

MISSION: *Philippines*



NBS Vice President Beth Galbreath headed up an international mission trip in October of 2014 to the Philippines, an archipelago of over 7,000 islands lying about 500 miles (805 km) off the southeast coast of Asia.

Only about 7% of the islands are larger than one square mile, and only one-third have names.

So how did it all come about?

“This mission was conceived in 2011, when I was on a mission trip with my church, visiting the home congregations of Filipino members of our congregation.” Beth told us. “My husband, a pastor, preached on Luke’s resurrection story at all the churches we visited, after I told Luke, Chapter 24. And everywhere, folks said, ‘Come back and teach us to tell the scripture!’ So the trip in October of 2014 had been in gestation since February 2011. These efforts cannot be rushed.”



While a lot of time, energy and planning goes into a mission, both Beth and NBS Director of International Relations Juliana Rowe consider finding a strong local partner the most difficult and critical aspect of an international mission. Beth says, “I worked for several years to find a dependable partner on the islands; all fell through. But a chance meeting with the United

Methodist Bishop of the Manila area led to an invitation to teach at a youth assembly at Christmas, 2013. That was crucial because it allowed me to meet face-to-face with Wycliffe Philippines leaders who ultimately became our

partners. So I’m convinced that there is no substitute for a mission leader’s presence in a preliminary trip, making face-to-face connections and plans with local partners, unless the leader has previous relationships with someone on the ground, such as a missionary.”

The mission team of Beth, Larry Paul Gusto, Carole Danby, Jim Cyr, Penelope Ferguson, Phyllis Hostmeyer and Karl Hallsten departed for the Philippines on October 19 on a 1:00 a.m. flight to Manila and returned home on October 30, 2014. The ten-day mission included two biblical storytelling institutes and culminated in the founding of NBS Philippines.

On Monday (October 20) the team rested and held a team meeting. Tuesday they did a little shopping (huge malls are a part of the urban Philippine culture) and made a visit to the Museum of the Philippine People, which provided a deeper understanding of the nation’s history and culture.

On Wednesday, October 22, the actual work began and the team flew to Davao, on the island of Mindanao, for a two-day institute, returning to Manila on Saturday, October 25. Next, the team held a 3-day institute at Quezon City in the Manila metro area October 27-29. On the 30th they boarded planes for the 30 or so hours of travel back home, exhausted but thrilled with the mission’s success.

The trip was intentionally scheduled for semester break, so students were able to participate in the NBS Institutes for Biblical Storytelling.

The Philippine people are very young: 53% of the population are under the age of 25, and another 37% are between the ages of 25 and 54. In Davao, Dr. Julie Bustamante and her local team had arranged for students to get school credit for attending the institute, so large groups of enthusiastic teens as well as some older pastors and teachers participated. The team found the younger students thrilled to gain a new skill to



offer in church (besides being in the praise bands which are in nearly every church in the Philippines).

The team found the cultural norm of deference to age (a hallmark of Filipino culture) a challenge. When their elders were present, the younger folks were less likely to ask questions and had to be strongly encouraged to tell in front of the group! In Quezon City, the older pastors and professors had no hesitation in asking challenging questions, so the Q&A sessions were lively. And it was these pastors and professors who met the next Monday with Wycliffe leaders Rev. Dr. Romerlito Macalinao and Rev. Dr. Larry Paul Gusto, NBS partners in the mission, to found NBS Philippines.

The team also encountered differences in language skill. Although the national languages of Tagalog and English are taught in school, the heart language of many folks in Mindanao is not Tagalog but Bisaya (Visaya). So in Davao, even the Tagalog-speaking teacher and group participants had to slow down! The younger attendees were extremely tech-savvy. Smart phones were everywhere. Thanks to their enthusiasm NBS Philippines had a Facebook page before the return flight was off the runway!

More international trips are in the making, including one to Botswana. So, what does Beth say to others who may feel led to be on or even lead a team? "For me, the most important aspect—especially the patient, exacting and sometimes frustrating work of a team leader—is the knowledge that we have accomplished something important for the Reign of God in the 21st Century. We have set in motion ripples of passion for telling God's story in a new way, a way that will spread far beyond the participants in our workshops. We have laid the groundwork for dozens of other workshops and encouraged hundreds of new tellers to learn and tell the scriptures by heart!"

PHILIPPINE TEAM REFLECTIONS

Carole Danby,
Australia



My time in Davao in the south and Quezon City near Manila with five Americans from the Network was fascinating and deeply confronting, challenging and amazingly blessed. As someone who is quite active in children's ministry, the most powerful time for me was when a team of young people and the very humble female minister invited us to climb into the back of their van and visit the Payatas (dump site) where a church service was conducted for the children who live there. Storytelling and music were featured and small group discussion and prayer. After the service, some adults provided hot food with rice for all the children. This was so moving and humbling.



Jim Cyr,
New Jersey



I said "Yes!" to this mission because I had a desire to put my skills in biblical storytelling to use in spreading this vital skill for sharing the Good News. It cost me approximately \$2,000. Immersion in Filipino culture was a great learning experience. The chance to work with our Filipino brothers and sisters was very moving due to their love for Jesus and their excitement in sharing the good news. If you're considering being on our next team I'd say, "Do it!"

HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR AN NBS INTERNATIONAL MISSION

Tips from NBS
Philippines
Team Member
Phyllis Hostmeyer



Physical:

Begin walking and building endurance for long days.

Mental:

Study your stories and practice with real audiences. *Read about the country* you will be visiting so that you understand their culture and learn as much as you can about their history, government, needs, and people. *Study maps* to understand where you will be.

Emotional:

Be ready to deal with anything that comes your way. Problems with flights, long days, poor weather conditions, long waits, new foods. It is all part of the adventure and the more you embrace the challenges the more joyful your experience will be.

Spiritual:

Pray for God's guidance; pray for your teammates and your leader.

WANT TO GO ON AN NBS MISSION?

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