

June 2022

Dear AWR Friend,

**AWR**  
**50**  
**YEARS**  
**OF MINISTRY**


*Thirty couples—dressed in black and white—gathered to be officially married after giving their hearts to Jesus.*

I had never seen anything like it before!

Think about it: Thirty couples from the jungles of Mindoro, Philippines, who until recently had been living in primitive conditions, now dressed for their wedding—the women in white bridal gowns and the men in tuxedo-like black suits.

There they were in front of us, never before married but living together for years, having children, hiding from military forces, participating in assassination attacks—and now getting married!

It really began to sink in that Adventist World Radio (AWR)—only by God's grace—had just stopped a 50-year war. Something never seen or done before!

These couples couldn't get married before because they all had warrants out for their arrest, as they were assassins. Now they were fully pardoned by the government, getting married, being baptized, building churches, giving Bible studies to other rebels, and preaching evangelistic sermons for AWR! Their lives were changed forever.

"Please," they asked after the wedding, "can we keep the shoes?"

Everything they were wearing had been rented for the occasion—including their shoes. They had never owned shoes before and were now wearing them for the first time. How could we refuse their request? We made sure they all got to keep them!



*The newlyweds looked radiant on their wedding day.*

## ANOTHER AMAZING CONCLUSION—AND BEGINNING!

The story of the former rebels of Mindoro is like the Widow's Oil—never-ending in the best possible way!

You will recall that last November, a team from AWR, along with our world church president, Elder Ted Wilson, flew to the Philippines for a historic event that included first meeting with President Rodrigo Duterte in Manila to receive his gratitude for the part AWR and the Adventist Church played in ending the communist rebel resistance guerrilla group in Mindoro called the New People's Army. I shared that amazing encounter with you in a prior letter.

We then flew to the island of Mindoro, where we held multiple evangelistic events as part of a country-wide Total Member Involvement (TMI) initiative. When it was over, more than 124,000 people had been baptized! This exceeded the Rwanda 2016 TMI event, which until last year had been the largest in the history of the Adventist Church. In Mindoro alone, 2,000 were baptized on that last Sabbath, and this included the 700 former rebels, now fully reconciled.

## A PROMISE KEPT

You will recall that after the baptism of the former rebels, emotions ran high and God's Spirit could be felt moving hearts and bringing about a spirit of love and reconciliation. After the baptism, the 700 former rebels and their families came to us and said, "Today we leave the past behind and accept the commission of Jesus—we will go!"

A 50-year war was over, and these men and women had changed leaders. Now they were followers of Jesus. They understood the TMI concept of "each one reach one" and they promised to do just that. They said, "We have done terrible things, but now we want to reach more people from our villages up in the mountains. We promise to each one reach one!"

Then they added, "When we do, do you promise to return for their baptism?"

"Sure, we'll return!" someone from our group was quick to agree. We figured it would be another year before they reached their goal, and a year later would be a nice time to return for a follow-up.

Well, you know the rest of that story. One month later, in December, they called us and said, "We've reached our goal! We have another 700 ready for baptism!"

That's why this past April you saw us returning to the Philippines once more—and we were amazed by what we discovered! They had each one reached one—and then some! A total of 1,219 more people were ready for baptism, all as a result of the work of these former rebel assassins now fully restored and witnessing in their villages.

We were blown away. How was that possible? How had they done it?

## WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE

The thing is, when you're on fire for God and filled with awe at being forgiven a debt you knew you could never repay, your joy and gratitude know no bounds.

Not only did these restored men and women give Bible studies and gather their friends and villagers to present to them the *Revelation of Hope* Bible series material we gave them, but they began building churches in their villages. The funds you so generously provided for this project are making a huge difference, and churches are now cropping up all over Mindoro!



Meet Ernesto (center), a former rebel soldier now flanked by the 210 new converts he has helped prepare for baptism.



Every church built has become an entire village event. Whenever a church is planned for a village, the former rebels invite the whole village to participate in this event, letting them know everyone will be welcome in the church when it's finished, because it will be their village church. The enthusiasm is contagious, and as they work side by side with their neighbors, the former rebels also share their faith.

