**DIRECTOR’S NOTES**

**The Magic of CHRISTMAS is not in the presents but in HIS Presence.**

It is common knowledge that the Philippines feels the Christmas spirit and celebrates the Christmas season as soon as the calendar is flipped to September. Christmas carols are in the air, both the classical and the pop, in English or in Filipino. Family members here and overseas plan for homecomings and reunions, plane tickets bought early to avoid the rising cost once the peak season for buying arrives. Pre-Christmas sales and early discount rates invite everyone to start spending the hard-earned peso until the 13th (or 14th and even 15th depending on the generosity of the bosses) month pay gets deposited in ATM machines. We make a list of gifts to give every person dear to us, and even those not close to us. Christmas has indeed been a festive season for all of us until the first week of January of the new year.

Nothing wrong with our tradition. It is our culture. It is what makes us unique as a people. “Walang ganyan sa States.” We love to give small or big gifts. We love to share. We love to make Christmas merry with lots of food and wine. We love togetherness. We love family, reel or real.

Our God loves to give, too. John 3:16 says “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” THE GIFT OF ALL GIFTS. OUR SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. As we accept the most precious yet priceless of all gifts, remember to share it and make Jesus a part of every present that we hand to anyone, young or old, and most importantly, must be in our hearts and spirit. Make everyone feel and see Jesus in us, in our homes, in our get-togethers, in our Christmas parties. Share the presence of our Savior. Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever.

**A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL!**

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**MICHAEL DON EPP, SENIOR VP, ACSI GLOBAL, USA VISITS THE ACSI PHILIPPINES**

If the whole country prepared especially for the ASEAN Summit from November 12 to 19, ACSI PHILIPPINES welcomed warmly the Senior Vice-President of ACSI Global, USA, Michael Don Epp. His first visit to the Philippines took him to key places in Metro Manila and Cebu. His one week stay was highlighted by a special seminar-workshop he led on “A Biblical Perspective of Financial Management and Fund Raising”. He conducted one in the MGC New Life Christian Academy (MGCNLCA) in Taguig City and another in Ikthus Time Square, Mandaue City, Cebu. Both events were well-attended and were very productive as gleaned from the interactive discussions among delegates and with Mike Epp.

MGCNLCA headed by Mrs. Helen K. Villanueva was a very gracious host and was instrumental in the smooth conduct of the seminar. Mrs. Villanueva was represented by Mr. Kenrick Chua who gave the welcome remarks. Present in the Metro Manila event were ACSI Phils Board Members, Ms. Luz Isobal, Principal of Bethel International School, Palo, Leyte and Mrs. Alice Foronda, Principal of Cornerstone Christian Academy, Quezon City.

The program started with a Praise and Worship led by Vincent Sabong and two other members of the JCGS Outreach Church in Quezon City. Ms. Isobal led the opening prayer. Mike Epp started his talk on building a Biblical Foundation by conducting...
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ACSI GLOBAL SENIOR VP VISITS THE ACSI PHILS

case studies on Moses, David, and Paul. He presented new approaches to funding and asked everyone to establish one’s personal orbit and fund-raising orbit to help in identifying sources of support. A number of group works were conducted and everyone participated and shared their experiences and thoughts on all topics. The workshop centered on each school represented to build their case for support and share their cases with the whole group. The book, “A Spirituality of Fundraising” was made available at a reasonable cost to all participants.

The Mandaue event was handled by ACSI Board Dr. Rosario Alfafara, Principal of Mandaue Christian School. In attendance was the School Directress of Philippine Christian Gospel School (PCGS) in Cebu and an ACSI Board member, Dr. Wanda Po.

School Visits Conducted

In spite of Metro Manila schools having a week’s holiday due to the Summit, it was fortunate for the schools in Cavite to be holding regular classes. It was an opportune time for Mike, Ms. Isobal, and Mrs. Evelyn M. Bumatay, ACSI Phils Country Director to visit two member schools in Cavite, Abraham’s Flock Christian Academy in Noveleta, Cavite and Imus Unida Christian School. Gracious enough to join the group was Ms. Genalin Uzarraga of UCCP-Cagayan de Oro Christian School.

A group of selected high school students from Abraham’s Flock serenaded the group with two wonderfully rendered song numbers. Mr. and Mrs. Howard and Arlene Poblete, Abraham’s Flock Administrator and Principal, respectively, took the group around their school, led them to visit classes, and presented the guests with delicacies from Cavite. Imus Unida under Dr. Josephine Bautista tendered a welcome lunch and a tour of their two campuses. Though Imus Unida has new facilities, the original Unida Church still stands and is able to preserve its old altar and wooden pews. God has truly blessed these two schools with talented students, competent faculty, and improved school facilities.

While in Cebu and after the Financial Management seminar, the group visited the 70-year old PCGS, a Christian Chinese school. Dr. Wanda Po led a tour of PCGS including a visit to their new school building that provided classrooms and facilities to their Senior High School.

The next stop was at Mandaue Christian School’s (MCS) two campuses. MCS opens their classrooms to outreach groups that serve children from poor families as well as to a Christian church group for their worship services.

It was not pure work and school visits for Mike Epp; some relaxation time was also spent over lunch at Shakey’s with the ACSI Philippines staff, dinner in Taguig with a few Board members, and Jollibee dinner and special cakes and tea in a coffee shop, both in Cebu. Historical spots in Cebu were also visited capped with lunch at Mactan Shangri-la.

Mike Epp’s message: “thank you for a well-planned and meaningful trip to the Philippines. I greatly appreciate the good schedule, experiences, accommodations, and meals. Thank you, so much!
Praises to God for a fruitful week!

