

# Mission Trip Diary

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**The  
Philippine  
Community Fund**

UK Charity Number 1091581

**Stroud Christian Fellowship -**

**14<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2015

*As I'm starting to write this, we are on our way to Heathrow airport terminal 4, the time is 9.06am. I'm thinking of what Glenn and I will share at the Couples evening on Tuesday night relating to commitment. It's definitely different from agreement. It's so much deeper; it's more of a covenant, and I find that funny since my name means Blood Covenant in Hebrew.*

*I wrote down a few things in my note pad, concerning Commitment and after that I started to dream about building a two bed home out of three large shipping containers – open plan with balcony and detached garage. This is how I wind down and get creative. More evidence how my brain works – PCF School is constructed out of shipping containers.....*

Our flight with Etihad was good but long, 20 hours in total with an early morning stopover in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). We didn't see much of this country, or air port for that matter. It's a long journey sitting still.

When we arrived in Manila mid afternoon on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, we were collected by our driver Theo who was driving a 14 seat Nissan mini bus, but due to the huge amount of luggage we had a second mini bus just for our bags. As we were driving to our hotel my eyes were wide open to the different houses along the highway. Some were three storeys, some were multi and others just made of sticks and tarpaulin. This is a city of extreme contrasts. You should see the over head cables – it's a combination of spider's web/ crow's nest. A health and safety expert would cry blood, I'm sure.

Checked in and unpacked we met in the Reception of our hotel, UCCP Shalom Centre (Luis Maria Guerero Street, Malate, ) which is based in the middle of the red light district. I realised that when we were on our way to have our first meal at Robinsons Mall (a few steps away) when some of the girls were showing far too much leg and cleavage.

We had our first meal at The Banana Leaf and the food was good and cheap.

After that we all went to buy some food at the supermarket for the following day's breakfast and lunch. It's very American when it comes to brand and quality.

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Glenn and I started our day with instant porridge mixed with fresh exotic fruit. Pineapple and mango works well but I'm not too sure about melon. When we had washed up using the hotel's shampoo (I brought my own tea towel) it was time to leave for PCF School to get a closer look at the complex and its surroundings. I wonder if my mental and actual picture will be congruent.

The school is located in Tondo, next to a big river, which unfortunately is polluted. Jane Walker mentioned it being so bad that fish with three heads live there, but nothing else. I noticed that shanty towns were built on stilts along the shore. Prime location if it wasn't for the raw sewage in the water and toxins in the air.

PCF School is built out of shipping containers and is four storeys high. Most class rooms are located on the first three floors with the Livelihood project as well as the enabling room and home economics on the fourth floor (also known as blue level). This is where I will be spending some of my time.

On our introductory round I met with James, Assisting manager at the Livelihood project, where he asked me to come back and discuss designing bags using leather and ring pulls. (Coca Cola Corp wishes to see 10 designs by June 2015)

The staff, children, parents are all so clean and beautiful!

Before our Chicken and Rice lunch from Mc Donald's we went to have a quick look at KCM, the community church which is cross the dual carriage way at 'Hapi Land', Tondo. We have to ask Theo to take us because it's not safe to cross the road. The smell is not as bad as I thought it would be, but then it's dry season.

A lot of people live here – adults, children, chickens, cats and dogs. The children were very happy to see us though the adults seemed more reserved. Ron and Joanna weren't there and the whole feeling of the place felt surreal. I was amazed how big it was and that no one was stealing the equipment. There was a guard living near the entrance and I believe people don't steal anything due to the amazing community work KCM does here. Respect and God's divine protection I'm sure.

As Jane was showing us around she explained that the building used to be the PCF school before she managed to convince the government to give her the plot of land cross the road, and the port company to donate the containers. She is a woman with a strong vision for the future - A force to be reckoned with.

***“To get what you need here; it's important to have the right level of nuisance” (Jane Walker)***

In the afternoon we started to look at the 'box' room where the shipment has been placed and where we need to count and do a proper inventory in the next few days. We have also been asked to paint the performing arts department. Our schedule is full and open for change. There is a school holiday on Thursday, probably and a notional holiday next Wednesday, most likely.

