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“BEHOLD, THE FORMER THINGS HAVE COME TO PASS AND NEW THINGS I DECLARE” Isa. 42:9

The end of another year is traditionally a time for looking back and a time for looking forward to what the New Year has in store. As we stand at the end of 2007 and look toward 2008, I feel the Lord wants me to open up my heart to you and share what has happened this past year, where we are at now, and where I believe God wants to take us in the year ahead.

Looking Back

First of all, we hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and we wish you a Blessed New Year. As for me, this really has not been a very Merry Christmas season. In all honesty, it has been the most depressing Christmas season of my life. I know Christians are not “supposed” to get depressed but let’s be honest with one another for a change. Christians are as human as any one else. We suffer the same challenges and temptations as all our neighbors. The only difference is that we do not have to live without hope or face our challenges alone. We have Someone to lean on, no matter how dark the night.

Financially this has been the worst year we have ever experienced in the ministry. The income for Church Triumphant dropped by 40% from what it was last year. We have not even been able to meet our monthly budget for the work in the Philippines. To add to the pressure on us personally, about two years ago I did a very foolish thing. I put most of Barbara’s inheritance (\$40,000) into a short-term investment with a “Christian” businessman. Based on that “guaranteed” return, we stepped out in faith and bought a home of our own (our first since we sold our previous house in California and moved to Romania in 1992). We were able to purchase the house well below market value with the idea of living in the house while fixing it up and then reselling it in about two years for a profit, hopefully \$100,000 or more. The short term investment with the Christian businessman was supposed to be paid back by October, 2006, at the latest and would have more than covered the monthly payments on the house while we were fixing it up. That did not happen. Our investment turned into a financial disaster where we lost everything. More than a year later we have still received nothing back but empty promises. In the meantime the bottom has dropped out of the housing market here in California and our house has lost at least \$100,000 in value, making it impossible to refinance. God has been gracious but still we will start the new year three months behind on our mortgage.

I know Christians aren’t supposed to admit it when they are struggling financially. Someone may think, “They just need to have more faith”, but that is utter nonsense. Read Philippians 4:11-13. The Apostle Paul said that he had learned both how to abound and how to suffer need. I remember many years ago when we were living in Omaha, Nebraska. I would earn additional income by buying a house, fixing it up, and then reselling it at a profit to supplement my income from the ministry. Over the years we have taken just \$500 a month out of the ministry for our personal needs leaving everything else to go into the ministry. We had just sold our house in North Omaha and bought a house in nearby Bellevue when the deal fell through on the old house, leaving us with two mortgage payments. I asked for prayer about the situation at a prayer meeting. A dear friend responded by saying, “Howard, you just have to have more faith.” I didn’t say anything but I couldn’t help thinking, “I own two houses and you own none. Yet, you are telling me to ‘have more faith’?”

Unexpected Breakthrough on Mindanao

The lack of finances has put an additional strain on the work in the Philippines as well. Ministry outreach has been continuing but monthly support for the workers has had to be cut back because the money just hasn't been there compared to a year ago. Earlier this month we received an email from Pastor Allan Asang, our Filipino Director. He told us he had been forced to remove a Board member because of a serious, long hidden sin that had been exposed. He went on to share that they were three months behind on the mortgage for the headquarters building and church in Tagum City and that the bank in Manila was threatening foreclosure even though they were only nine months away from paying it off completely (about \$2,700). We were only able to send them one month's payment along with a note explaining that, at the time, we were also two months behind on the mortgage on our home and asking them to pray that we would not lose our house. We also encouraged him that he had done the right thing in removing the offending Brother who refused to repent. We instructed him to bring the pastors and the Board together to explain what had happened and why the guilty pastor had been put out. We serve a Holy God who expects us to walk in integrity before Him and before the world.

We were totally unprepared and were moved to tears by their response that we will share in Allan's own words.

