

## Reflections on the February 2025 Mission Visit to the Philippines

By: Esther Lee

### 1. Pastor Chen's First Formation of the "Luzon, Philippines 13-Church Mission Visit Team"



**This journey was more than just a short-term mission—it was a vision trip.** The goal was to support brothers and sisters with a burden and calling for mid- to long-term missions by providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the current state of churches in Luzon, Philippines. Through on-site visits and exchanges, we were able to build close relationships and meaningful interactions with local pastors and co-workers.

**Our team consisted of eight members from four different churches:** Banqiao Ban-cheng Friends Church, Keelung Chong-xin Church, Zhonghe Nan-shi-jiao Friends Church, and Tainan Grace Church. Though we came from different backgrounds, we were united in Christ, brought together by the same calling and walked this journey hand in hand.

**Each member took on a specific role**—everyone had a place, everyone played their part, and together we functioned beautifully as a team from the very first stop. Alongside the lovely Yuhan, I witnessed how naturally and effectively we worked together: some were in charge of photography and leading the itinerary, others focused on medical care and outreach. There were those responsible for translation (like me), finances, administration, media coordination, children's activities, and also those faithfully supporting us through prayer and spiritual devotions. As 1 Peter 4:10 says, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." On this journey, we truly experienced that no gift is too small, and every act of service is indispensable.

Upon arriving at the Manila Mission Training Dormitory, we discovered that the elevator was out of order. With heavy luggage in hand, two brothers didn't hesitate to carry bags up nine floors for the rest of us—trip after trip. It was deeply touching and heartwarming. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) That night, I silently prayed, "Lord, truly, we are Your disciples. Amen!"

**Reflection:** This vision trip once again reminded me that possessing Christlike character is crucial to the success of mission work. It's not about how much we can do, how much we can say, or how far we can go—but whether we can live out the image of Christ. Through love, humility, faithfulness, and teamwork, we reflect His glory.

## 2. Visiting 13 Churches Across Luzon, Philippines

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Visiting the thirteen churches on Luzon Island was the core of this mission trip. Although I had previously seen these churches and their pastors through short-term mission videos, online meetings, and countless photos shared in our chat groups, so much so that they felt quite familiar to me. However, stepping onto Philippine soil, walking into each church, and shaking hands with the pastor face to face, it was an entirely different experience.

I came to realize deeply that nothing can replace the impact of firsthand experience. It reminded me of Job's words: "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you." (Job 42:5)—Moving from knowledge to encounter, from observation to genuine connection, is a transformation on a completely different level.

**Gratitude for the Helping Hands Behind the Scenes:** I want to express special thanks to Yuhan and Qianlong. It was their creativity, initiative, and Pastor Chen's support that made this extensive 13-church tour possible. They willingly walked the extra mile, dedicating extra time and resources to ensure the visits were thorough and meaningful. Their efforts deserve full recognition and our heartfelt appreciation.

**A Snapshot of Our Seven-Day Church Tour:** To help visualize our journey, I labeled the churches we visited in chronological order across the seven days. Among them, the farthest was San Andres, located at the southern tip of Luzon. It's a quiet, beautiful fishing village by the sea, about ten hours by car from Manila—a true journey to the "ends of the earth." We had originally planned to take a boat to a nearby island for a short excursion, but due to travel time constraints and a scheduled evening church meeting, we had to cancel. Although it was a bit disappointing, it reminded us again: The heart of a mission trip lies not in sightseeing, but in encounters—between people and the Gospel.



**Cultural Insights from the Filipino Church:** This immersive visit also gave me deeper insight into the culture and faith of the Filipino people:

- ✧ They are a naturally joyful and content people, with radiant smiles even in difficult circumstances.
- ✧ Their faith is reverent and sincere.
- ✧ Family is of utmost importance—many of their prayers revolve around their loved ones.

In terms of church life, what stood out the most was:

- ✧ A remarkably high number of youth and children.
- ✧ These churches place strong emphasis on youth ministry and engagement.

Upon entering a church, the first thing you notice isn't the pulpit, but a full set of musical instruments—guitars, keyboards, drum kits. They engage youth by speaking their language—through lively music, dynamic rhythm, expressive dance, and contagious energy. This draws young people in, keeps them connected, and helps them fall in love with the church. Their style of worship? Energetic, expressive, and bursting with joy. In one word: Explosive!