Finished our first day at PCF with prayers and a scripture – Luke 5:4

Apparently, Theo our driver was very scared driving to Tondo and it was difficult to find a bus company that would take us places whilst here. I wonder if Theo will be more at ease towards the end of our trip.

Back at the hotel, Glenn and I started to plan our talk for tomorrow.

As we left Shalom for our evening meal, I saw a young girl begging near Robinsons' holding a comatose young (3 or 4 years old) child on her lap. This is organised crime at its worst. The child on her lap is either on heroin, opium or alcohol. The money goes to the 'boss' and the beggar gets food in exchange. Makes me so angry!

Had food at Pizza Hut this evening where Ron, Joanna, Heidi, Kid, Jane and Philip joined us.

Both Glenn and I woke up early in the night. We tried to plan our talk for Tuesday evening. 'Commitment' though our communication wasn't on the same wavelength.

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015

We were picked up by Theo who took us to Bulacan, north of Manila, to distribute food parcels to the families with children 'at' PCF, who have been relocated away from Tondo. The government is doing a relocation drive and no one knows when the next one will happen. 'Hapi Land' is built on private land and the people living there live from one day to the next keeping their faith.

Kid and two other social workers came with us as well as Heidi. It was a long journey but I saw some nice country side and some very Spanish looking neighbour hoods. I particularly liked the feel of Santa Maria.

Our first task was to experience PCF Social Work and I decided to sit in on a meeting where mostly women had to fill in forms where they could get money for transportation. It was a humbling experience sitting together on a very clean floor together with women whose language I didn't understand. The home consisted of one room and separate WC. Most PCF families are better off than the other families on this estate, and they seem to be proud of their heritage.

Each sponsored child's family is given a food parcel as a thank you for letting their child attend school.

After our administration experience we sang and prayed together. Three prayer requests:

- One woman had a growth removed on her neck and needed a check up. Due to relocation she missed the appointment and would like God's healing to save money and time travelling two hours to Manila.
- One woman was fearful for the future. She is now caring for her sisters 3 children as well as her own 5 after her sister's death

and the father not wanting to return. She finds it difficult to cope.

- Painful back – 4 women came forward. We prayed.

Then it was time to distribute food bags containing non perishable food stuff.

After that we continued to a different, more established 'garden city'. The children seem to like living there. It's so much cleaner than Tondo, though there isn't as much to do. I can see the need for a church and something for teenagers to do, or they might just disappear back to Manila.

After our journey back we had some time to refocus before going to KCM to meet the couples. Phil, Rachel, Roy, Shirley, Glenn and I shared our lives with these lovely people. I could have stayed the whole night, though left at 10.30pm. Awesome experience!!!!

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015

This morning I started sorting the Box room at PCF by counting tooth brushes. I'm delighted to see that everything got there without any problems. Tooth brushes, paste and soaps as well as towels and hygiene kits got there without any complications.

After lunch I went to do some pampering at KCM, on the women living and working on the dump site. What a wonderful experience.

Joanna had managed to get hold of what was on my list: washing up bowls, cotton wool pads, water, towels, tissue paper etc. As Rachel and I were setting up Ron was attaching a spot light in the ceiling so that we could see what we were doing. Cables hang freely everywhere. Interesting!

We were busy the whole time starting from 1pm and finishing at 4pm. I don't know how many mini facials I managed to do, I just loved it and felt so blessed having those beautiful faces in my hands, praying for them at the same time.

I decided to use my own Arbonne FC5 products on everyone because I know it would be safe. In this climate – hot and humid – I find the scrub, purifying cleanser, skin conditioning oil, eye cream and hydrating day cream works best.

I gave of my time but received so much more in exchange. Totally, Utterly Blessed!!

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Glenn and I woke up early and decided to go for a coffee after our usual breakfast of porridge and tropical fruit. We ended up at Robinsons' and Starbucks, which is not my favourite cafe. We shared a Danish Cinnamon bun and enjoyed a Grande Americano each – great start to a new day!