Dearest Our Beloved Missionaries,

Praise God for His mighty moved in our Pastors meeting, there are 12 churches participated the churches from far region can't able to go due of some financial crises. Last night we have a very powerful time in prayers. God spoke to us how to live in every situation as God servant. As paul stated in Eph, 6. we end up our prayers at 12 midnight last night and in this morning revealed more sins in each of us and we forgive each other and ask forgiveness to God and God revealed a Verse to Albert in Jer. 2:8.

We end up our gathering in prayers and 1 pm today, and we unite to pray for you and your needs. And the Pastors here are give pledges to help your needs at this time. We will send it on next week as we gathered all the offerings Pastor Oscar list all the commitment to give its total \$350 and we want to send it to you by next week. To help your house payment Praise God and we have very powerful prayers concerning your situation this morning until 1 pm. We believe God has a great move of it to supply the needs. Praise God.....

Pastor ___ did not come he missed the great move of God healing the broken hearted and very open each other we shared in our hearts to God and to each other repentance take place and prayed a blessings for each Pastors, and we released forgiveness to thos who hurt us and the ministry who betrayed us. I announced to the Pastors and CTMI board that Pastor ___ is no longer part of CTMI. As I know he is in gather of ___ group also. (a group causing division by preaching false doctrine)

On January 1 started our prayer day for CTMI ministry, each congregation pray for the ministry, on January 1 the main church in Tagum city and then 2 Calabcab church are committed to pray, then 3 dugayan until all churches make it. So daily we have one church who will committed prayers for the ministry. Praise God, I trust there will be a great move of God for it. List all the prayer request and I will pass to the churches each congregation pray each day.

We LOve you so much and we pray for you.

In Him,

Allan and Family

Did you catch that? These poor pastors, many of whom struggle along on less than \$50 a month, committed to sending us \$350 toward our mortgage payment. What sacrifice! More than that, they were on their faces in prayer before the throne of God until midnight repenting of past failures, forgiving one another, and restoring one another as God purified His people and healed the broken hearted. They are getting right with God and with each other and restoring daily prayer as the sure foundation for the ministry there. This is the breakthrough we have waited and believed God for! They are finally taking ownership, listening to the Holy Spirit, and putting their reliance on Him instead of us. On Wednesday, December 19, 2007, the ministry of Church Triumphant on Mindanao came to maturity and wholeness. Praise God for His great faithfulness and mercy.

A New Sense of Direction

After being on the road from mid-October through November into December, we have set aside time to seek the face of God and get direction from Him for the year ahead. He has shown us His heart for the ministry of Church Triumphant. First of all, He has clearly instructed us that He no longer wants us to send regular personal support for the pastors in the Philippines. He wants to break the cycle of dependency on America. He wants them to become God dependent rather than man dependent. We will continue to help with some special projects such as paying off the building and assisting to build some churches but He wants them to look to Him as their Jehovah Jireh for their personal support.

Secondly, God has shown us His heart for America. In Luke 19:41-44, Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on a donkey to the cries of “Hosanna!” Yet he cries bitterly over the city because He sees their hearts and knows that they will face destruction “because you did not know the time of your visitation”. In the very same way, Jesus is weeping over America because we are in great danger of missing our hour of visitation. The Lord wants so much to pour out His Holy Spirit and send a great revival to America but the Church is not ready!

We believe that God is calling us as missionaries to America, to help call the Church in America to return to her covenant with God. In this coming year, we feel God is calling us to travel across America not just to raise money for the Philippines but to do seminars to prepare the Church in America to come back to God’s heart. The Scripture He has given us is Isaiah 58:12 – “Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the “Repairer of the Breach”, the “Restorer of Streets to Dwell In”.

The Church in America, for the most part, has become like the people of Jerusalem in Luke 19. There was great celebration as they cried, “Blessed is the King who comes in the Name of the Lord”. They were dancing in the streets but, in the midst of the enthusiasm, something was missing. The people were saying all the right words but with the wrong motives. They were singing all the right songs but they were blessing themselves instead of understanding their hour of visitation and what it really meant. They were praising Jesus for what they THOUGHT He would do – deliver them from the Roman armies and restore peace, prosperity, and honor to their nation. But Jesus had another agenda. So they crucified their King.