**Final Thoughts:** I wholeheartedly encourage you: If you ever have the chance to join a mission trip like this, don't hesitate—go, experience it for yourself. This isn't just a religious activity; it's a cross-cultural encounter full of love and spiritual transformation.

#### 4. Becoming a Channel of God's Mercy to the Poor



##### First Stop: Kawit Church — A House Church

**The Shepherding Testimony of Kawit Church:** Kawit Church is located in a waterside slum area, home to some of the most impoverished and marginalized people in Philippine society. The slum is densely packed with dilapidated wooden shacks and mounds of garbage, and the air is often filled with foul odors. Many residents ended up here due to past mistakes, struggling to survive in an

environment the world has forgotten. Yet, the pastor of Kawit Church—a brother in his sixties—has chosen to live among them. He resides in a house so broken and foul-smelling that it's almost beyond imagination. Financially struggling himself, he and his wife either walk or ride bicycles to visit church members, lead Bible studies, and teach God's Word, all to save on transportation costs. For years, he has faithfully upheld his original calling: to serve those in the slums who are in greatest need. His unwavering dedication is deeply moving. He often says, "Walking is the secret to a healthy body." To those abandoned by society and unseen by the world, God has not turned away. God uses this pastor to bring them a message of unchanging truth: "You are God's beloved. He has not forsaken you. His love is always with you."



**Expanding the Children's Outreach Ministry:** This pastor, together with his ministry team, has sought to extend the reach of the gospel—so that more children and adults may hear the Good News, receive discipleship training, and participate in ministry. One sister even opened her home as a meeting place. Though her house was once in ruins, it has gradually improved through God's grace and provision, becoming a place of blessing for others.

**Reflections:** In ancient times, Mencius' mother moved three times to ensure her son had a good environment for learning. Today's parents also place great value on their children's education and upbringing. But what if one day God's call comes to you and me—to dwell long-term in the slums, bringing hope and truth to those who live there—would we be willing to obey?

Pastor Felizardo Andril may not be as well-known as Mother Teresa of India or Deacon Lee Cheng-Long of Taiwan's Homeless Friends Ministry, but in God's eyes, he is a faithful and good servant. He follows the Lord's command: "*The poor have the gospel preached to them*" (Matthew 11:5), entering the margins and darkness of society to light the candle of hope.

Just like John the Baptist, who wore the humblest clothes and ate what the wilderness provided, yet was filled with God's power—Pastor Felizardo Andril may appear ordinary in the eyes of the world, but in God's sight, he is a powerful servant.

## 5. A Lifetime of Service unto the Lord



### Second Stop: Taguig Church

During our visit to the Taiwan Friends Ministries & Mission in the Philippines (TFMMP), we deeply sensed God's grace and faithfulness upon His servants in the field. Despite limited resources, they remain steadfast in ministry and continue to expand God's work, which greatly inspired and moved us.

Ptr. Maximino Villoria Juacalla is the former president of TFMMP and a key representative in external affairs and partnerships. With his wealth of experience and unwavering faith, he led the organization for many years and established a solid foundation for the growth of local churches.

Our second stop was at Pastor Manny's church in Taguig. Compared to the church in Kawit, the environment here is somewhat better, but it still faces many challenges—cracks in the walls and a leaking roof when it rains. Nevertheless, Pastor Manny and his congregation stand firm in faith and service. He places great emphasis on discipleship, and several young people have been trained to become future leaders and co-workers in the church. There is also a group of committed women who serve faithfully alongside him.



Pastor Manny is gentle and gracious, refined in manner. Though now in his seventies, he remains single and has devoted his entire life to serving the Lord. His ministry extends beyond the church; he exerts a godly influence in the community, the city council, and even the police station. He regularly visits local government offices to lead Bible studies and prayer meetings, bearing witness to his faith in the public sphere. In addition, he has planted two sister churches in San

Andres and Pasig, continuing faithfully in expanding God's kingdom.

In these pastors, we witness a profound spirit of going the extra mile for the Lord. Their lives reflect a kind of service that often goes unnoticed yet bears lasting fruit. They are not only faithful in preaching but also in living out the gospel and impacting their communities. May we, too, be inspired by their example—wherever we are—to remain faithful to the work God has entrusted to us.



