa Revolution on Sunday, February 25, 2018, a good number of souls gathered in the evening to fellowship and celebrate love. Sponsored by the FOCIM Couple's Ministry, the event was called "Eat, Love and Build 2018", a catchy title brainstormed by the couples Cabangon, Santos, and Young. It summed up the event's objective of providing an occasion for the church's married couples, aspiring couples, hopeful singles and friends to indulge themselves in healthy food, have fun at the tail end of the love month, and raise the fund in the process for the sanctuary project.

More than 50 individuals gathered that night in Organico Gourmet, a romantic, country-styled restaurant in Mandaluyong City. Guests were greeted in the registration area by the amazing duo, Bro. Woods and Sis Pam Young. The program kicked off with an opening prayer led by Bro. Bing Guerrero. As part of the opening remarks, Bro. Elso Cabangon, one of the co-heads of the Couple's Ministry, warmly welcomed everyone and thanked all attendees for their support. Emcees for the night were the couple, Bro. Bodge and Sis. Roanna Santos. They shared some video clips from the recent TV commercials of a famous Filipino fast-food chain which depicted how true love is.

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EDITORIAL 4G

KINGDOM OF GOD

A diet is best described as a fixed plan of eating and drinking, where the type and amount of food are planned out to achieve weight loss or to follow a lifestyle. Fad diets are all the rage today. These are diets that promise quick weight loss by restricting you to eat certain food. Everywhere you look, someone's trying a diet that she swears will change her body. Flip through magazines, surf the web or turn on the television and you will surely see numerous diets that all promise to help you lose several pounds in as little as a week or two. People of all gender and sizes try these diets to be physically fit and healthy. Just like how we need physical food and exercise for physical strength, we also

need spiritual food for spiritual strength. And the only thing that can provide us with all the needed spiritual nutrients is the Bible.

This year as our church continues to respond to God's Great Commission, we are being pushed to move out of our comfort zone once more and continue to Grow, Go and Glow all for God's greater glory.

Just like the food group GROW that helps our body grow bigger and stronger. God wants us to continue to grow. Ephesians 4:14-15 says, "That we henceforth be no more children but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things..." Growth is the development or

improvement towards maturity. Nobody is born a full grown human being. Likewise, no one is born a full grown Christian. We were once babies in faith. (1 John 2:12). Babies that needs to be taken care of as they cannot do it themselves. As a newborn baby gets nourishment from milk and strained foods, the same thing is needed for spiritual babies. They also need to be cared and nursed. They need to be followed up on and prayed for, and they need someone to talk to them and vice versa. The spiritual infant feeds on the fundamental truths of God to grow that is why in our church we have our devotion every day, Friday night prayer meetings, and the Sunday Service.



GO food group provides fuel and help us to 'go' and be active. Likewise, we are called by the Lord to go with Him in his mission. We are called to accept and act this important mission. We are called to serve God by serving others (Matthew 25:35-36, 40) and God showed us how to do it (1 Peter 4:10). God gives each Christian a gift or gifts so that others can be lifted and guided. God created us to make a difference in this world. What really matters is not the duration of your life here on earth, but the donation and contribution of your life to make a difference. Our church has been equipping us to share our gifts. The last words that the Risen Christ said to his followers before he ascended into Heaven were "go and make disciples." Making disciples is

the mission of every church. It is our responsibility as a church to nurture, encourage and challenge individuals on their life-long spiritual journeys. To accomplish this, we must have a discipleship plan – an intentional process through which we guide individuals step-by-step toward spiritual growth. That is why this year FOCIM has introduced the Roots sessions and manual to guide us in our spiritual development. We are aware how the Lord needs more workers in His vineyard and yet we remain comfortably seated every Sunday at the church. This is much more than just another study or series of studies. It represents a new intentionality of our church in guiding its members, believers, and free believers toward a life of discipleship.



And last but not the least the Glow food group that is full of vitamins and minerals. It keeps our skin, hair and eyes bright and glowing. These are kinds of food that can keep our immune system strong so that we can fight bacteria and viruses. But sadly, many Christians start to lose our "spiritual glow" after a few months or years. Our love for Christ begins to wane. We start to lose our hunger and thirst for God's word. Worldly matters are prioritized over spiritual matters. And many of us stop sharing our faith with others. We are like the glow sticks that kids and even you played with when you were younger. Some assumes that once you open the package, the sticks will glow the minute you take them out of the wrapping. But they don't. Those glow sticks are just dull tubes when you first unwrap them. You must bend them until the small container inside it breaks and reacts to the chemicals in the tube to activate the luminescent reaction that makes it glow in the

dark. But the glow sticks usually lose their glow after about 12 hours and so do we after some time, we lose our glow. Through God's Holy Word, He will bend us to "activate" the glow within so we will glow once again! We must continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling each day if we are to maintain our "spiritual glow."

God does not want us to wither, hide, and be inactive participants in His kingdom. Let Christ's love within us help us to grow, go, and glow that we may go forth and make disciples of all nations. Remember He has called us to be the light in this dark and dull world. Acts 1:8 says "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

So what are we waiting for? FOCIM, It's time to GROW, GO and GLOW for GOD!

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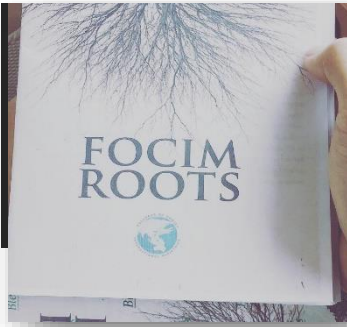


Mitch Sarmiento and Chu Unite

The night was further enlivened by Sis. ML Marcelo, who shared sweets from Bulacan as prizes for her fun games. God's message on love was delivered by Bro. Diwa Guinigundo. He reminded how important it was to say, "Thank you," "I'm sorry," and "I love you."

A sumptuous buffet dinner was served: a full course meal from soup, salad, main course and dessert! During dinner, guests were serenaded by Sis. Danika Bello and Sis. Roanna Santos. The last part of the program turned out to be such a roaring fun experience when everyone shared their funniest "pick-up" lines. The winning answers were given by Bro. Chu Unite and Sis. Mitch Sarmiento, after hilarious exchange of witty pick-up lines.

