

# *Church Triumphant*

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## ***“FOR WE DO NOT WRESTLE AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD...” Eph. 6:12a***

As we begin a new year in our walk with the Lord, it is important to remember that we live in a war zone. It may not look like a war zone physically (unless you live in a big city where street gangs are battling over drug territories) but be sure that you live in a war zone spiritually. You have an enemy who has come to steal, kill, and destroy. The good news is that you also have a victorious Leader who has come to bring abundant Life (John 10:10).

When troubles come and problems threaten to overwhelm, it is easy to think that your enemy is the person opposing you in the natural realm – your rebellious children, your demanding boss, your irresponsible employees, your nagging wife, your cold and uncaring husband, your “unspiritual” pastor who doesn’t recognize your spiritual “gift”, your unreasonable neighbor, the drug dealer on the street corner, etc., etc. No! They may be the one your enemy is using but your real enemy is Satan and his kingdom of darkness. You overcome him by applying the blood of Jesus to your heart, dying to your flesh, and living a testimony of victory by the power of the Holy Spirit working within you. He will use all these challenges to conform you to the image of Christ. As your heart is purified and your life reflects the righteousness of Christ, those you think are your enemies will be drawn by the Christ they see in you. Then you will be able to lead them out of darkness and into the glorious light of the Kingdom of God. Your “enemies” will become your Brothers and Sisters in Christ and your real enemy will have lost another of his captives. What better way to start the New Year than by bringing more souls into the Kingdom of God!

### ***War in the Philippines***

Last month, we shared the burden God put on our hearts about the need to cover the Philippines with a more intense canopy of prayer. We are so grateful to all of you who joined us in our 30 days of prayer. We had no idea of how crucial that need for prayer really was. We want to continue to focus prayer on the work there so you will find another 30 day prayer guide at the end of this newsletter.

This fall and winter have been difficult times for the Philippines. We were blessed by God with an unusually quiet hurricane season here in America, a welcome respite from last year. What America dealt with last year, the South Pacific faced this year. The Philippines was hit directly by six typhoons this season. Most of the damage was on Luzon and the Visayans but the mountains of Mindanao were hit with landslides caused by the torrential rains that mark just the beginning of the rainy season. The battering from the typhoons was symptomatic of the great war that is now taking place in the heavenlies above the Philippines. That is why our prayers at this time are so crucial.

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, President of the Philippines, has made a push over the last several years to get rid of the New People’s Army (NPA), the communist rebels who have been fighting against the government of the Philippines since the days of Ferdinand Marcos. As democracy has triumphed over dictatorship, their numbers have decreased to about 7,000 according to official government sources. In recent weeks, President Arroyo has increased pressure on the NPA in an attempt to wipe them out completely. One of the major strongholds of the NPA is the mountain tribal areas of Mindanao, the same areas that are the focus of much of our ministry.

In the past there have been problems with the communist rebels from time to time. Two and a half years ago we had a close call while holding a conference at the church in Sua-on. In the middle of the night, two communist rebels came to the house where we were staying, intending to kill the owner of the house and anyone else who got in their way. Datu Amado Owambay, a local chieftain stopped them from coming in. Last year we were not even able to visit Sua-on at all because of a military confrontation between the Philippine army and the NPA that was happening in the area at that time. On another visit a year ago, we were not able to visit the Talaingod area because increased communist activity there made it too dangerous.

### *The Battle Heats Up*

The communist party of the Philippines and their military wing the NPA, a Maoist group dedicated to the violent overthrow of the Philippine government, are fighting for their survival. They are desperately trying to extort the finances necessary to win additional seats in Congress to establish themselves as a “legitimate” political party so they can then accuse President Arroyo of “civil rights abuses” when she tries to use the army to protect innocent civilians and government officials from their violence and oppression.

The tribal areas of Mindanao have become a major battleground in this war. NPA leaders are demanding large sums of money from anyone coming into the tribal areas trying to develop resources and provide jobs for the tribal people. This is causing problems for many of the people we have been working with in trying to bring help to the tribal areas. Many of the chieftains who have come to the Lord through our efforts are on the brink of all out war with the communist rebels because the NPA is now fighting to stop the spread of the Gospel.

Three chieftains and two other tribal leaders have already been murdered by the NPA in recent weeks in an attempt to frighten the tribal people into submission. One of the murdered chieftains was Deputy Mayor Elias Dumalandong, an Ata chieftain who came to the Lord at the Peace Conference in May, 2004, where 300 chieftains renounced every other god and made Jesus Christ Lord of Mindanao. Datu Elias was a friend and a major link between the government and the tribal chieftains. When his term in office expired, he was planning to attend Bible school with his wife and become a pastor. If all out war comes to the mountains, many more precious Brothers and Sisters in Christ will die.

We are engaged in all out spiritual warfare to rescue the souls of men from the kingdom of darkness. That war is being mirrored in the natural by increased violence between the NPA and the Philippine army with the tribal people caught in the middle. What Satan is trying to do through the NPA is to regain control over the area through a blood sacrifice. He does not care who gets killed as long as death and destruction enable him to reestablish control through fear. We need to pray that the blood of Jesus covers the innocent blood that is shed on the land and that peace is quickly restored with a minimum loss of life.

This is not a time to turn around and run but a time to redouble our efforts in prayer and a time to send additional financial help to those caught in the crossfire that threatens to destroy everything they have. Join with us in reaching out to our hurting Brothers and Sisters in Christ, surrounding them with our prayers and our compassion. May 2007 be a year of great victory for them and for you as well. God bless you abundantly.