## 6. Into the Fishing Village — Witnessing Faithfulness and Calling in San Andres



### Third stop: San Andres Friend Church

Our journey began in Manila at 5 a.m., unfolding into a day filled with testimony and deep inspiration.

We departed early that morning, embarking on a long journey that brought us to San Andres—a small coastal fishing village in the Philippines—by a little past 3 p.m. Initially, we had hoped to take a boat to explore a nearby uninhabited island, but with the late hour, there were no more boats operating. That plan had to be set aside. However, something far more meaningful awaited us.

Upon returning to the church, we were warmly greeted by a group of waiting children, along with several youth and women from the community. Their eager faces and welcoming presence reminded us why we had come. After a time of worship and introductions, we split into three smaller groups. I joined the children's group. Pastor Chen anointed each child and prayed for them, while I handed out some cookies that we had picked up earlier on the road—how timely they were! Pastor Demi distributed candy, bringing great joy to the children, who went home smiling and satisfied. The youth group, meanwhile, was filled with excitement and energy. They were having such a great time that we actually forgot to hand out the snacks we had prepared for them—testament to how fully they were enjoying the moment.

Later, we had the opportunity to sit down with **Pastor Lina Luz**, who shared the joys and challenges of her ministry. She had previously served at Taguig church before returning to her hometown of San Andres, where she began reaching out to her family and friends. Many came to faith through her witness, and over time, she was first ordained as an elder and then as a pastor.



But the journey hasn't been easy. Some church members still hoped that Pastor Manny from Taguig would continue pastoring them, given his long-standing relationship with the congregation. However, with the distance between the two locations and Pastor Manny's advanced age, it was simply not feasible for him to travel back and forth weekly. This situation highlights an essential truth: **to build strong local churches, it is vital to equip and commission local leaders who are prepared for the call of ministry.**

Pastor Lina Luz also shared that their home was destroyed in a past typhoon. The place they currently live in—and the church building they use—are both borrowed from friends. Humbly, she asked for our prayers, that the Lord would provide them with a home and a permanent place for their church. This visit reminded us that even in places with limited resources and challenging conditions, God's servants are standing firm, joyfully walking the "extra mile" in their calling, giving their lives fully to the Lord. Pastor Lina Luz is one such vessel—faithfully used by God.

**May we not only be moved, but also respond—through prayer, support, and partnership with these faithful workers—in building God's kingdom together.**

## 7. A Place Where Children Fill the Streets, and Worship Meets Calling



### Stop 4: Pura Friends Church

Our fourth stop was **Pura Church**, located in a district called *Pura*. What stands out most in this area is the joyful presence of children everywhere you look. You can see them running through the alleys, playing in the streets, or gathered eagerly around the church—each face radiant with innocence and joy, bringing vibrant life and hope to this community.

The young people in the church had thoughtfully prepared a variety of activities for the children, including games, crafts, and snacks. Their service was not only creative and enthusiastic, but also filled with love and patience. What they offered wasn't just the smooth execution of a program—it was quiet companionship, and an investment in lives that truly matters. These young people are indeed a treasure to the church. Their labor will not be forgotten by God. Though their work may appear simple on the surface—chasing children under the sun, guiding hands through a craft project—each act is deeply precious in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. Everything they've given will become a blessing for the children—seeds of love planted in their hearts that will, in time, bear fruit in faith. We were also given the opportunity to share Bible stories with the children—a true grace from the Lord. Though our time was short, each session was rich with the presence of God. Seeing the children listen intently, with eyes full of wonder and hunger, assured us that the Spirit is at work in this place.



One figure who left a lasting impression was **Pastor Art**, the church's senior shepherd. Though advanced in years, he still exudes vitality and joy, especially when leading us in worship. In his younger days, he was a professional guitarist, and now he has fully dedicated that musical gift to the Lord. As he led us in worship, we saw in his gentle eyes a deep tenderness—evidence of a man who truly loves music, and even more so, loves God. In our interview with him, Pastor Art shared from his heart, expressing a deep desire to see more young people rise up and commit themselves to the service of the Lord. He understands well that the future of the church lies in the next generation. His own life is a powerful testimony—once part of the music world, now fully devoted to the Kingdom, faithfully serving with no turning back.



