

# Rick & Becky Martin

Your Missionaries in  
Iloilo City, Philippines since 1976

Dear Friends,

The purpose of this prayer letter is to encourage you to pray for the need of churches being started here in the Philippines as well as other countries around the world.

In 1976 I took a survey trip to the Philippines and visited the *Bible Baptist Church* in Cebu City for about 10 days. It was there that I met the students at the Bible College that Missionary Bob Hughes started. I would go into the poor neighborhoods with them and watch them enthusiastically hold classes in the open air teaching the children a Bible story, singing, prayer time and sharing the plan of salvation. I noticed the burden that the men had to go out and start a church when they would graduate. It had a profound impact on my life and two years later Iloilo Baptist college was started. Being only 25 years old I knew I wasn't qualified, but missionaries can never be sure how long they will be able to stay in a country.

We started in an old house with 13 full-time students and several part-time students.

At the first graduation 3 men and 6 ladies graduated. The 3 men, now in their 60s, are still pastoring churches 42 years later. The first one to start a church was Eddie Ledesma (Below when he graduated in 1982) who went to the island of Palawan.





The students followed the pattern of the Bible College in Cebu City by doing ministry work nearly every day. They would hold Extension classes, Bible studies for unbelievers, preach in homes, soul winning and other outreach ministries. I took Eddie Ledesma to the Iloilo Provincial Prison on Fridays. I taught him how to baptize by baptizing the prisoners who had received Christ as Savior in a 50-gallon water barrel.

The main purpose of the Bible College was to train men to go out and start a church. The only course we have for men is in Pastoral Theology. Through the years more than 90% of the men who graduate go out and start a church within 3-4 months of graduation.

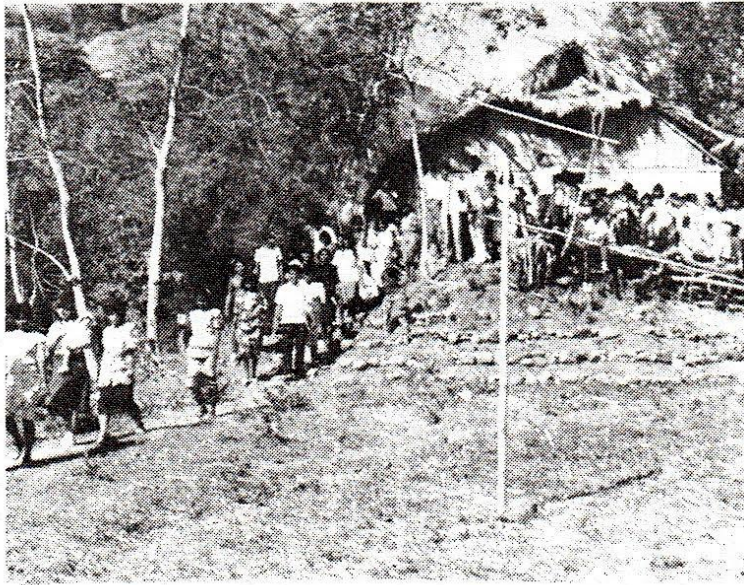


Another student was Hermando Alibitado who was a part of the 3rd graduating class. Everyone called him "Cruz". He had a great sense of humor and was fun to be around. He graduated in 1984 and started a church in the remote area of Anilao, Iloilo. In college he was known not only for his humor but also his initiative in ministry work. The first church he started was called *Good Tidings Baptist Church*. To the left is Brother Alibitado when he was a very young pastor.



January- February 2025 (part 1)

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He noticed that in an area not so far from their church there were several "Aetis" which were the original Filipinos centuries ago. They were nomadic. He began to win some of them to Christ and convinced them to stay in that area. He started a church for them. He was the first graduate to start a second church and pastor both of those at the same time. It was called *Hilltop Baptist Church* because as you can see it was on a hilltop.

Pastoring 2 churches at the same time is very difficult even if the churches are small. But he worked hard, and the Lord blessed both churches. He set the example that many of our

graduates have followed in starting and pastoring two churches at one time. On his first anniversary, he invited me to speak to his church with the "Aetis" and it was an unforgettable experience. Becky's parents were with us at the time, so we took them to the service. When we first got there, we saw this boy holding a big lizard that was tied up as you can see below.

