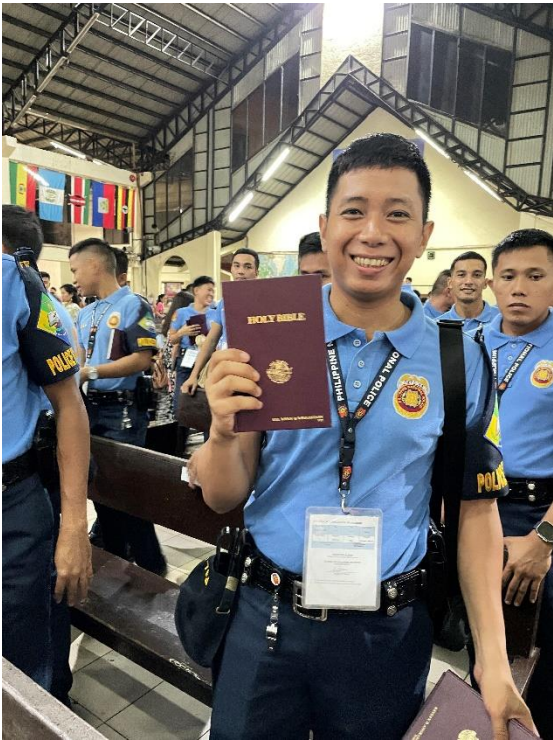


Rick & Becky Martin

Your Missionaries in
Iloilo City, Philippines since 1976

Dear Friends,

This young police officer, pictured below, received Jesus Christ as his Savior at Iloilo Baptist Church recently during our mission conference. 40 years ago, two young men who were being trained to be police officers had a vision to open the doors to officers like this to know our wonderful Savior.



The Lord has opened so many doors here in the Philippines to reach people with the gospel. One of them is reaching police officers. Today there is an official policy of the Philippine National Police that encourages pastors to hold weekly meetings with small groups of officers to teach spiritual values. This policy is a result of two young men who had a vision - while they were in their training.

In the early 1980's these two young men entered the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City. Cesar Binag and Mao Aplaska were both Christians when they entered the academy. After they met there, they began to read their Bible and pray together that God might use them to reach the officers of the Philippine National Police. Although it is a military academy at that time the cadets are given the choice of entering the Armed Forces of the Philippines or the Philippine National Police when they graduate. These two cadets decided to join the PNP.

The academy, PMA as it is often referred to, only accepts about 400 new students each year. During the last year of

Cesar Binag's and Mao Aplaska's training there was a cheating scandal at the academy. The PMA has been often recognized as one of the premier military academies in southeast Asia. This is partially due to the fact that it copies many of the principles and practices of West Point. This includes an honor code that says, "We the cadets, do not lie, cheat, steal nor tolerate among us those who do".

Over 100 cadets were involved in the cheating. With only about 400 new students being allowed to enroll each year this meant that about 6% of the total student body was involved. The academy had never had as large a group of students facing expulsion. When a student is accused of breaking the honor code there is a trial for each offender. The judge is not a member of the faculty or administration. Instead, a senior cadet is voted on by the senior class and he alone has the responsibility to judge and sentence the accused. These trials were all held after class and went late into the night for many days.

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Cesar Binag was so respected among his peers that he was chosen as judge. Several years ago, Gen. Binag told me the story of judging each of these cadets and said this was the hardest thing he did during his career. One by one he declared each cadet guilty or innocent and about 80 or the cadets were found guilty. He was hated by the cadets who had been found guilty as it ruined their careers. But he was admired by others who saw his courage.

When he graduated, he soon was given the command of the 2nd Special Action Group which are the special forces of the PNP that fight in battles against the Muslims and communist rebels. During that time, he was awarded the Gold Cross Medal for Gallantry in Action. In each position he held he openly shared the gospel with those in his command. Below he is leading his men at that time.



Above right, he is receiving an award from the United Nations Mission in Liberia for Outstanding Leadership Award. He told me the first thing he did when he became the head of the UN force in Liberia was to give his testimony of how he received Christ as Savior and let them know that his faith in Christ was a part of his leadership.

During his time as a police officer, he enrolled in Harvard University and in 2011 he graduated with a master's in public administration from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He also received a study grant at the FBI and after that became the leader of the Counter Terrorism Task Force in the Philippines. He continued to witness others at Harvard and those being trained by the FBI.