Indeed, love was in the air, and no one in that company of like-minded, spirit-filled people could miss it. "Eat, Love and Build" turned out to be such a hit because the Lord had allowed it. When God's people come together in unity and in love, He makes things beautiful. Truly the event accomplished its objective—not only was everyone's tummy and hearts filled to the brim, but FOCIM's fundraising for the new sanctuary was initiated. As one famous Christian song goes, "In His time, in His time, He makes all things beautiful, In His time."



Taking the LEAD one step at a time: FOCIM Introduces the ROOTS Manual

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) mandates our Church to go and make disciples of all nations. As a Lampstand, each FOCIM member must carry out the burden to transform people's lives by teaching and guiding them towards living righteously as followers of Jesus Christ. Given this great mandate, FOCIM launched the first LEAD Discipleship Assembly which was held last March 11 and 18 at the Lampstand. The Assembly was open to all FOCIM members and all Ministry team members, Home Church leaders, and

Ministry heads were required to attend. To further equip, each member received a "FOCIM Roots" introductory manual that served as a guide through the step by step discussion of the FOCIM's Discipleship journey.

For the first session that took place on March 11, Bro. Daniel Guinigundo opened with an eye-opening question – Are you happy where our Church is now? The said question received a variety of responses from "Yes, but we could be better" to "Not quite as we need to be bigger in number". With

those responses in mind, it became clear that our Church needs to take on a deeper approach in regard to discipleship. Our Church needs to focus on discipleship that is transformational and we must start now. To ensure that we are on the right path towards transformational discipleship, we need to remove the fear of wrong teaching. This is where the "FOCIM Roots" manual comes in, as it aims to provide concrete direction based on Biblical passages to aid us throughout our discipleship journey.

Transformational discipleship requires good leadership. Bro. Daniel shared the prerequisites for good leaders. For one, a good leader must have a deep relationship with God so that the right priorities are in place. Another is that a good leader must involve other people, as evidently told in the story of the Biblical character Jethro. It was Jethro who encouraged Moses to appoint others to share in the burden of ministry to the nation of Israel. In the same way, the FOCIM leaders must empower its members to share the burden and make disciples. On a more specific level, Bro. Daniel shared that a LEAD group / Home Church leader should be prayerful, diligent, armed with a good testimony, a part of the Church's Succession plan, and maintains a servanthood spirit.



Sis. Pam Young then provided an overview of the FOCIM LEAD (Learn, Equip, Act, Develop) Discipleship journey: from "Engage", to "Grow", followed by "Go", and finally "Commit". Each step is defined by critical activities such as "One-on-one sessions to jumpstart your walk with Christ", "Learning modules on basic Christian principles", and "Declaration of faith through baptism". Given that we are currently in transitional phase, it was made clear that all members must complete the LEAD training in order to be able to disciple.

Bro. Daniel then provided a thorough step-by-step walkthrough of the “FOCIM Roots” manual. The manual is divided into 4 lessons with each lesson covering the three important Cs that we should be rooted in – Christ, Community, and Church. Each lesson is then sub-divided into sessions which in turn are divided into four Cs: Connect, Communicate, Culminate, and Challenge.

“Connect” highlights the importance of conducting relationship-building activities to help connect with each other. “Communicate” allows the sharing of God’s Word and enable the facilitator to reveal answers to the question “What is God trying to teach me?” The part about “Culminate” encourages the potential disciple to share his/her insights on the Word through guide questions. Lastly, the “Challenge” part empowers the potential member to put his/her faith into action.



The second session was held last March 18 and it started with Sis. Pam providing a recap on the Discipleship process and the previous lessons. On top of this, a short quiz was given in order to have an assessment on the knowledge of the participating members. Sis. Pam then proceeded to resume discussion of the FOCIM Roots Manual. The discussion focused on the two remaining lessons – “Rooted in the Community” and “Rooted in the Church”.

“Rooted in the Community” emphasizes the importance of being involved in church. The church is God’s plan for the message of salvation to be spread into the world. Furthermore, the only way to achieve spiritual growth is by connecting with fellow believers, and this can only be done in church as it is a community of believers. On the other hand, “Rooted in the Church” highlights the need to share FOCIM’s history, mandate, Vision / Mission, and its calling to be a Lampstand. It also involves spiritual growth by serving in various ministries under Word, World, and Well.

On March 25, a special FOCIM Roots training manual after session was held. It provided the members an opportunity to ask relevant questions and participate in actual group activities. Bro. Daniel provided a refresher on the Discipleship process, which was followed by a group contest. The contest urged the participants to answer questions related to the FOCIM Roots manual and in the process gave them a chance to review important details. The final activity allowed selected members to apply their learnings and become creative through a scenario-based role playing activity centered on lessons from the manual.

Discipleship is not a onetime occurrence, nor does it happen instantly. Rather, it is a process that requires commitment, sacrifice, and training. Through these LEAD Discipleship sessions, the Lord has prepared us to become trees that bear fruit and serve as light of the world. With the aid of the FOCIM Roots manual, we have been equipped with the knowledge based on God’s Word. And now, we must accept the challenge in fulfilling our mandate to go and make disciples of all nations.





Empowered Sundays: Gen-C Launches New Project

By Edward Matthew D. Unite

The Generation for Christ Youth Ministry launched a new project which is unlike the usual youth services, to pique the interest and attention of more young people. Dubbed as “Power Hour”, the hour-long activity aims to lead more people to Christ, and eventually, the church, by conducting more interactive activities like games and discussions that are timely and relevant to the youth today, regardless of their faith. According to the Gen-C President, Sis. Aertzah Denise Cerveza, one of the reasons for this youth activity was to encourage more youth members both from FOCIM Mandaluyong (Mother Church) and FOCIM Quezon City to come and fellowship together once a month.

Held last March 4, 2018 at one o’clock in the afternoon, at The Lampstand, its success was very evident in the number of attendees, 50 young people, both visitors and members alike, who came and participated.

Power Hour started with Praise and Worship followed by opening remarks. Before the message, a short Ice Breaker was conducted by emcees Sis. Denise Cerveza and Danika Bello. Everyone had an opportunity to introduce himself or herself and share a brief description about his or her family, friends and hobbies.