When my son Ricky saw it, he said, "Daddy, can we buy that lizard and take him home?" So, I asked the boy in the picture if we could do that, and he said no. When I asked him why he said it was because his pastor told him he wanted to cook it and give it to the speaker to eat for lunch. Then I remembered I was the guest speaker! I realized I was in trouble because you don't refuse food here without offending people. I mentioned that he had a sense of humor, and he seemed really happy to feed me that lizard. The best way I can describe the taste of that lizard is that it would be like eating a lizard that had been run over by a car and at the side of the road, in other words, "roadkill."



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About 10 years ago Brother Alibitado was preparing for his church anniversary and was standing on the side of a road when a truck swerved off the road and killed him. We were heartbroken but he has not been forgotten.

Through the years the Lord has blessed the starting of churches across the Philippines. One reason I know this is because there are many Bible colleges training men to start churches.

Aurello Solis, a 1987 graduate of IBC, below in the middle, started several churches despite his disability of having only one arm. He is about 28 years old in this picture but over 60 years old now.



As a young man Aurello would sell and deliver whiskey in the mountains on the island of Negros. He was known for his temper. In fact, he was called "sing-ke" meaning "someone who gets mad over the smallest little thing". One day while driving his truck that was loaded with whisky, the truck turned over and Aurelio lost his left arm. It was just one more "scar" added to all the others on his body: stab wounds from numerous fights.

Shortly after that a singing group from Iloilo Baptist College came to his home place. The people had to hold him back because he wanted to stone the church. One of the students in that group was from that church, knew Aurello, and invited him to the service. He agreed, but he said to himself that if anybody at the church said something about him being there, he was going to punch them. Aurelio brought a bottle of whisky with him; not realizing that God was going to deal with his heart. The people were so kind and gracious to him that it disarmed him (pun intended). His heart was softened and that day he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. His life completely changed and not long after that he enrolled at IBC and graduated and started this church. He has since started several churches and trained men in his churches to start churches. The picture above is on his first-year anniversary. He invited me to be the guest speaker that day.

Most of these men who graduated in the early years have been faithful to their calling. Not long ago, I listed the men who graduated in the years from 1982 to 1986. Twenty of those men are still alive and pastoring. Five of them are in heaven after pastoring until the time of their homegoing. We have lost track of the other four but the last time we had contact they were not pastoring.



Most new churches started by the graduates of IBC are started without a facility like the open-air church below. They go out by faith and the one thing that stands out about their ministries is that they love to do work in the ministry like they did in college.



In the mountains when a pastor puts up his first church building, he will sometimes make his own hollow blocks.



The sand and gravel needed for the hollow blocks may be needed to be transported by a carabao after being picked up on a mountain road.



A lot of people live up in the mountains and a large number of churches are started in those mountain villages.



After a while the church will have a simple but more permanent place to meet.



Pastors in rural areas baptize in nearby rivers or the ocean.



Some pastors in the coastal areas baptize in the ocean.



Iloilo Baptist College has kept its original purpose: training the students to serve the Lord and start churches and my prayer is that God will continue to use it for His honor and Glory.



Students work in outreach ministries such as Extensions Classes which are Bible classes for children in the open air on Saturdays.



Going into the public schools and teaching the Bible



Leading people to the Lord



They also can work in ministries like:

Home Bible Studies in the homes of unbelievers.

Deaf Ministry      Home Church Services (for 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> year men who conduct services in the homes of unbelievers.)

Senior Citizens Ministry      Christmas and Musical Ministry

Jeepney ministry for children

Film Ministry

Sports League Ministry

Help the Needy

Lepers Ministry

Tragedy Ministry

Widows Ministry

Medical Missions

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Graduation is exciting as the students have completed their course. The ladies have an important role too as they help the pastors where they serve.

New Graduates waiting for the graduation service to begin.



In Bible School, the students make friends that will last for a lifetime





2024-2025 Student Body



Please pray that more churches will be started in the Philippines and around the world.

Thank you for praying and supporting the planting of churches.

God bless,

Rick and Becky Martin