Even more admirable is his impact beyond the church walls. Pastor Art has long hosted Bible studies and prayer meetings in local community centers, city council offices, and even police stations. His presence is not only respected on a personal level, but also recognized by local government officials for the positive impact that Christianity has had on public safety and community morale. Through his service, we've come to see that faith is not just a truth preached from the pulpit—it's a living influence that shapes society for the better.



This stop reminded us again of Jesus' invitation: "Let the little children come to Me." It is not only a call of compassion, but a divine commission entrusted to the Church. And Pastor Art's life stands as a beautiful example of faithful service—an inspiration to the next generation. We firmly believe that among these children, future leaders of God's Kingdom will arise. And the devotion of today's young servants is a crucial part of that divine plan.

## 8. A Bond of Love



### Fifth Stop: Sembrano Friends Church

At 9 a.m. this morning, we departed from the Manila Mission Training Center and headed to Sambrano Church, located in a remote area. Though small in size, this church plays a vital role in the local community. Over the years, they have quietly and faithfully served through Sunday school, youth camps, distributing supplies, and

visiting families in need. Sambrano Church is more than just a building—it is a beacon of hope, shining into the lives of many poor and lost families.



Unfortunately, Pastor Romeo was not in the area at the time and couldn't receive us in person. However, we were warmly welcomed by his wife and the church members, and we experienced a heartfelt and uplifting time of fellowship. After the meeting, the pastor's wife thoughtfully prepared sandwiches, desserts, and fresh fruit for us. Through this simple meal, we tasted the sweetness of the Lord's love.

What moved us deeply was meeting Rochelle Galleon. She was once a recipient of a scholarship from the Xinyi Mission Association and has now graduated from university. Although her current job doesn't pay much, she diligently supplements her income through portrait painting. Her artwork is detailed and touching—not only displaying skill but also reflecting her perseverance and faith. Several of our team members were moved by her story and willingly gave her their photos to draw as a way of supporting her and expressing our love and encouragement.

This visit was more than just another stop—it was a moment of learning. We witnessed a church that remains faithful in ministry despite limited resources. We saw a young sister who, though facing difficulties, uses her God-given talent to live for Him. As we left, our hearts were filled with gratitude and reflection: True richness is not in how much we own, but in how much we are willing to give for the Lord.





## 9. The God Who Discerns the Heart and Brings Comfort and Encouragement



### Sixth Stop: Santiago Miracle Friends Church

Among all the churches we visited during this trip, **Miracle Gospel Church** was noticeably more resource-rich. From the photos we took, you can get a glimpse of what I mean—the church facilities are bright, clean, and well-equipped, standing in contrast to some of the more remote and under-resourced congregations. The pastor and members

welcomed us with warmth and generosity, even inviting us to stay the night at his home. It was a very comfortable stay, and we truly felt like part of the family.

The final part of our visit was the **small group prayer and blessing time**—a moment everyone looked forward to. We shared, prayed for each other, and enjoyed a beautiful unity in the Spirit. After our group had finished praying, I felt a stirring in my heart to pray specifically for one of the sisters. Interestingly, although I was looking at **Sister A**, I spoke out that I would pray for **Sister B**. In truth, I didn't know exactly what to say in my prayer. But as soon as I began to speak, the words that came out seemed to touch something deep inside her. Tears began streaming down her face. It was clear that God was ministering to her heart.

Although I initially wanted to follow up with her, we were called away for a group photo, so I got up and left. But I couldn't stop thinking about her. After the gathering had ended, I walked up to her and handed her a small **love offering**. It wasn't just a financial gift—it was what I believe to be a **tangible “point of contact” for her to experience God's love and compassion**. I believe it truly meant something to her, because as the event was winding down, she came up to me and quietly said, “Thank you.”



That simple expression of gratitude deeply touched me. I hope that through this moment, the flame of faith in her heart would be reignited, and that she would continue walking with the Lord with renewed strength and hope.

### Reflection:

**To be in step with God, to be used by Him, and to become a vessel of blessing to others is truly an honor!**

It's not about our strategies or abilities—it's about being sensitive to the Holy Spirit and offering ourselves willingly. When we do, God's love flows through us and becomes a divine “touch point” in someone else's life, a ray of light from heaven itself.