“Love”, the first of three topics in the series “Real Love” discussed by Bro. Daniel Guinigundo earned a lot of positive feedback from attendees, simply because everyone was able to easily relate to it. Other topics in the series “Real Love” are Dating, Purity and Relationship. Some snacks and drinks were served while everybody was seated on the carpet listening to Bro. Daniel as he shared the true definition of Love based on the word of God. After the short sharing, an open forum

followed which aptly supplemented the main point of the message. Many were truly blessed and had fun interacting with other youth members and invited guests.

Gen-C Power Hour is being conducted every Youth Sunday, or every first Sunday of the month, after the morning worship service in Mandaluyong, and every second Sunday of the month after the afternoon service in Quezon City. Undoubtedly, it is something that all young people will appreciate due to its focus on fellowship and responding to the needs of the youth today, leaving everyone attending empowered and ready for the challenges of the week ahead.



* The Deafening Cry of Silence:

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo

Padaluyin ninyo ang katarungan, gaya ng isang ilog; gayundin ang katuwiran tulad ng isang di natutuyong batis.

(Amos 5:24)

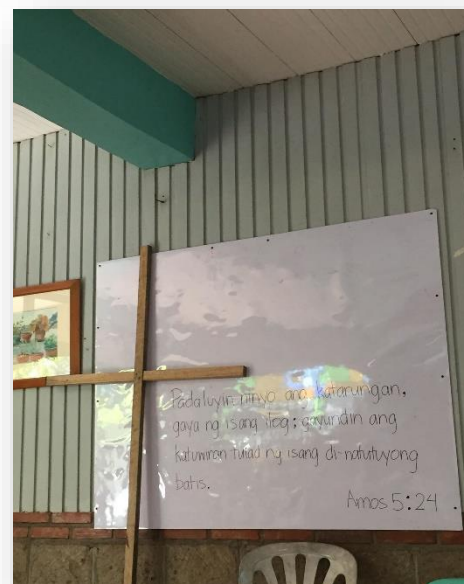
As students of the Asian Theological Seminary, we are constantly reminded that absorbing head knowledge within the four corners of our classrooms would be an exercise in futility if the world outside would remain unchanged. While this was something I knew from the first day of enrollment, nothing could have prepared me for the day when my eyes would fully see the lawlessness and injustice occurring under our very “privileged” noses.

Last March 18, 2018, I accompanied our Department Chair, Dr. Annabel Manzanilla Manalo, to a psychosocial and legal rights orientation for the victims of EJK under the care of Balay Rehabilitation Center, a Philippine Human Rights NGO providing psychosocial services and rehabilitation to internally displaced persons and survivors of torture and organized violence. Having a legal background and as part of our class requirement, I, along with my friend, Atty. Blesscille Guerra, lent a hand at educating victims of EJK on their legal rights.

We arrived at the venue at half past 9 in the morning. All of us were warmly welcomed by the Balay employees, profusely thanking us for lending our legal know-how on a weekend. They shared that it was quite difficult to look for lawyers who were readily available to conduct mini lectures that would be easily understood by lay persons. It did



make me realize that against the backdrop of our goal of dispensing justice in the high courts of the land, who was guarding the rights of the lowest in our society? It was even more heartbreaking to see one of the persons attending our lecture traveling all the way to Fairview with one foot bandaged past the ankle—she was a collateral damage during one of the shoot-outs in her community with her foot being the collators’ damage of a stray bullet.



A Glimpse into the Lives of the EJK Victims



After a brief meditation and reflection activity, the employees of Balay conducted a basic human rights lecture for the victims-- mostly mothers who untimely lost their sons and husbands. Like a child in the backseat of a car, we were helpless as we heard them recount stories of the wrongful acts done to them. Instead of the usual knock on the door by the police officers, as was the perceived way of conducting *Oplan Tokhang*, homes were reportedly ransacked even in the middle of the night, and family members allegedly shot point blank in the comforts of their bedrooms and living rooms. It seems that persons found in notorious drug lists were compelled to subscribe to prepared affidavits, admitting to crimes that they did not even commit. The event looked like an affirmation of the fact that the oppressed stayed oppressed and the war against drugs surprisingly turned into a war against the rule of law and worse, against the country's own people.

Notwithstanding these gripping stories, we had to muster the courage and provide the victims with a background on criminal procedure—from the filing of a complaint up to its appeal. My partner and I likewise discussed, in the simplest of ways (in Filipino, which proved to be a challenge!), the filing of the actual complaint with the prosecutor's office, what the law provides as contemplative of an EJK, and other questions that they might have. While the law appears to be the panacea to the country's many problems, the problem of EJK, as the law now stands, is beyond its ambit. At present, victims of EJK have met dead ends in terms of seeking legal recourse, especially since perpetrators of the crime appear to be unknown to them. Sadly, neither can they approach the authorities as the latter are the ones they claimed were directly responsible for their family members' death.

The lecture was done in a few hours and it left us dazed and overwhelmed. The day was a snapshot of the battles that our countrymen fight everyday—while we seemed to have been plagued by our mundane concerns of getting coffee in the morning, dropping off our children to school, and picking up everything we need in the grocery, some men and women are concerned with the basic issue of survival: being safe in their homes, staying alive through the night, and trying to make sense why their very dignity and integrity as human beings are constantly put on the line.

Faced with these traumatic realities, all the more we are fueled in our burden to study harder and to become immensely soaked in His Word—the need for able men and women to fight for the least of our brethren becomes all the more apparent. Although they may not attain peace and justice in our current system of government, it is incumbent upon us Christians to show them that with Him, they may attain peace that transcends all understanding. Just as in the days of old, it is in the hands of God's people to speak life and to bring peace to those whose cries for help continue to resonate with pain and death.





Ulirang Mandaleño Award

Last February 7, 2018, FOCIM's very own Bro. Elso U. Cabangon, head of the Couple's Ministry, was awarded by the City Government of Mandaluyong the "Ulirang Mandaleño Award" for Journalism.



Bro. Elso's stint as a journalist spanned generations, albeit on broken periods.

He began as a student journalist and columnist of DAWN, the weekly student newspaper in the University of the East. It was the period when student activism started forming in the halls of the academe, spilling out onto the streets of urban areas, harping on issues such as high tuition fees and eventually embracing national and even international concerns, such as the then raging Vietnam War.