The Scriptures say in Ecclesiastes 3 that there is a time for every purpose under Heaven. We must recognize what time it is from God’s point of view. I don’t think it is too late for America but it is time to wake up and lay aside our personal needs and earthly comforts for the sake of the Gospel.

God called and established America as a nation founded on freedom to take the message of freedom and salvation to the ends of the Earth. That is why God prospered this nation above every other nation. There was a time when we fulfilled that calling, sending more missionaries than any other nation but not any more. Along came the “Me Generation” preaching a “Me First” Gospel of convenience. Success is now measured by the 3 B’s – buildings, bodies, and bucks! The latest statistics tell us that last year Americans spent more money on pet food than was spent on world missions. A higher percentage of income was given for cross cultural mis-

sionaries by Believers in Nigeria than in America. The Church is exploding in China and India as Believers risk everything to share the message of salvation with those who have never heard. Yet the average church in America did not gain even one member by conversion in all of 2006. Something has to change!

Like the Ephesian church in Revelation 2, the Church in America has done a lot of good things over the years but we have left our first Love. We have traded our intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, for religious activities that make us “feel good” on the outside but leave us empty deep inside.

We Need Your Help

James 5:16 says “...pray for one another, that you may be healed...” I don’t think James was talking just about physical healing but he was talking about a total healing – physically, spiritually, financially, emotionally – whatever is contrary to God’s plan for you – life and more abundant life. We want to covenant with you to pray especially for you and your needs and we ask that you will pray for our needs and us. We know this breakthrough in the Philippines would not have been possible without your prayers on their behalf. Please let us know what your needs are and we will set aside time to pray for you, for your church, your family, or whatever your needs are.

In return, we ask that you would pray for us, that God would give us greater clarity of vision, more precise direction, and a greater revelation of His plans. Pray for our financial needs that God will supply according to His perfect plan and timing. Pray for our physical needs as well. Howard has been diagnosed with type II diabetes. The doctors say that there is no cure but God always has the last word. Barbara has been diagnosed with high blood pressure and hypothyroidism.

Pray especially for a clear sense of specific direction regarding our ministry to America. We need to know if God is wanting us to launch out on the road full time with multiple seminars back to back or if He wants us to pastor a church somewhere as a ministry base and then reach out with occasional seminars as He opens the door. I know that I am not called as a typical pastor to spend 20 – 30 years in one location. What I believe God is saying to do is a ministry similar to what we did in Timisoara, Romania and, to a lesser extent, on Mindanao. For lack of a better terminology, I would call it an apostolic pastor who goes into an area to establish the church on a solid Biblical foundation and then trains local leaders to carry on the work. This is the pattern that the Apostle Paul followed. It might involve coming to a church that doesn’t have a pastor on a short term basis to establish them, encourage them, equip them and train local leaders for the ministry God created them to accomplish, and then release them to fulfill their destiny to impact their world with the life changing message of redemption in Christ Jesus. I believe that God wants to bring transformation to America one community at a time.

We know America is heavy on God’s heart and He wants to call this nation back to Himself. He would not show us His heart unless there was something he wants us to do about it. Pray that we will have a clear understanding of what, where, when, and how to come into the fullness of His plan and His purposes for Church Triumphant. God bless you for all your love and prayers and financial support over the years. May we face 2008 together, holding tight to God’s unchanging hand with our eyes fixed on things eternal.

As you pray for us for a clear sense of direction, we would appreciate hearing back from you whatever God would share with you, whether positive or negative. The Bible says “In the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Pro.11:14). If you would like to schedule a meeting or seminar in your church or if you know of a church without a pastor that would be open to us coming for a season as described above, please contact us. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Howard & Barbara Gard

Please join us in prayer for these needs.