Howard & Barbara Gard

## *30 Day Prayer Focus*

Again we have included a 30 day prayer calendar. You can begin following the calendar when you finish the previous calendar or as soon as it arrives if you have already finished the previous one. We invite you to join us in daily prayer for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the Philippines and for one another. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you in prayer so you can pray what is on God's heart for each situation.

Day 1 – Please pray for our Filipino Director Allan Asang. Pastor Allan was just released from the hospital suffering from gout (a form of arthritis), respiratory problems, fever, and exhaustion. He works long hours ministering in villages throughout Mindanao under very difficult conditions. Pray for his total healing and God's protection and provision for him, his family, and his ministry.

Day 2 – Pray for great wisdom and direction for the tribal chieftains as they decide whether to join with the government in going to war against the communist rebels.

Day 3 – Pray for God's protection on the chieftains and tribal leaders who have been targeted for assassination by the NPA.

Day 4 – Pray for the Philippine army that they will be able to take out the rebels with a minimum loss of civilian lives.

Day 5 – Pray for the members of the NPA that they will turn away from their violence and find deliverance in Jesus Christ who wills that none should perish but that all would repent and find eternal life in Him.

Day 6 – Pray for the tribal people caught in the middle of the conflict that God's hand of protection will be upon them and that the battle raging around them will cause them to draw closer to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Pray that they will grow stronger in their personal relationship with Him.

Day 7 – Praise God for the many former members of the NPA who have come to Christ in the last six years. Pray that they will continue to grow in their walk with Him.

Day 8 – Pray for God's hand of protection on Pastor Ernie Balong and his family. Pastor Ernie teaches at the Bible school in Tagum City and serves a District Supervisor for District 1 that includes many areas controlled by the NPA. He also pastors our church in the village of Florida.

Day 9 – Pray for God's protection and provision for Pastor Prudencio (Pepper) Sabio who pastors the church in Melale and teaches at the Bible school there. He also serves as District Supervisor for District 2 that is also greatly impacted by the struggle between the NPA and the Philippine army.

Day 10 – Pray for the other prayer warriors who are a part of this prayer initiative in America, the Philippines, and around the world. Pray for God's blessing, provision, and protection on them and their loved ones.

Day 11 – Pray for all the teachers and students in our Bible schools who are preparing to become church planters. Pray that they will grow in their walk with the Lord so they can effectively minister to others from the Word of God and not just from the opinions of men.

Day 12 – Pray that God will raise up prayer coordinators in every church on Mindanao who will have the ability to train and motivate others to pray as well.

Day 13 – Pray for the widow of Datu Elias Dumalandong and their family as well as for the wives and families of

the other chieftains and tribal leaders who were murdered by the NPA in recent weeks.

Day 14 – Praise God for His promise to care for the widows, the orphans, and all who are oppressed.

Day 15 – Pray for Pastor Talio Nebula and his growing church in the village of Salvation.

Day 16 – Pray for Pastor Albert Asang and his wife Emma who pastor the church in Panabo as well as heading up the Bible schools and the church planting ministry of Church Triumphant.

Day 17 – Pray for Pastor Janjem Dinglas who graduated from our Bible school and now pastors the church in Kipalili. Pray also for his father who pastors the church in Sabud.

Day 18 – Pray for Pastor Jonathan Saburan and his church in Sua-on. Communist activity has been strong in this area in the past.

Day 19 – Pray for Pastor Bayani Asang, our chief carpenter who has taken the position of pastor at the church in Dugayon in addition to his other responsibilities. Pray that God will protect him physically, emotionally, and spiritually in this dangerous area.

Day 20 – Pray for all the churches that support this ministry on a regular basis that God will bless and multiply the effectiveness of their outreach within their own communities. Be sure to pray for your own church and pastor as well.

Day 21 – Praise God for His grace and mercy in protecting us from terrorist attack during the holiday season.

Day 22 – Pray for God's hand of protection on the tribal people and their farms during the rainy season.

Day 23 – Pray that God will provide the finances necessary to meet the needs of His people who are trusting in Him during these difficult times.

Day 24 – Pray for Datu Amado Owambay that God's hand of protection will be upon him and that he will continue to be an effective peace maker between the government and the NPA.

Day 25 – Pray for Datu Amado Makurampil, the Provisional Governor of the tribal area, that God will give him great wisdom and courage to deal with the NPA threat.

Day 26 – Pray for Pastor Tony Asang who spearheads our outreach to the tribal chieftains that God will continue to give him great wisdom as the chieftains look to him for spiritual leadership.

Day 27 – Pray for Datu Sangat, a Manobo chieftain from the village of Misolong, who serves as head of the Tribal Council, a position of great responsibility during this time of conflict. Pray that he will draw closer to Jesus Christ, the Source of all wisdom.

Day 28 – Praise God that we had the opportunity to lead 300 of these key leaders to the Lord in May, 2004, so they now have Him to turn to during this time of crisis.

Day 29 – Pray that God will use this challenging time to demolish strongholds of darkness and establish His Kingdom in the hearts and lives of the tribal people of Mindanao. Pray that He will show Himself mighty on their behalf.

Day 30 – Pray for God's Kingdom to come and God's will to be done in your life, your family, your church, your community, throughout your nation, and around the world.