His DAWN involvement led him to active membership in the College Editors Guild of the Philippines where he carried out the task of, among others, organizing CEGP chapters in regions outside the Greater Manila Area.

The outbreak of the First Quarter Storm in 1970, the historic student uprising, led Bro. Elso to even deeper involvement in the movement to change Philippine society and rid it of so much inequality and oppression.

The movement eventually led to the declaration of martial law in 1972. This time, the journalistic involvement of Bro. Elso found him in the underground resistance of progressive groups against the dictatorship. He became a staff contributor/writer for revolutionary publications, striving to keep people aware of news and issues kept from them by the controlled press. In 1974, he and a companion were arrested by a military intelligence group and in the process he sustained four gunshot wounds. Detained for two years, Bro. Elso continued to get involved in pamphleteering even in detention.

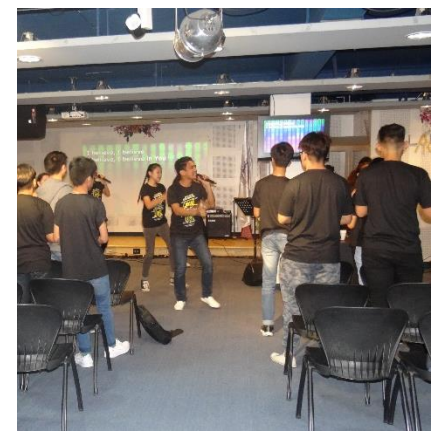
After his release from detention, Bro. Elso worked as administration manager for a construction firm in the Middle East, and came back in 1988 to work for the Manila Chronicle as editorial and features writer. In 1989, the publication was cited as Newspaper of the Year, and the citation mentioned, among others, the quality and substance of the editorials of the Manila Chronicle.

Bro. Elso returned to the Middle East in 1990 and worked as brand manager for a trading firm. An advocate of OFW welfare, he was with a group that organized the OFW Chamber of Commerce. He came home for good in 2010. Upon his return, he immediately organized a reunion of his co-members of the League of Editors for a Democratic Society – College Editors Guild of the Philippines 1969-1972, who then proceeded to write and publish a book entitled "Not On Our Watch – Martial Law Really Happened, We Were There". Edited by YES chief editor Jo-Ann Maglipon, among writers/contributors to this book are BSP Deputy Governor and FOCIM's Senior Pastor Diwa Guinigundo, ex-CNN Beijing Bureau Chief Jaime Flor Cruz and ex- Health Secretary Manolito Dayrit. The book became a best-seller in Fully Booked shops, contributing to the youth's awareness of the fateful chapter in the people's struggle for freedom. Bro. Elso's life-long commitment to the betterment of his compatriots through various advocacies serves as an example of a Mandaleño's love of his city and nation.



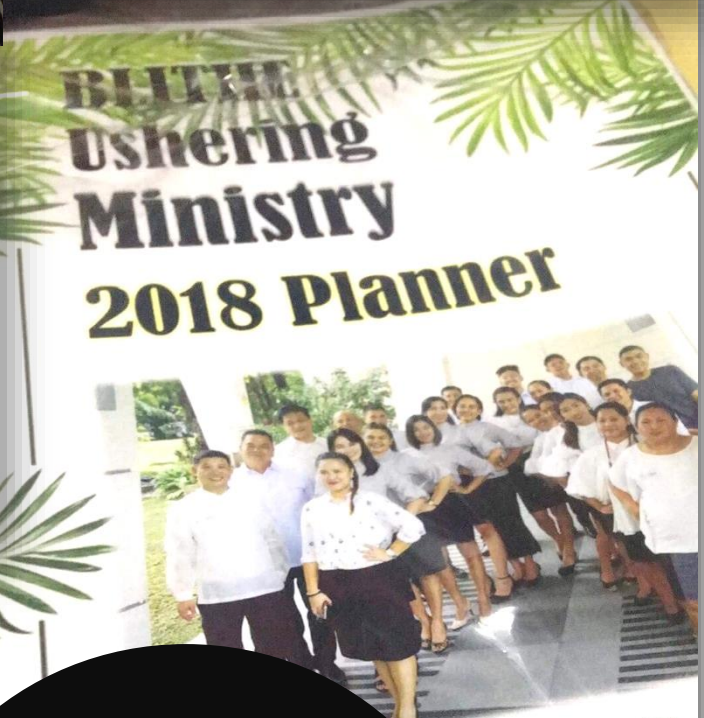
Gearing Up to Reach the Top: The Gen-C Holds Its First Two General Assemblies this 2018

By Daniel Alberto G. Guinigundo



Last February 4, 2018 Mandaluyong, and last March 24, 2018 in Quezon City, the Generation for Christ Youth Ministry held their respective general assemblies for the young people and young professionals. Entitled Gear Up, the event served as a launch pad for the ministry's multi-year plan. **This year, it's all about planning and preparation to attain their goals.**





BLITHE Ushering Ministry Holds Successful First General Assembly



Last January 28, 2018 after the lovefeast service, the BLITHE Ushering Ministry held their first general assembly entitled 4G: Be Connected, Stay Connected, where they launched their new projects and activities, particularly, their new 2018 planner, for each member to be fully informed about the ministry's calendar and to help them in planning out their year.



Journey to *Motherhood*



By Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

— Psalm 127:3-5

Sis. Pamela “Pam” Unite Young, married to Bro. Woodrow “Woods” Young, has embarked on her very own journey to motherhood.

It was a week before her due date (12 April 2018) and I could see that Sis. Pam was ready to pop. Despite being in a fully air-conditioned room, she looked flushed and I was afraid she would give birth that very moment—actually, she gave birth on 09 April 2018 to a healthy baby boy named David Nathan but let’s talk about that later.

“It did not sink in right away. *Hindi ko muna tinaasan* hopes *ko* until I got confirmation from the doctor,” Sis. Pam said. She shared that they have been trying to get pregnant for a few months already. And in her ninth month, Sis. Pam shared that her pregnancy has been relatively easy. “*Sabi ni Woods ang bait ko daw*,” Sis. Pam said, “*Hindi ako nag-lihi*,” she laughed. Not only did she not experience cravings, she also had only minimal vomiting episodes and dizziness during her first trimester.