Because the school had declared a holiday today, with 24 hours notice, all students were off school so we decided today was the best day to paint the performing arts room. We cleaned the walls, painted the walls, cleaned the windows and put everything back inside the room in 4 hours. Because I wasn't dressed for painting I continued doing some inventory of school uniforms instead. Some were dirty and needed freshening up so I put them to one side. Heidi explained that the volunteers are in charge of washing clothes. It's their way of paying for their child attending school. That's why the school is so clean!

After lunch, some of us went with Elmo, the youth pastor, to partake in the community Bible study. He used to be part of a gang (knife scars were visible as well as tattoos) and explained that this is a dangerous place, but I didn't feel scared. The sun was shining, people were so friendly and I held a 1 month old baby boy named Kai who was all dressed in white. We sang, we prayed, we worshipped, we shared – Awesome!!! Totally WOW!

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2015

We started our day with the usual, paper tasting, instant porridge mixed with fruit and left for PCF at 7.30am to prepare school assemblies.

Three assemblies in total: We sang 'Let's Hop... Jesus is Lord and that's what it's all about' followed by a dramatisation of the memory verse - 1 Samuel 16:4 "People look at the outwards appearance whilst God looks at the heart".

Before lunch I went to see James, to discuss bag designs, ring pulls and branding – love this type of work - The potential is endless. I asked for ten minutes of his time, he gave me 1 hour.

My feeling is that they need a bag designer to be in charge of the initial collection. The branding is being sorted and it's important to get price and QC in place before starting production.

Whilst we were waiting to leave for KCM to do youth church Glenn and I decided to have a burger at a 'Greek' restaurant - Just what I needed.

Youth church was just wonderful. They have such pure hearts for life and worship. A bit of a blur to remember everything but all I can say is we could have spent the whole night with them, again.

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015

Today we spent the whole day at KCM with children and adults of various ages. Chris Butler and I did face painting for a few hours in the morning and it was interesting trying to paint the children's faces whilst some others were sitting on my shoulders - New experience.

Everyone left for SM hypermarket to have lunch. This was very necessary because the afternoon was going to be very intense with older children attending Young Warriors. Alice Price had created a play where I was to be the furnace. I created a frilly pompom out of three plastic bags. These bags became popular with the children and I think they wanted to take them home. I mentioned this to Joanna and suggested that they make some with the children, and use them instead of scarves/flags when worshipping. (They used to have scarves but they have gone walkabouts)

We played games and prayed. There was one girl in particular who I felt drawn to. I could feel her pain but I didn't know why. I prayed for her in the spirit and managed to get Ron to translate. Tears turned to – 'snot' - Leaking all over the place. She is beautiful and I told her so. My prayer: Lord, hold her close to you; give her strength and a safe future.

Today was long and hot but very satisfying. I have adopted the local tradition of tucking a flannel into my neck line. I feel so blessed and overcome with love for these people.

Today was also Peter Bradley's birthday so we went out in the evening to celebrate. He had chosen a noisy place that served anything you wanted - Cooked as well as uncooked. (Red light district). The noise was too much for some of the team. I suppose being partially deaf has its benefits.

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2015

Today is Church the whole day! We are spending time with parents in the morning and children in the afternoon. Everyone who attends receives cooked food (in a plastic bag) when they leave. The wonderful women in the kitchen cook 1000 meals every week. Feeding the 5000!

Phil spoke about Fear and I had on my heart to share the opposite – Faith. Didn't get time today, will see if there is a chance next week and if God wants me to share. We see.

Did kids church in the afternoon but we run out of food. Whilst we were waiting for more rice to cook we tried to entertain the children with some games and some of the children who already had their food wanted to come back inside. Unfortunately we couldn't let them.

It was a long, hot day.

Tomorrow we have a break from Tondo. We are climbing a volcano instead.

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015

Our hotel is basic and clean and our room has a small cooking corner where we prepare our breakfast and lunch. Every morning we have porridge and most lunches we have a protein shake made with coconut water, a nutrition bar, and some nuts as well as dried or fresh fruit. Every evening when we return our room is tidy and we find clean towels in our en suit bathroom.

Today is our one and only day off. We have got two mini buses today because we are going to Taal Lake, to take a boat and climb the active volcano before the day is over. There isn't much time to relax so I'm making the most of the journey. We are travelling in comfort which means I can nod off if needed.