The results have been stunning. Everyone exceeded their goal of "each one reach one."

One couple, Dona and Dodo, had prayed, "God, give us more than just one each. We can do better than that!" So they prayed for a miracle and in the end brought 57 candidates for baptism!

Ernesto, another former assassin, had the astounding total of 210 people whom he proudly presented, all brought to the feet of Jesus by his testimony. It was an amazing celebration!

That's why we returned to Mindoro. We couldn't go back on our promise when they had so faithfully fulfilled and exceeded theirs!

We stopped at one village where they were building a church. We saw the former rebels pouring cement foundations, and with chain-saws, cutting lumber posts from jungle trees—and all the measurements were by hand. Yet the beams for the church were perfect. We were amazed at their ability! They said, "We prayed and told people in surrounding villages: 'Come and help us. This will be your church, too.' Everyone pitched in—and we're sharing with them what we've learned."

They're doing all of this while staying within their budget of \$5,000 per church. God has blessed this whole project in a fantastic way—from the moment we decided to blanket the island of Mindoro with the Three Angels' Messages, to the many high points of this journey, to the ending of the communist New People's Army guerrilla warfare in Mindoro.

But I've saved the best for last. Right now, we're praying for another miracle, and by the time you receive this letter, you may have witnessed it yourself!

A delegation of these fully restored former rebels—now Seventh-day Adventist Christians—is coming to the General Conference Session this month to share their experience and rejoice with the world church at what God has done and is doing.

As you can imagine, only by God's intervention will this happen. They're identified as former terrorists, and that's not a very favorable thing to have on your record when applying for a visa to the United States! But if we've learned anything, it's that God is a God of miracles!



*Across the island of Mindoro, new church buildings are springing up to meet the needs of the new believers.*



*The enthusiasm is contagious as former rebels invite villagers to help build the new churches and join them in Sabbath services.*

Another very special guest at the General Conference Session is a general of the Philippine armed forces. So many members of the military were moved by what God did to transform the rebels and assassins that they themselves surrendered their lives to Jesus and were baptized along with the former rebels last year.

But now, Brigadier General Augusto Villarreal has decided to take that step himself, and God willing, by the time you receive this letter, you will have witnessed his baptism taking place in St. Louis before our world church. What a celebration! It reminds me of another much more glorious occasion God has promised us in heaven. What a time of rejoicing that will be—and what surprises we will see!

## MOVING FORWARD

As I close this letter, I just received an amazing update from our Hasidic Jewish scholar in Israel, and also from our Baptist pastor in India. We've also just learned of another Sunday church in Namibia that is asking to transition to become an Adventist church, and we've heard an encouraging update from Ukraine. Later this month, right after the General Conference Session, we'll be in Nazareth for the dedication of our new evangelism center with Wisam Ali, and at the end of the month, we'll be in Cali, Colombia, for a special medical missionary outreach.

I could go on with more amazing updates, but all this news and much more will have to wait until next month. God is doing so many incredible things in so many different places around the world that it's exceedingly abundantly more than we can share in just one letter!

God is preparing an army of believers, and as we near the end of time, "By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 612)

Friend, we haven't seen anything yet. This is just the beginning of the wonderful things we will see right before Jesus comes. And as the world is falling apart all around us, and as evil spirits do their work, God's truth will shine with a brightness we haven't seen before. It is my prayer that you and I—and Adventist World Radio—will be the bearers of this light shining to every corner of the world and into every heart.

Thank you for partnering with us in this amazing journey of faith, for your prayers that encourage and bless, and for your financial support that makes everything we do possible, as together we proclaim that Jesus is coming soon!

Yours in the Blessed Hope,



Duane McKey  
President



P.S. We can't help but marvel at what God is doing not only among the rebels of Mindoro, but all around the world! Like Gideon's 300, this is not our battle, but God's. And with His Spirit leading the way, there can be no borders, no walls, and no limits!