“My most memorable experience is the first time we saw him via ultrasound. *Yung 4d-ultrasound din. May mukha na siya. Now malaki na siya, nararamdaman ko na siya sa bawat galaw niya*,” Sis. Pam said excitedly.



Sis. Pam is known to be a very organized person. From arranging itineraries to listing down things to do and to buy, you can count on Sis. Pam to always be prepared. So, I was not surprised that she had a lot to share about the preparation she took for her pregnancy. Also, it did not come as a surprise that the couple had packed the labor bag and the baby’s bag a month before the scheduled date of delivery.

Since we are in an era where almost anything or everything can be found in social media, Sis. Pam joined and followed parenting and breastfeeding groups in Facebook and Instagram. She would read books and blogs to prepare them for childbirth, delivery options, newborn care, and breastfeeding, among others.

“We decided to do natural birth. That was when we had to do so much preparation. Natural birth means no anesthesia, no epidural. I had to do exercises. Breathing exercises, classes, and workshops,” she said. “The teachers were Betty San Luis and her husband, advocates of natural child birth. They have five children and all were born through natural birth. We chose the one-day session. We did breathing exercises, hip exercises, and massage techniques. *Para may role si Woods*,” Sis. Pam said. “Also, I hired a doula. She is like a birth coach. She will help me during labor.”

Sis. Pam would not only get advice from women who have been pregnant in her office but also in church. One of the people who have been giving her advice is Sis. Badette Lactao from the Fullness of Christ International Ministries (FOCIM). "In church, I ask them about labor. *Wala kasi sila anesthesia. I ask them kung masakit ba talaga. Pero kinaya naman nila,*" Pam laughed. "*Si Ate Badette maraming binigay na books,*" Sis. Pam added.

According to her, she also took vitamins, buko juice, raspberry tea leaf, and dates for her health and for easier or shorter labor. It was also important for her to prepare her birth plan and to discuss this with her Ob-gyn and Pediatrician. The couple toured the hospital, specifically the labor, delivery, and recovery rooms, got the hospital rates, and familiarized themselves with the procedure. "I also prepared documents (Philhealth, SSS if applicable, Admission Orders, and other documents for the hospital)," she said. "At work, I had to ensure that I did a proper turn-over of the work assigned to me and I had to train a reliever who will take my place," she added.

"The best part was when we went shopping for baby stuff!" Sis. Pam said. Of course, shopping also entailed doing the necessary exercises for pregnant women like walking and stretching.



Challenges

Sis. Pam is one of the singers of the FOCIM Worship Team. In her seventh month of pregnancy, Pam said, "I took a leave from worship team ministry *para hindi ako mapuyat* every Friday. But I am still active with other church work, specifically LEAD, which I would do at home."

Sis. Pam shared that the challenges she faced came later into the pregnancy. "I am getting allergic reactions to the hormones. My stomach is covered in rashes. There's no medicine, no way to treat it because steroids is harmful for the baby," Sis. Pam said. Her skin condition is called PUPPS (Pruritic Urticarial Papules and Plaques of Pregnancy), a fairly common skin condition seen in pregnancy.

"I would put ice to relieve the itch. I tried aloe vera but it didn't work. So, I use pine tar soap for bathing and I put bio oil on my skin." Aside from her allergies, Sis. Pam said she was diagnosed with a certain infection which would require her to be in antibiotics during labor so the disease will not be passed on to the baby. Despite this, Sis. Pam looks at peace. She said her doctors are ready and she and Bro. Woods are ready as well.

"***Yung devotion lagi namin ni Woods is we read for assurance and we read prayers for the baby,***" Sis. Pam said. "I always read the promises of God in the Bible so my worries will go away," she added.

"Trust God that He will take care of you and your baby. Control is with Him. No matter what you do or prepare, nakasalalay pa rin talaga sa Kanya," Sis. Pam said.

By the time Menorah is released, Sis. Pam had already given birth to a healthy baby boy, nicknamed Baby Nate.

"It was a superNATEural experience! Everything aligned so that we can have the birth that we wanted and prayed for. From the little details such as the time we went to the hospital to the big things like the length and difficulty of the labor, God gave us His favor," Sis. Pam shares.

According to her, labor was hard but not really painful. Her experience was relatively a short one for a first-time mom.

"He ejected like a cannon ball!" Sis. Pam said. This surprised everyone and thankfully, Sis. Pam's doctor was able to catch the baby on time.

All their preparations definitely paid off. "Having the right mindset was key in helping me achieve a natural birth," Sis. Pam said. "I just held on to the promises of God and depended on Him as my strength and deliverer."

And now it's Bro. Woods turn to say something about it, "**Now that we've seen our baby, we feel overjoyed, overwhelmed and extremely grateful to the Lord for this long-awaited blessing. Now that God has answered our prayer, we want to give Him back all the glory by raising this baby to become a man after God's heart.**"



I AM NOW A FATHER

By Woodrow Wilson C. Young



When my wife Pam showed me her latest pregnancy test confirming that I am going to be a father, I was filled with utmost excitement and great joy. After months of trying, God has finally answered our prayer. Back in 2016, I felt extremely grateful to the Lord that He has granted me the wonderful role of being a husband to Pam. After more than a year, God entrusted me with another great role - that of becoming a father. It was a long nine months as I was very much eager to meet our little bundle of joy. And as much as it was a great experience seeing our baby boy for the first time, the “nine months” journey towards Pam’s birth was a wonderful experience that I will always treasure.

What made Pam’s pregnancy a wonderful journey for me was that I was with her every step of the way. I was with her during every check up with our OB-GYN and all her ultrasound sessions. There was even one time early in Pam’s pregnancy that I was so excited to see our baby through the sonogram that I went to the Ultrasound room ahead of her. The staff mistakenly handed me the lubricant thinking that I was the one to undergo the Ultrasound procedure.

During her third trimester, we attended a “Birth Basics Workshop” where we learned the preparations we needed to take towards a normal delivery. The said workshop involved exercises that required my assistance. We attended seminars regarding pregnancy in “The Parenting Emporium” and breastfeeding in “BabyMama”. We also went shopping for baby related items at the Momzilla Baby fair. In addition, I was involved in interviewing our birth doula, also known as birth coach. My utmost support can be seen even in the small things such as setting up the yoga mat, medicine ball, and youtube videos for her daily prenatal workout, and then giving her a back massage. I also took charge of playing classical music and reading books to the baby while in Pam’s womb. Most importantly, I made sure to pray for the Lord’s protection for Pam and the baby on a daily basis. I believe that it is very important for the “father to be” to show full support to the pregnant wife and become involved in any way he can. This allows the “mother to be” to become much more at ease and less worried knowing that the husband is on top of everything else.