## 10. Where the Gospel Takes Root in the Community



### Stop 7: Cadanglaan Friends Christian Church City of God

Our seventh stop on this short-term mission journey was **Kadanglaan Church**, a newly established branch of **Ramos Church**, shepherded by Pastor **Cortes Soriano** and his wife **Perlita Martin**, the son and daughter-in-law of the senior pastor of Ramos Church. This couple reminded us of Priscilla and Aquila in the Bible—faithful

partners in building God's house, filled with compassion and a deep burden for the community.

Kadanglaan Church is located in a local community center and is still in its pioneering stage. Perlita Martin, one of the church leaders, works as a preschool teacher in a nearby daycare. Through her professional expertise and warm presence, she has built strong relationships with local families, which serve as a natural bridge for the gospel. As a result, they are able to use the daycare classroom as a gathering place for Sunday services, providing a very practical and effective base for ministry.

When we arrived, we were warmly welcomed by the preschool children with songs and dances. It was incredibly touching to see how naturally Perlita guided the little ones to express joy and hospitality through music and movement. Her passion and gift for early childhood education were clearly evident, and we could see how this was not only teaching—it was ministry in action.



Despite their fruitful work, this couple faces significant challenges. They have a child with a severe illness, which places a heavy burden on their family. Yet, instead of withdrawing, they have chosen to remain faithful in their calling. Their perseverance and love have deeply moved many who visit them. Each year, the Taiwan short-term mission teams are struck by their situation and gladly offer support and encouragement.

At noon, we were invited to Perlita's home for lunch. She is a truly gracious and virtuous woman—not only is she gifted in leading worship, but she is also an exceptional cook. She prepared a delicious and lovingly presented meal for us, and her hospitality was deeply felt. Before we left, she even packed three boxes of side dishes for us to take on our journey—an act of kindness that warmed our hearts.

At this stop, we witnessed a small yet thriving church and a couple who faithfully serve God amid adversity. Their testimony reminds us that the seed of the gospel often takes root quietly in everyday relationships. When there are people willing to water it with faithfulness and love, despite the challenges, it will surely bear much fruit.

## 11. Tears of Repentance, Grace of Renewal



### Stop 8: Ramos Friends Christian Church City of God

Our eighth stop took us to **Ramos Church**, where we encountered a deeply moving testimony of how a pastor's personal journey through tears of repentance led to divine restoration and blessing. Pastor Caros, the shepherd of this church, shared with us a very personal story. His original church and home were located elsewhere, but when the government requisitioned the land, he lost both. Forced to relocate, he began the difficult process of rebuilding both his church and home from scratch. The journey was not easy—resources were limited, and he often faced ridicule from neighbors and friends who doubted they would succeed.

In those difficult days, Pastor Caros began to reflect deeply. He admitted, with emotion in his voice, that he had prioritized rebuilding his personal home over the church. At one point, his house had walls while the church had none. It was during one of those reflective moments, with tears streaming down his face, that he sensed God clearly reminding him of this truth: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33) As he returned his focus to the church and faithfully committed to its growth and care, God's faithfulness began to unfold. Today, the church is not only growing steadily, but it has also launched outreach ministries and even planted a new congregation. This church plant is now being shepherded by his son and daughter-in-law—a beautiful testimony of generational calling. And in a wonderful display of God's grace, the family has now received a beautiful new home in an unexpected way—almost as if God had “redeemed” the house they once lost.



### Reflection: Tears That Lead to Transformation

As I translated Pastor Caros' testimony, I was particularly moved at the moment he began to weep. His tears brought to mind a cultural reflection: In Chinese tradition, we often hear sayings like “real men shed blood, not tears,” or “a man does not cry easily.” But is this mindset truly biblical? In Scripture, we see a very different view of tears. God does not despise tears—He welcomes them. They often mark moments of deep spiritual encounter and transformation. Consider these biblical examples:

1. **Job**, who wept bitterly before God in the midst of suffering (Job 16:20).
2. **Jeremiah**, known as the “weeping prophet,” who mourned deeply for the sins of his people (Lamentations 2:11).
3. **Jesus**, called the “Man of Sorrows,” who wept at least three times during His earthly ministry (Luke 19:41; John 11:35; Hebrews 5:7).
4. **Paul**, a man of great courage and strength, who openly recorded his many tears in ministry (Acts 20:19, 31; Philippians 3:18).

These were not signs of weakness—they were marks of a tender, responsive heart before God.

