



Olson Family Christmas Newsletter

*Serving the Lord to Reach
Unreached Language Groups in
the Philippines with
Ethnos 360*

Issue #36, December 2018

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:1-2

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For information on financial support of this ministry or to make a Christmas offering, please see the bottom of the next page.



At the beginning of the year we had a moderate sized volcanic eruption south of us.



We had believers from the Aeta people group do a cultural demonstration at the missions camp.



I was honored to be one of the keynote speakers at the missions camp for Filipinos.

Dear friends and family,

How blessed we are to be able to serve the living Savior! We send you our heartfelt greetings this Christmas, and pray you are all blessed with what God is doing in your lives and around the world.

For us, we are back in Texas! This is the time in our ministry rotation where we spend some time at home, taking care of necessary things related to health and family, re-connecting with supporters and churches, and getting our kids re-acquainted with living in the USA. The normal rotation is once every 4 years a missionary is supposed to return home for 1 year. In our case, because we spent our first 8 years on the field without a home assignment, we will most likely be extending our stay in the USA a little past one year. During our home assignment, we will be focusing primarily on 2 things – first, my health has taken a beating these past few years and I really need some extra time under a good doctor here to get back on the right track. Second, our youngest, Abby, will be starting college in January. She is transitioning from a Christian school among other missionary families overseas in the Filipino culture to a secular university in American culture. This will be a really big transition for her.

Year in Review

Near the beginning of the year, when we were still in the Philippines, we held security training for the Filipino branch of our mission. Ethnos 360 has 2 different branches in the Philippines – the expat side, which is called Ethnos 360, and the Filipino side, which is called New Tribes Mission Philippines. We work together on many things, and some of my closest friends are on the Filipino side. So at the beginning of the year, a team came from the USA to complete the training, and I was able to assist.

However, the highlight of my work in the first half of the year was teaching a Tagalog class to Filipino students at the school. As I have written about much in the past, I was teaching them to learn following the principles of the Growing Participant Approach. My students were mostly Filipino kids who are growing up in households that speak almost entirely English. Their parents had approached me with the idea of setting up a class to learn conversational Filipino (Tagalog) through comprehension exercises, rather than the traditional method, which has students memorize vocabulary and grammar rules. It was one of the most enjoyable things I have done our whole time in the Philippines. It was also especially satisfying to see these kids enjoying learning language for the first time, when in previous classes they reportedly felt like language learning was only drudgery.

Then in May, I was asked to be one of the speakers at the New Tribes Mission Philippines annual missions conference. This is where they invite young people from all over the Philippines to come and learn about tribal missions, and to consider if this might be what God is calling them to do. It was a very blessed time, and I was honored to be asked to speak. I would love to be able to do it again some day.

Ginny wrapped up her last semester at Faith Academy in the spring and said goodbye to her students from many years, as well as other teachers that have become friends. After a lot of work, we set to the task of packing our house with all of our belongings from the Philippines for the last 12 years, and prepared to move back to Texas.

Back in the USA

It is really good to reconnect with our family being back in Texas. The house is different without my mom around – it still feels like she should still be there at her computer when I walk by her downstairs office. Yet that is what life has given us. The Lord gives, and he takes away. Blessed be His name.

In terms of my health, when we first returned I wasn't doing so well. I got started with a new doctor just in time. Even with my very restricted diet, I had some significant setbacks, so that I have not been able to get out and meet with people the way I like to while we are on home assignment. We are hoping that will change in the spring, and we will be able to get out more.

Over our years in the Philippines, we have had roles as tribal church planters, medical clinic workers,



Abby graduated from high school!



We celebrated 4th of July (that is a 4th of July tree in the back, not Christmas) with family. We now have 4 generations alive together. :)



Barangay health workers in Palawan – the young man in the back was one of my language helpers years ago.



Our aviation team brought relief goods to typhoon stricken areas in Luzon.



I was blessed to be allowed to preach at the church I grew up in, Christ Episcopal Church in San Antonio.