See more photos at www.acsiphils.org
FEATURES

ACSI PHILIPPINES PARTICIPATES IN GRACE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Grace Christian College (GCC) hosted their 28th Grace Christian Education Convention last November 10 & 11 at their school grounds and Chapel. The theme was “Equipped to Serve: Facing Challenges; Harnessing Opportunities; Developing Global Leadership.” In attendance were thousands of teachers and principals from all over the country.

Keynote speakers were Dr. Bob Gillespie, Reasons of Hope, USA, Mr. Ernest Cheng, Managing Director of Canadian Test Centre, Dr. Delbert Hooge, Executive Director of School of Tomorrow Philippines, Dr. James Tan, President of Grace Christian College, among others.

It was a blessing for the ACSI Philippines Country Director, Mrs. Evelyn M. Bumatay, to be among the roster of speakers in two of the numerous seminars that were open to all participants. On the first day, Mrs. Bumatay presented the topic on “Developing and Strengthening School Culture.” On the second day, steps on how to utilize “the Flipped Classroom” as one instructional tool to make students learn much from their classes were described in detail by Mrs. Bumatay. It was a worthwhile event with some of the teachers from ACSI Philippines member schools in attendance.

During the GCC Leaders’ Convention the previous days, ACSI Philippines presented a Special Book Sale and set up display booth that offered a 50% discount for all leaders who attended the event. The school leaders found ACSI books valuable and useful; thus, a considerable number of books were sold.

Synopsis of ACSI Director’s Talks
Developing and Strengthening School Culture
To evaluate a school’s culture, one must first understand the essence or the way of being of the institution. Why do we do the things we do? What do our habits say about who we are and what we value? What practices have become entrenched in our school? The answers to these questions are the foundation of your school’s culture. We Christians differ in our relationships, dress patterns, value structures, and language. When we speak of school culture what exactly are we talking about?

The Flipped Classroom
Students are bored and it’s our fault. We fail to adjust teaching methods to meet the way our student’s brains function best. The weakness of the traditional approach is that not all students come to class prepared to learn. Some lack adequate background for the material, are uninterested in the subject, or have been simply disenchanted with the approach. Old model is based on pushing students together in age-group batches with one-pace-fits-all curricula and hoping they pick up something along the way. Flipped Classroom could be one tool utilize inside the classroom.

MEET THE ACSI PHILIPPINES STAFF

Milo F. Gigare, Bookkeeper, has been with the ACSI Philippines since 2012. A graduate of Bachelor of Science in Commerce Major in Accounting from Central Philippine University, Jaro, Iloilo, he spent 32 years as Accounting Head of the Philippine National Construction Corporation (PNCC).

He hails from San Pedro, Laguna, has three children (two sons and a daughter) and three grandchildren with his wife, Melody. He attends and is the Treasurer of Living Vessel Christian Baptist Church.

Jessica F. Ortillo, 29, is the new Administrative Officer from Mandaluyong City. She is married to Mark Anthony and they have a son, four-year old John Caleb. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Major in Office Management, a four-year course, from the Rizal Technological University.

She worked previously at an agency manpower firm, Power Edge Inc., for three years. She attends Jesus Christ the Door of Blessing International in Mandaluyong City.
St. Stephen’s High School is considered the first Christian Chinese School in the Philippines. Its story began in St. Stephen’s Church of Manila which was established in 1903 and ran by the American Episcopal Mission in the Philippines headed by Bishop Charles Henry Brent.

St. Stephen’s High School celebrated its Centennial Founding Anniversary on July 22, 2017 with the theme, “God’s Faithfulness Through All Generations”. St. Stephen’s High School started the year 2017 with a series of special events that highlight Stephenian values and excellence. The school hosted various interschool, alumni, and in-school competitions. Last February, the school hosted a well-attended FedRun.

To celebrate God’s faithfulness throughout all generations, St. Stephen’s High School held a Centennial Grand Alumni Homecoming at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) last July 16. Many of the school’s alumni from different batches attended the event. Alumni who are residing or working overseas even took the time off from their busy schedules just to grace the event. A number of students, alumni, faculty and staff showcased their talents through different song and dance numbers. The school also took this opportunity to present the many improvements that the school has undergone and the plans for renovations and further upgrading of the school’s facilities, as well as projects for teachers’ development.

Another highlight in this year’s celebration is the school’s Centennial Musical Production entitled “The Song of Stephen”. Students and alumni presented on the stage of Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) a retelling of the school’s colorful and rich history. Mr. Jaime del Mundo was the play’s librettist and artistic director, alumnus Mr. Arwin Tan, was the composer and musical director, and Mr. Alan Choa choreographed the dance number of the musical. The two runs of the musical were well attended by students, parents, alumni, and other guests.

Some text messages received were:
“The show moved me to tears many times. The guests we invited from abroad were touched by the teachers’ lives.”

“Congratulations! “The Song of Stephen” is indeed a testament of God’s story and faithfulness for His purpose and glory. May God continue to use you and the school in the years to come.”

“Your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).” “It is not easy to put all your energy in education, especially in Christian education in the post modern world. But God knows your heart.”

“The message of the importance of Christian education is very clear and loud in the song! May God continue to use St. Stephen to send God’s loving message to the loveless society.”

Truly, the Lord is gracious and generous. These events are simple ways of testifying to the world God’s faithfulness to St. Stephen’s High School. They are looking forward to another hundred years of God’s blessing and grace. May the Lord continue to use St. Stephen’s High School in molding minds and talents, and preparing generations to become productive members of their respective communities. In everything, all glory and honor is ascribed to the head of SSHS -- Almighty God, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and Comforter, The Holy Spirit.