**Tears of repentance lead to life transformation.** To weep is to show that the heart remains soft. And God delights in a heart that is tender and contrite (Psalm 51:17). Pastor Caros' tears were not just emotional—they were sacred. They signified surrender and opened the way for God to rebuild his life, his ministry, and his legacy.

## 12. Compassion and Faithfulness in the Midst of Hardship



### Stop 9: Pasig Friends Church

It was an early February night when a sudden clap of thunder startled me. I turned to my husband and asked him a question that had long lingered in my heart:

- ✧ I said: "If the Lord takes you home before me, what will I do on my own?"
- ✧ He replied: "You can go back to Malaysia. Your sisters will be there with you."
- ✧ I half-joked: "But I'm already an old lady (LKK), and so are they—will they still be around by then?"

What began as a casual late-night conversation suddenly became deeply poignant on **February 15**, when I heard **Pastor Claire** share her story. Her testimony mirrored the very thoughts I had recently expressed and challenged me to consider: if I were in her shoes, could I have the same strength and faith?

**Pasig Friends Church**, located in Metro Manila, holds its services on the third floor of Pastor Claire's home. For the past nine years—since the passing of her husband, who was the church's former pastor—she has faithfully continued to shepherd the congregation alongside her daughter. Despite her personal loss, she has clung tightly to God and walked each step with unwavering trust.

Although they own their house, they do not hold the land title, which means they must pay monthly land taxes, adding to their financial burdens. Even so, Pastor Claire remains committed to ministry and has even expanded to a satellite congregation about ten minutes away. This branch was established on a piece of land gifted to her by a close friend, specifically to support her children's ministry. What moves me deeply is her loyalty and integrity. For years, people have tried to persuade her to sell this land to ease her financial strain. Yet, she firmly refuses—she cannot betray the heart of the friend who gave it in love. Such steadfastness is incredibly rare in today's material-driven world. As a woman myself, I had to ask: if I were her, would I have the same strength and faithfulness?

Beyond her role as a pastor, Pastor Claire's compassion for children shines brightly. Every weekend, she prepares meals for the children in the neighborhood—not only to nourish their spirits through teaching and worship, but also to fill their stomachs with home-cooked meals. Her generosity and sacrifice deeply inspired me. She doesn't just talk about love—she lives it out. Her story brought to mind the words of Paul in **1 Corinthians 12:9**: "But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." In Pastor Claire, I saw the living expression of this verse—a quiet, unwavering strength that reveals God's power through human frailty.

♥ **Reflections:** This is what the Bible calls **compassion**. I saw it firsthand—in **Kawit**, and here again in **Pasig Friends Church**. It wasn't abstract or theoretical. It was **real, felt, weighty, and costly. So tangible.**



### 13. Laying Down a Teaching Career for the Lord, Turning Love into Action



#### Stop 10: Samatac Church

At our tenth stop, we visited **Samatac Church**, pastored by the passionate and committed **Pastor Demi**. Once a high school teacher, Pastor Demi was not only dedicated to academics but also to the spiritual lives of his students, leading several of them to Christ during his time in education.

As church responsibilities grew, he faced a critical decision: to continue his stable teaching career or to fully commit to the expanding work of the Lord. With great faith and courage, he chose the latter—he laid down his profession to pursue full-time ministry. Such a decision is not easy and speaks volumes about his devotion to God's calling.

However, the road ahead was not without hardship. Over the years, the church had been frequently evicted by landlords—mainly due to the noise from worship. Like modern-day nomads, the congregation was forced to relocate repeatedly. Pastor Demi brought us to one of their former church locations, a plot where their original building once stood before being demolished and sold. Although the sight stirred a sense of loss, he spoke not with bitterness, but with hope. It is still his earnest prayer that one day, God will make a way for them to repurchase the land and build a permanent church home. This dream remains in his heart—a longing he continually lifts to the Lord.

In addition to pastoring, **Pastor Demi has also been actively involved in disaster relief and community rebuilding.** While many people wait until they have more than enough to offer help, Pastor Demi acts according to the strength and means he currently has. When disaster struck the area, he didn't hesitate. He bought as much rice as he could afford, packed it into smaller portions, and distributed it personally to affected families. He never underestimated his ability to make a difference, no matter how small the resources might seem.