On the way there we stopped off at a Starbucks, which overlooked the lake, for some caffeine before descending. The landscape is beautiful and feels a little bit Spanish in places and Chinese in others.

At Starbucks we met a guy who 'owned' a business providing boats to cross the lake. We had been told last night that we couldn't cross the lake because the tour operator needed 48 hours notice. So being offered boats and to climb a volcano was a great offer. We said yes!

I put my hand in the water. It was so warm. How can anything live in that heat? Looking at the landscape there must be plenty of life. There were fishing boats and sea gulls everywhere. The journey didn't take long and feeling the sea spray against my face was wonderfully refreshing. On the other side of the lake life felt more relaxed. Even the dogs looked happier and better cared for. We had to pay P50 per person to enter the island before we could start our climb. Some island people offered us a horse to travel on, but we declined. Animal welfare is not a priority here so I wanted to release

the sad steed from its hard work. However, there were other people using the four legged option to travel.

As we slowly ascended this dusty, and sometimes sulphur smelly mountain, we observed a different Philippines with green fields, coffee plantations and cleaner sky. At the top the view was 'wow' and was only spoilt by some ugly tower blocks in the horizon.

It took us two hours to walk to the top and a good hour to walk down. At base camp my feet were black and I was contemplating buying a cola until a woman offered me a fresh coconut. Sold! Absolutely delicious!

Before hopping on board I washed my feet, and Fit Flops, in the warm water and paid the bridge owner P500 to leave. Well worth the journey and I'm absolutely amazed how Elaine, with a broken ankle, managed to stay so perky (She didn't climb but she managed to get on and off a small boat).

Hopping on board the bus we headed towards a restaurant that Heidi had heard of. But they were not able to provide for all our tastes so we ended up at a 'funfair' where some went to a pizza place and others to 'Mesa' a Philippine restaurant. Glenn and I went with Peter and Mike to the latter. Great choice of food!

The journey back to Manila took a long time because the roads were congested everywhere. I wonder....How do they turn a four lane high way into 6 ½ lanes? It's incredible to watch Theo drive. It's like a giant dodgem track but without the bumping. There is no road rage. Everyone has total control of their vehicle as well as their temper. Patience is definitely bestowed on these good people.

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Today we are spending more time at PCF. Those who are sponsoring a child will meet with them, exchange a hug or two and give gifts. I noticed fresh fruit and vegetables in the bags. They have a very sweet tooth here in the Philippines. Most of them seem to live on rice and sugar, so fresh produce is a luxury.

We had a brief meeting in the library (first floor) before I headed off to check in with James and to purchase some bags made out of ring pulls and 'junk'. I bought a bracelet, a lanyard and two bags. To help out with transportation, we will collect 5kg each of items to take back with us. The bus was full with red and white striped bags.

During the day, some people will finish inventorying in the Box room and others have other things to do. Peter and Mike are finishing the welding outside and I will be spending time in the morning with some of the girls in the Enabling room, blue level (4<sup>th</sup> floor). These girls have experienced various forms of abuse but predominantly sexual. The girl that I prayed for last Saturday was there. Her name is Rosanna (I think??). Now I know why she was in so much pain.

I wasn't sure what to say but decided on sharing my story. The girls asked some questions how I overcame and forgave. At the end I shared some images on my iPad, to introduce them to my family. To finish off a beautiful hour we prayed together. As one of the girls said – We need a prayer huddle. So we huddled and prayed.

After lunch I occupied the Home Economics room with my Arbonne products as well as towels, water and a smile. Once again I had the opportunity to pray for these women whilst giving them a mini facial. A few of the women were volunteers. These women are seldom pampered to anything. Rachel was helping again and she was doing a great job. We finished before 4pm, which gave me an opportunity to

give a handful of women a hand massage before Theo took us back to the hotel.