While we are here in Texas, we still have financial needs. We are still doing ministry work even while stateside. Would you consider making an end of the year donation to support our ministry in the Philippines? We would be honored to have your support. If so, our financial information is below.

teachers, and many others. There were times I was working as a language consultant, translation assistant, security manager, conference speaker, or some combination of all of those at the same time. Since arriving back at home, I have continued to some degree with help as a translation assistant and keeping up with the security situation in the Philippines. I have also had opportunities to teach some Sunday school classes, as well as preach at our church in San Antonio.

So even with the limitations because of my illness, I am able to continue doing some of the ministry work. It is less intense while we are at home, with the need for me to focus on my health first for the next few months. However, there is still work that I can do being based at home.

Ginny has been very busy since August, as she has been taking some continuing education courses. The life of a missionary-teacher never really slows down!

The biggest blessing of being at home is that we have been able to see our grandchildren several times. :) We are thankful that the Lord has given us this time to be able to keep up with them.

The near future and far future

We have been asked by many people if we are going to come home permanently, on account of now being home with good medical care, being able to see our grandchildren, and concerns for how returning overseas might once again negatively impact my health. In our prayers and seeking the Lord, we plan to continue in ministry, whatever that may look like. As long as my health gets to the point where it is possible to travel back and forth a couple of times a year, we believe it will be possible to return overseas, if that is His will. I am not giving up! We can serve Him anywhere, whether that is from here in the USA, or from overseas, but our first duty is to pursue continuing what God originally called us to. So please pray that my health will be restored and I will be able to continue my service for many years to come.

I have been reflecting on Paul's words to the Romans: *I want you to know, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. Romans 1:13*

God carries out His plans for all of us in His own perfect way. It was His guiding hand that moved us out of the tribal ministry after 3 years, in order that we might serve the other ministries in the Philippines. It is His hand that has us at home now for a time. It will be His hand that moves us to wherever He has us next.

At home and abroad...

Our hearts are in the Philippines, so here is a report of some of the things God is doing there:

The Palawano believers are expanding with a massive outreach throughout Southern Palawan. Medical work, literacy teaching, expansion of schools and Christian education are all features of what is happening there. Our old partner, Elise, is in the forefront of this work. It has brought us great joy to see some of our old friends, Palawanos, involved in this. In particular, one young man that I was very close to is one of the health workers for the local government outreach, and is also active in teaching literacy. Though it pains me that we cannot be there, we are rejoicing to see what God is doing.

The northern part of Luzon, our biggest island, was hit with several typhoons in the past few months. This required the evacuation of some of our missionaries for a time, but thankfully because of a very capable aviation team, everyone was able to go back in to their tribal ministries. Besides that, the helicopter was also put to good use in ferrying relief supplies to some of the hard hit areas.

On Mindanao, under martial law due to terrorist activity last year, of the 7 or 8 different active works among tribes, one story stood out to me as I reviewed the year. In one area where a group of Manobo tribal people live, some 20 years ago a violent rebel group forced the tribal people into the lowlands (think of them as political refugees in their own country). As a result of their forced relocation, which happened to coincide with a missionary outreach at the time, many became believers. Fast forward to today, and many of these people that have become believers at that time are now leading the outreaches. In August of this year, they baptized 53 people. Please pray for peace in this region.

Serving Him,
George & Ginny

To help support our ministry, you can make a tax deductible contribution to Ethnos 360 (note the name and address change). There are several ways:

1. On-line:

www.reachthetribes.org/financial.html

-or-

ethnos360.org/missionaries/george-and-ginny-olson

2. Call the home office to set up ACH deposits at:
866-547-2460

3. By mail – send checks to:

Ethnos 360

312 W. First St.

Sanford, FL 32771-1231

Simply designate that the funds are “for the ministry of George & Ginny Olson.”

4. Or you can simply follow these links:

www.ethnos360.org or

www.reachthetribes.org

As you all know, our ministry depends on donations from faithful supporters like you all! Please consider joining our support team!