D-Day (Delivery Day) came on April 9, coincidentally known as the Day of Valor. I was already sound asleep when Pam started to experience recurring contractions at around 1 in the morning. By God’s favor, our OB-GYN was already at the hospital attending to another patient as she advised us via text message to come to the hospital. When we arrived, she was already at 4 cm. Her labor took almost 9 hours and I was there supporting her and was very much involved throughout.

Most of the time I was holding her hand while guiding her through “Lamaze breathing” – a technique using slow / relaxed breathing to block out the pain from the contractions. There were also a few moments I tried making her laugh as she finds some of my facial expressions funny, which definitely made her more relaxed. She also spent a couple of hours in the hot shower, as this proved helpful in easing the pain of her contractions further. I was with her in the shower the whole time, assisting her, making sure that the water is in the right temperature and even feeding her arroz caldo.

At exactly 11:47 AM our baby boy, David Nathan, came out in the most unexpected way – flying out like a baseball! Good thing our OB-GYN caught him safely. The doctor said that was the first time she saw such a fast coming out of a new born, and suggested to call David Nathan as “Super Baby”.

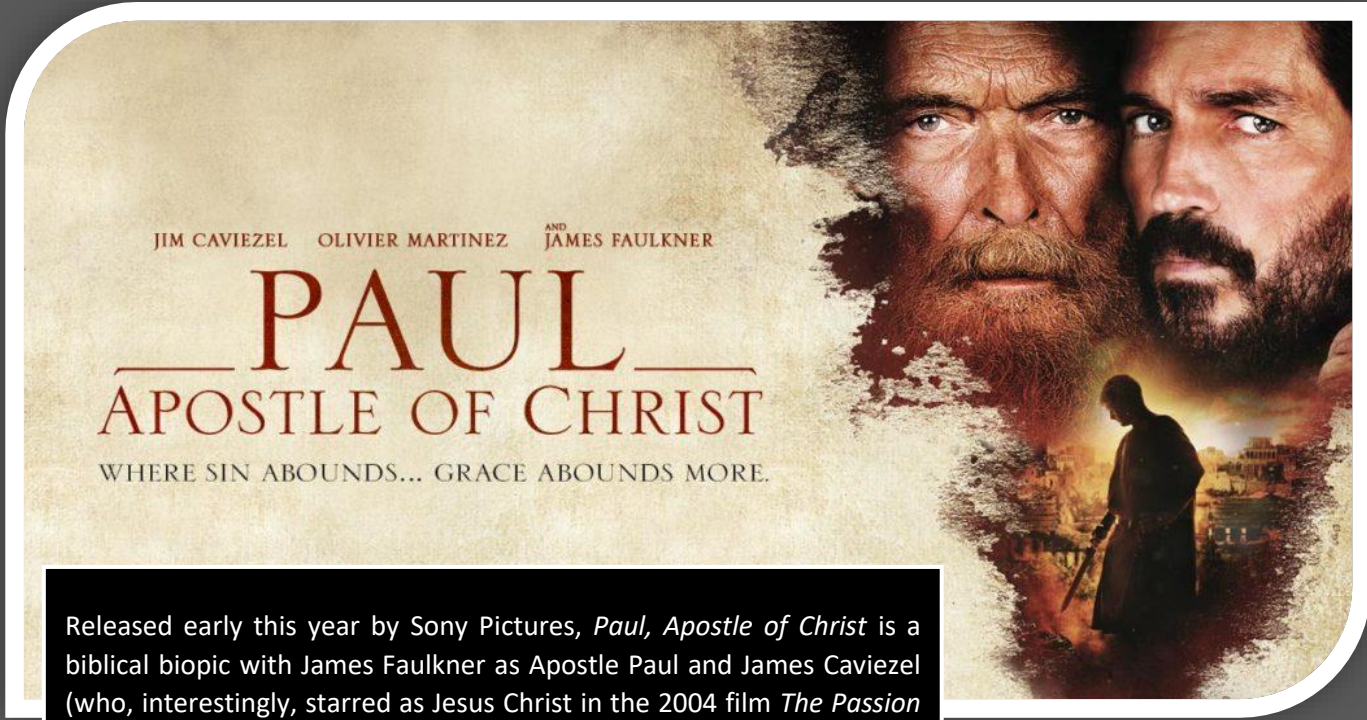
To cap off my involvement, I was given the task of cutting the baby’s umbilical cord. It was definitely a great moment and I did it efficiently, I think. But unknown to me, our birth doula caught me on camera struggling to wear rubber gloves for the task! Funny how I looked.

The birth of our baby boy, David Nathan, was an amazing experience that I will treasure forever. I now look forward to fulfilling my role as a father after God’s heart.



MOVIE REVIEW

By Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo



JIM CAVIEZEL OLIVIER MARTINEZ AND JAMES FAULKNER

PAUL

APOSTLE OF CHRIST

WHERE SIN ABOUNDS... GRACE ABOUNDS MORE.

Released early this year by Sony Pictures, *Paul, Apostle of Christ* is a biblical biopic with James Faulkner as Apostle Paul and James Caviezel (who, interestingly, starred as Jesus Christ in the 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ*) as Saint Luke.

The film is set in ancient Rome during the height of Emperor Nero's reign. During these dark years in history, all followers of Jesus Christ faced heavy persecution from the Romans. Paul, the central character in the story, is being held in prison and is facing execution for being an alleged threat to the Roman Empire.

Meanwhile, for the majority of the film, Luke is seen shuttling back and forth between the prison and a hidden Christian settlement in Rome. Based on these difficult circumstances, Paul's life story unfolds through his many conversations with Luke. Luke, on the other hand, would write down his fruitful encounters with Paul, which presumably led to the writing of the Book of Acts.

The storyline reaches its climax when the story of Paul's conversion from a persecutor of Christians to a staunch follower of Christ was revealed.