- Day 1 – Please pray for the churches on Mindanao as one by one they set aside an entire day to pray over the ministry there. Pray that they will see specific answers to their prayers and be encouraged.
- Day 2 – Praise God that the fighting between the Muslim terrorists and the Philippine army has calmed down. Pray for the displaced people in South Cotabato as they return to their homes and farms.
- Day 3 – Pray for the many areas of the Philippines affected by typhoons, heavy flooding, and mudslides during the rainy season. Pray the bridges, roads, farms, and buildings will be quickly restored.
- Day 4 – Pray for the village pastors who gave so sacrificially to meet someone else's need. Pray that God will multiply it back to them to more than meet their needs.
- Day 5 – Pray that the Holy Spirit will put His seal on the spiritual breakthrough that came as the pastors repented to and forgave one another for past offenses. May those doors stay closed to the past as these Believers walk in newness of life.
- Day 6 – Pray for those pastors who were unable to attend the meetings that God would minister to them where they are and bring them to new levels of breakthrough in their lives also.
- Day 7 – Praise God for the awesome breakthrough among the leaders on Mindanao. Thank Him for healing the broken hearted and letting the oppressed go free as He breaks every yoke of unforgiveness.
- Day 8 – Pray for the pastor who was trapped in hidden sin and had to be removed from ministry. Pray that he will come to a place of confession, repentance, and restoration before it is eternally too late.
- Day 9 – Pray that God will provide the financial resources necessary to quickly pay off the mortgage on the Church Triumphant headquarters building in Tagum City.
- Day 10 – Pray that God will give the Gards the clear specific directions they need for the next phase of their ministry to America.
- Day 11 – Pray for wisdom for the voters in America as they go to the polls to vote in primary elections in state after state. Pray that people of integrity will be chosen as candidates at every level of government.
- Day 12 – Pray for Joel Baba, one of our Bible school students from Pamam-onan in the province of Surigao Del Sur. He has not yet graduated but is already pioneering a church in his area.
- Day 13 – Pray for Renie Robles, another student from our newest Bible school who is also pioneering a church in the same area of Surigao Del Sur.
- Day 14 – Pray for Leonido & Mercylyna Gudilos, two more of our Bible school students who are pioneering churches in Rosario in the province of Agusan Del Sur.
- Day 15 – Praise God that He is raising up so many young people who are ready to lay down their lives to reach the lost with the Good News of salvation.

- Day 16 – Pray for Pastor Allan Asang as he provides the necessary leadership for the work on Mindanao. Pray that he will continue to grow in his ability to hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- Day 17 – Pray for Albert and Emma Asang as they lead the Bible school and church planting ministries of Church Triumphant on Mindanao.
- Day 18 – Pray for Pastor Ernie Balong who provides leadership for District 1 as well as teaches in the Bible school and serves on the Board. He has served faithfully under difficult circumstances and been a great blessing to the ministry there.
- Day 19 – Pray for faith to arise in the hearts of all God’s people who have been trusting in America to supply their needs. Pray that they will instead trust in God. Pray that He will respond with abundant provision as He shows Himself faithful so that Jesus may receive all the glory.
- Day 20 – Pray that the curse of poverty will be broken off God’s people on Mindanao.
- Day 21 – Praise God that He is bringing greater maturity and accountability to His leaders among the tribal people of Mindanao.
- Day 22 – Pray for Ignacio Antay as he pastors the church in Kimataan village.
- Day 23 – Pray for Pastor Ondo Dinglas and his church in Sabud up in the mountains.
- Day 24 – Pray for Pastor Jaime Petogo as he pioneers the church in Upper Ampawid.
- Day 25 – Pray for Pastor Antonio Catalino and his congregation in Binukayan village.
- Day 26 – Pray for Pastor Zaldy Dayanan as he pastors in the community of Datu Ampunan.
- Day 27 – Pray for Pastor Rogimi Bangunan and his congregation in Puyopayahan.
- Day 28 – Praise God for the many tribal people who have received Christ as Savior this past month.
- Day 29 – Pray for our dear friends at Mana Ministries. They have a very effective ministry to the street children in Timisoara, Romania but now forces within the government are trying to shut down their Home for Girls because they are evangelical Christians. Pray that God will bless them with supernatural favor and provision.
- Day 30 – Pray that God’s Kingdom will come and His will be done throughout the Earth as it is in Heaven.