In 2017 he was assigned as regional director of Region 6 here in Iloilo city. That is when I first met him. Not long after being named regional director he visited our church and continued to visit our church from time to time. He asked if we could provide two pastors each day to have a Bible message with the plan of salvation for all the officers of Region 6 as they were required to come to the headquarters to be tested on their shooting proficiency. There are 13,000 officers in the region and the gospel was given to most of them during this time.

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The first time he visited our church when he was the regional director, I was nervous but soon realized what a humble man he was. During the invitation he went forward and as you can see, he is humbly praying on his knees to God.



He has attended our church a lot of times since then, especially when we have a special event for police officers or the Pastors and Workers Conference.

One of the last things he did as our regional director was to swim across the Guimaras Strait which is a 3-kilometer (2 miles) swim. It takes courage as the current there can be dangerous. He was 53 years old the day he did this. I was there the day he arrived in Guimaras and the people were so proud of him because the reason he did this was to raise money for the families of police officers who had died in the line of duty. This picture below was taken after he finished the swim.



During his time in the academy and after they graduated from PMA, they began to mentor other cadets and officers. They started what is now known as "My Brother Keeper" where they lead officers to Christ and assign another officer who is a Christian to help them grow in the Lord. Later Gen. Binag started another ministry "God Bless Our Cops" which encourages pastors to get involved in reaching and encouraging police officers.

As they were ending their careers, they were three-star and two-star generals working at the national headquarters. On April 24, 2020, Lieutenant General Cesar Hawthorne Binag, chief of Philippine National Police (PNP) became the deputy chief of operations making the third ranking officer in all the PNP. He and Gen Aplaska were both assigned to the policy making group that approved new programs. During that time, they were able to start a program allowing pastors to go to the police stations throughout the country with weekly squad meetings of an average of 8 officers per squad.

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These two programs were combined into one known as Squad Weekly Interactive Meeting (SWIM) and passed by the policy making leaders of the PNP. It is now being organized in stations nationwide. The biggest need they have is for enough pastors to help so please pray for that.

The national coordinator for the pastors of the SWIM program is one of our graduates, Pastor Leo Decinal. Along with Maj General Mao Aplaska the leadership of the SWIM program for the police officers is Retired Colonel Elmer Sallidor who is the first police officer to be awarded the Medal of Valor. This is the highest Military award for courage in battle. He attended our police appreciation service last November and is returning to be a part of the pastors and workers conference in early October. The Lord has greatly used him in this ministry because he is well known and greatly respected by Police officers.

Below is Col. Sillador on the right. In the middle is Major General Mao Aplaska who is also retired and is the officer that was a classmate at the Philippine Military Academy with Gen. Binag. It was Gen Aplaska who had the vision with Gen Binag to reach police officers as mentioned earlier. Here they are receiving an award from our church for their love of God and Country.



After General Binag retired he visited Iloilo City several times.

Above right, he was our special guest for our June 12, 2022, celebration of Independence Day here in the Philippines.



Police Appreciation Service November 2023. On the front row on the left is Major Randee Alog who grew up at IBC and was accepted into the Philippine Military Academy. He is now serving the Philippine Army in a camp 2 hours from our church and has been helpful in planning special events for the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

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At this service Gen. Binag, standing on my left, gave a plaque to the family of a police officer who died.



Here he is pictured with the officers present that day. He is the one next to the pulpit in civilian dress.



Before he retired, he was the head of the Covid task force where he signed all the travel passes. One Sunday during Covid he visited our church with his wife and 3 sons. Below he is on my right.



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Before he left on this day he gave our church a gift of \$1200 to buy musical instruments for some of our Bible college students. He loves music and he wrote a nice song "God Bless Our Cops" which we use at our events with police officers.



Once I asked him what his favorite song was and said "Jesus Loves Me." When I asked him why he liked that song so much he said when he was a child, he would sing that song and get saved at that time.

Pictured right- At this church service where Gen. Binag attended, we had a child, Jay France, sing "Jesus Loves Me."



What is the result of the vision of these 2 young men who wanted to reach police officers almost 40 years ago? Police officers are more open to the gospel than ever. At our recent mission conference in July we invited a group of young officers who were taking their field training in Iloilo City to attend the Wednesday night service. About 50 of them and the older officers who were training them came and it was so exciting as many of them received Christ as Savior that night.

Pictured right are two police officers who made a profession of faith that night.



Some of the officers who attended our missions conference



Each officer received a Bible with their name engraved on the front



Introducing another police officer who accepted the Lord

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Giving the gospel to officers



Winning a female officer



I am so thankful for General Binag, who is not only a hero to the Filipino people, but also to those of us who have seen him use his life to bring many souls to heaven.

God bless!

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