While the overarching theme of the movie is the difficulty faced by the Christians during those times, perhaps one of the unexpected gems of the film is the journey of the roman soldier Mauritius,

the prefect of Mamertine Prison where Paul was being held captive. While Mauritius is generally tolerant of Paul in the film, he is, in more ways than one, an antagonist of the story. However, as the story unfolded, it was revealed that his daughter was suffering from an unknown disease, which led Mauritius to make various sacrifices to the roman gods. As the disease worsened, Mauritius would suddenly find himself conflicted between adhering to paganistic practices or seeking help from Luke, a Christian physician.

Paul, Apostle of Christ, while largely focused on the life of Paul, is essentially a film about faith amidst difficult times. Many of the characters were, in one way or another, facing different trials that caused some to abandon their beliefs and principles. The movie leads its viewers into a deeper appreciation of their free exercise of faith and lends encouragement to those facing challenges in their faith walk.

Menorah Rating: 3.5/5 stars

What to do this summer:

Sip & Gogh

By Dan Abraham G. Guinigundo



“Art is not what you see, but what you make other see.”

Edgar Degas

For some, creating art can be very intimidating. It is this same intimidation that has reduced the best of us to mere appreciators of art, never crossing the line from observer to artist. Thankfully, those days are over.



Artwork by Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares

Enter Sip & Gogh.

Sip & Gogh is the first paint and sip (or drink) studio in Manila, which offers a guided painting experience less the hassle. The set-up is simple: customers reserve a session online or by phone and simply show up at the time and date chosen. Classes are either “Open Sessions,” where guests can choose to replicate *any* of the paintings provided by the branch, or by a particular painting, where the entire class will be asked to paint only one painting. In either case, instructors will be assigned to guide the guests on a step-by-step basis.

Open Sessions cost P1,000.00 per person, while the painting-specific cost P900.00.

All materials will be provided by the studio. These are inclusive of the (blank) canvas, easel, brushes, apron, and of course, unlimited paint.

Coffee or wine and snacks will also be served during the session. The guests will be given 2 hours to finish their paintings. Exceeding the time limit will mean paying for another session.

Tips:

- ✓ Be mindful of the two-hour limit. While having fun is the cardinal rule, it is important to pace yourself to avoid rushing towards the end. Time really flies once you’re inside the studio!
- ✓ Use the instructors. Remember, the instructors are all professionals. You will always have something to learn from them. Don’t hesitate to seek their help with your painting.
- ✓ Strictly follow the house rules: (1) Sip, (2) Drink, and (3) Laugh!

Branches:

You may reserve online at <https://www.sipandgogh.com>.

- Sip & Gogh Atelier (Cainta, Rizal)
- Sip & Gogh Ayala Heights (Old Balara, Quezon City)
- Sip & Gogh Eastwood (Libis, Quezon City)
- Sip & Gogh Kapitolyo (Kapitolyo, Pasig City)
- Sip & Gogh Alabang (Alabang, Muntinlupa City)
- Sip & Gogh Century Mall (Century City, Makati City)

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Tips on How to Manage your Mid-Year Bonus

By Broderick "Bodge" Santos, RFP

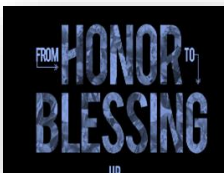


The month of May finds some of the 45 million full-time employed Filipinos blessed with their much anticipated mid-year bonus. Some are excited to get hold of the latest offers: It could be a new smart tablet, an SUV which offers an irresistible low down payment scheme or the latest curved LED TV. Others are into the coolest game consoles, a signature bag or a luxury watch that simply feels like a "must-have." This list goes on and on, and yet, after all the spending rush, many become surprised to realize that nothing is left to save, invest and bless others with.

I am reminded of the saying of Albert Einstein about the meaning of insanity: "Insanity is doing the same thing again and again and expecting a different result." Truly, if we do not change anything today, we can never expect to change anything in the future. It is extremely important that ahead of time, there must be proper planning. Allow me to share with you 10 proven tips on how you can spend your mid-year bonus while still remaining a significant blessing to both your family and others.

1. Honor God First With Your Blessings.

According to the Bible, "You shall remember the Lord for He has given you the power to make wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18)." Never forget to honor first the Giver before indulging in His gifts, by setting aside at least 10% or more of your bonus for church offerings (love offering, project sanctuary & mission fund) . Remember, we can never out-give the Lord who has provided all that we have and will ever have in our lives.



2. Create Your Emergency Fund.

This is a very important step in achieving financial freedom. This will be your financial safety net in case of any future unfortunate incidents like job loss, illness, sudden death in the family, repairs & etc. This fund should at least cover 3 to 6 months of your expenses. It should be parked in liquid financial tools like a high earning savings account or in a short-term time deposit. With the extra money you have amassed, this would be the best time to set aside money to increase this fund.



3. Pay Down Your Debts.

If you have high paying interest loans/debts like credit cards, housing loans, personal loans, shark loans or in Filipino lingo, a "5-6" loan, you should focus on utilizing your holiday bonuses to pay them off as soon as possible. Also, there would be no sense of setting aside money to save or invest if you have debts to pay. Normally, the debt interest is higher than what you earn from your saving or investing. Remember this as a rule of thumb: all of your debt payments should not exceed 35% of your monthly income. If you're paying more than that, it is time to reduce or pay it off by using your bonus.



4. Invest on a Medical Healthcare Card.

Another strong financial safety net for you and your family is to get your own (or an additional) medical healthcare card to cover you for those unexpected illness that can easily drain your wallets. For a better illustration, you will need at least Php 1 Million for a cancer diagnosed patient to get treated properly. Don't depend on your Phil Health and your SSS coverage, because this will definitely not be enough to pay off medical expenses.





5. Get a Life Insurance.

If you were to suddenly pass away, would you be sure that your loved ones could be financially capable? If not, now is the time for you to get a life insurance. It's highly recommended that your insurance coverage should be at least 5 times of your annual income (ex. 5 x P 200K annual income = Php 1 Million insurance). It's also okay to start with a small coverage that will fit your budget. Just buy an additional one when you get your next bonus to better build up your coverage. Also, remember to be safe and get your insurance policy only from the top 10 insurance companies in our country.