We followed him into the disaster area and witnessed firsthand that his ministry isn't confined within the walls of a church building. He lives out the gospel by being present in the community, responding to needs with compassion and faith. Through his actions, he showed us that **love doesn't wait for abundance—true love comes from gathering all our strength together and giving anyway.**

♥ **Reflection:** As Pastor Demi led us into the disaster zone, he wasn't merely showing us the damage. He was delivering a deeper message: **Faith must be active. When we join hands and hearts, we can send love out into the world.** This kind of faith is real, tangible, and transformative—it changes lives and communities.

## 14. A Multi-Language, Multi-Generational, Unified Sunday Gathering



### Stop 11-13: Manila Friends Church

Our Sunday in Manila was a spiritually enriching day filled with warmth, worship, and fellowship across three congregations of the Manila Friends Church—a church family that beautifully reflects the unity in diversity within the body of Christ.

#### Morning: Filipino Service – A Family-Like Worship Community

Our day began with the Tagalog-speaking congregation, which meets in the dormitory of the mission training center and is pastored by Pastor Edward. This gathering felt more like a house church—composed of several families worshipping and serving together. The atmosphere was intimate and loving, like an extended family gathering in the presence of God.

After the service, we broke into small groups for prayer, lifting each other up and seeking the Lord in unity. Then came lunch, and we added to the meal by sharing some fish and side dishes we had brought from Taiwan, making the fellowship even more abundant and joyful.

#### Afternoon: Filipino Youth Service – A Vibrant Next Generation

In the afternoon, we visited the Filipino Youth Service, led by Pastor Jennie. This congregation is lively and full of energy, with most members being teenagers, along with some married young adults and a few children. Despite their youth, the church follows a solid structure—including post-service small group sharing and prayer, which deepens their spiritual connections and community life.

We saw the Lord raising up this new generation to stand firm in their faith and become lightbearers for His kingdom.

#### Evening: Chinese Congregation – Cross-Cultural Fellowship Over Great Food

In the evening, we had dinner with several members from the Chinese-speaking congregation, including Brother Hung, Sister Jinlian, and Emma, at a local Chinese restaurant. The food was delicious and nostalgic—it reminded us of home.

Emma had been faithfully uploading the daily “Fire Bible Reading” devotionals for our group. She is from Tainan, Taiwan, and has a clear burden for missions. Currently studying medicine, she hopes to one day serve in the mission field through medical ministry. Her testimony and commitment were truly inspiring.

#### ♥ Reflection:

Through these three unique gatherings—Filipino families, vibrant youth, and Chinese believers—we caught a glimpse of what it means for “all tribes and nations” to worship the Lord. The diversity of languages and generations all united in Christ is a beautiful expression of God’s Kingdom. We left the day deeply touched by the richness, faith, and fellowship of Manila Friends Church.

## 2025 Philippines Short-Term Mission Summary

### A Journey of Seeds Sown and Hearts Stirred

Over the course of several days, we visited 13 Friends churches across Luzon, Philippines—from urban centers to rural communities, from well-established churches to newly planted ministries. At every stop, we witnessed God's hand at work in remarkable and moving ways.



This journey through the churches of the Philippines has been nothing short of sacred. From city congregations to coastal villages, from seasoned pastors to energetic youth, we witnessed the body of Christ at work—diverse yet united, humble yet powerful. In each stop, the common

thread was unmistakable: a deep love for God, a heart for people, and a willingness to go the extra mile for the sake of the Gospel.

We saw children laughing and learning, youth rising up in service, and faithful shepherds pouring out their lives day by day. We saw churches that lacked material abundance, yet overflowed with spiritual richness. We saw cracked walls and leaky roofs, but inside—unshakable faith, joy in worship, and hope that cannot be extinguished.



Our hearts are full of gratitude—for every handshake, every prayer, every story shared. We are especially thankful for the pastors and leaders who welcomed us, the volunteers who served tirelessly behind the scenes, and the communities who reminded us what it means to live with kingdom perspective. Truly, what we received was far more than what we gave.

As we return, we carry with us not only memories, but a renewed vision. The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are still few—but what we saw gives us hope. Hope that the next generation is rising. Hope that the Gospel continues to transform. And hope that, together across nations and cultures, we are indeed one Church under one Lord.



**To God be the glory—for the seeds sown, the hearts stirred, and the future He is shaping in every corner of His Kingdom.**