6. Get your Funeral Plan.

In life, there are about 3 things that are certain: bills, change and death. In other words, whether we like it or not, we will eventually depart this world and meet our Creator. It is better that our family members will be prepared by being provided with such a plan to cover for all the funeral and burial expenses. These plans are now offered on instalment basis up to five years, plus money back guarantee. This means that at the end of your term, all of your payments will go back to you in the form of cash rebate.



7. Insure your House.

Ensure to have your house insured to avoid any financial calamity which may cripple your cash flow. Remember that no property, big or small, is exempted from a devastating natural disaster (ex. flooding, fire or earthquake). For only a small amount, your house will be covered from any stifling disaster that may come its way.



8. Invest to Sharpen Your Saw.

Gaining more knowledge and applying it is the ultimate key towards achieving true financial wisdom. Remember to read books, attend seminars, join free social media financial groups (like the Money Talks Viber group) and work with a financial planner or life coach. Doing so is never an expense because building up your financial knowledge is always a great investment. Never forget to invest on your great asset: YOU.



9. Be a Blessing to Others.

Did you know that there are more than 22 million Filipinos who are living below the poverty level? You can change all of that by being a blessing to someone today. Be the real miracle that people are looking for and you'll be surprised on how fulfilled and happy you will feel.



10. Start Investing your Money.

Invest your money once all of the above items have been ticked off your list. Take in mind your objective (why are you investing), your time-horizon (what your timeframe is) and your risk appetite (what investment is suited for you). The following are some of the investment outlets you can explore:

- a.) Time Deposit (Both Short & Long Term)
- b.) Pre-need & Investment-linked Insurance
- c.) Government & Corporate Bonds
- d.) Mutual Funds, Feeder Fund and UITFs
- e.) FX Trading, Stocks, Real Estate Investment
- f.) Build Your Own Enterprise

Remember the principle: the great the return, the greater the risk. Choose the one that will always compliment your risk appetite. Also, only get into an investment that you already understand very well. Remember the key in achieving true wealth is not about making a lot of money, but about managing well the money that is entrusted to you by our Lord.

Broderick "Bodge" Santos is a Division Head of East West Banking for Retail Banking Group whose other passion is to provide a wealth of financial literacy tips to Filipinos all around the economic world. He graduated from San Beda College with a course of Business Management & Entrepreneurship, finished his MBA at the professional school of DLSU and graduated with honorable distinction. He has been in the banking industry, in various companies such as HSBC, for more than 16 years. In addition, he is the founder of the Kingdom Circle Marketplace Ministries, as well as the head of the Well Ministries for the church Fullness of Christ International Ministries.

He has been married to his lovely wife, Roanna, for more than 21 years and has 2 wonderful sons, Myles & Keith.

How did God change your life?

April of 2016 is the summer I will never forget. It was the exact month before I was hit with the realization that I was going through the most difficult challenge of my life. I was no longer hopeful about my future and my head was crippling with very negative thoughts. I felt so hopeless. I lost my passion in teaching, together with the purpose of my being.

When my father died back in 2015, I only cried once. Even up to this day, I honestly do not know the reason why I reacted that way. I think I was not able to fully get to grieve over my father's death.

After the burial, I forced myself to go back to work. I worked hard, stayed late at work and kept myself busy so that when I arrived home I would feel exhausted that the next thing to do was to sleep. I also binged on food in order to feel good. I turned away from doing the activities that I used to love such as hiking and running.

As soon as I realized what I was going through, the fighter in me was awakened. At first, I was in denial. It was difficult for me to accept the fact that emotion was at its lowest.

Hence, I conducted my own research by reading some articles about it. I also watched YouTube videos of people who went through the same experience and how were they able to overcome their emotional issue. I also asked some friends who are also experts in dealing with the same condition. It was when I finally accepted my situation.

It was in this moment of doubt, failure and hopelessness that I once again surrendered my life to God. I asked for His forgiveness for all my shortcomings as one of His servant-leaders. I asked Him to cleanse me from all my sins and heal me from my condition. By God's grace, He gave me clarity and reminded me of how precious I am in His eyes. He made me feel loved and that I am alive for a purpose that will bring glory and honor to His name. He also reminded me to take care of myself and to let go of all my emotional baggage.

After a couple of months of complete surrender to the Lord, everything that was troubling me dwindled fast. When I humbled myself to Him and lifted up all my worries to Him and Him alone, everything became crystal clear. He gave me the understanding and wisdom on how to deal with my emotional problems. He also gave me the support I needed through my biological and spiritual family and my closest friends.

It is because of this experience that I am more aware of the need to take good care of my body right now. I realized that when I am eating the right kind of food and as I do regular exercise and other physical activities, my mind is more peaceful. Most importantly, allotting time to do my devotion everyday helps me fight the evil thoughts in my head.

John Powell said this, "We think we have to change, grow and be good in order to be loved. But rather we are loved and we receive His grace so we can change, grow and be good."

The only limit to healing in our lives is the degree to which we do not reveal ourselves. In order to grow, we must hold a commitment to what is true. God's grace gives us the freedom to face God and face the truth about us in the light of God's Word. Knowing we are fully loved and accepted by Him, He calls us to come to Him with everything so that He can help us experience freedom (John 8:32) and a more abundant life (John 10:10).

Sis. Salie Faune



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Join us

Worship Service

SUNDAY 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (Mandaluyong)
SUNDAY 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Quezon City)

Adults' Sunday School

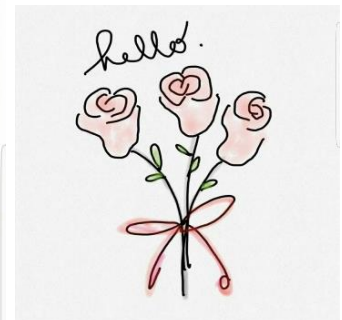
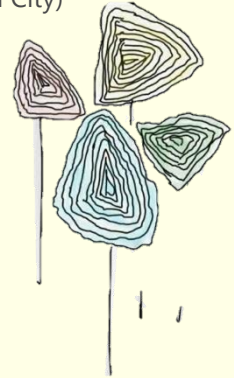
SUNDAY 8:30 AM - 9:00 AM

Kids' Sunday School

SUNDAY 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Prayer Meeting

FRIDAY 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Artwork by Ma. Lourdes N. Colinares



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