The most significant observation that I have made is that these people might be poor but they are not perverted. What I mean is that they don't have time or money to pretend to be something that they are not. They have pure hearts and they are quick to show appreciation. They have everything in front of them, nothing to lose.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015

Today is a national holiday, which was announced a couple of days ago. 25 year since the down fall of President Marcos. The whole school has been invited to attend a birthday party at 'Le Pavilion', near Mall Asia. The birthday girl is the daughter to a wealthy benefactor for PCF. Mme Era, who is a Born again Christian and has been married to one of the royals in Qatar. She said in her speech that she normally celebrates her daughter's birthday with family and friends but preferred to invite the PCF children this time. Each child had an opportunity to bring a parent. Teachers and staff were also invited (plus us) to her party. A three course meal and drinks were included as well as gifts for the children and food for the parents. A total of 900 people came to celebrate. Part of the celebration included a full sermon about inviting God to reign and deny Satan. I think 300 or so children stood up to ask Jesus into their lives. Now these children need support and prayer. The PCF choir sang and danced and one of the runners up to Philippine the Voice performed on stage. Compared to this morning's experience at KCM – it was a total extreme contrast.

Before the birthday party I spent the morning with mothers and toddlers. We played, sang, laughed and comforted each other. There was a one week old girl named Daniella who I had a cuddle with. She was too sleepy. Perhaps she didn't have the strength to wake up for a feed? I'm praying for this precious little girl that she will have the strength to feed so she can live and grow strong.

Before we left to travel to the birthday party we handed out some food and sanitary towels for the women. These items, which we take for granted, are a luxury. Most women will take a piece of cardboard, wrap it in some sack cloth, if they can find it and use that as sanitation. If they don't have that they will stay at home, unable to

earn a wage. I also managed to purchase 60 first aid kits which will be handed out to each family this afternoon. This was possible due to the over ride commission earned from my Arbonne business plus the kind donations from friends.

Joanna told me a story about two of the children that were standing close to her. They lost their mother two months ago, in child birth. The family couldn't afford to pay for an immediate funeral so the body of the mother and her bump lay in an open coffin, out in the heat for two weeks. These two children are now in 'care' of their neighbour whilst their father is trying to fend for them.

As Joanna said: Life stinks!

The traffic from KCM to Shalom was more than congested, which only left us ten minutes to get ready to go to the party. I managed to shower, wash my hair, apply makeup and self tan my legs plus get dressed in less than ten minutes – fastest beatification ever!!?

Our day ended at Asia Mall where Glenn and I walked around looking for something to bring back home. We found a couple of T-shirts as well as three note pads plus pens that I want to give to the three girls that I feel drawn to - It will be their happy books. (Hebrews 11:1)

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015

It is our final day today. We shall say goodbye and so long. I don't want to leave these wonderful people. In my heart I'm planning to return in two years. Now I need to make my business work better and help more people share health, wealth and wellbeing with others around them. With God's blessing my Arbonne business will make that possible.

After breakfast, Theo took us to PCF where Philip thanked all of us for getting on without getting in the way. He also explained where the charity is going and how they need to expand further. The children are growing up and they need to use their education and get in to the job market. Some are more entrepreneurial some more academic. They all need faith and a future.

Philip mentioned three keys: Love, Attention, and Opportunity – we all have to accept the rough with the smooth to move forward, he said.

As a church we decided on how to spend the gift offering. The livelihood project is getting a new sewing machine that can work with leather. The school is getting sports equipment and some individuals are getting sponsored to start their own businesses.

After our brief in the library we did a prayer walk around the school. I focused on the fourth floor because I know there is a great opportunity for many of the students as well as the foundations for a faithful future.

After our lunch at SM we held a swift assembly for the older children. I was the furnace again. Not sure if they understood what I was doing waving torn plastic bags around. It was a brief good bye; where we

received some lovely thank you cards and special hugs. I didn't see Rosanna anywhere...? I'm praying that she is safe.

One lovely girl named Rachelle wanted a picture with me and Rachel. And before we embraced in our final hug she asked if I was on face book. I said you will find me there. And she did.

We had a quick burger for supper and then we were off in the mini bus again. Our final evening at KCM started with handing over more hygiene items and £250 towards more equipment including a nebuliser. Many children suffer from chronic asthma due to the smog. So I pray that these items will be greatly received and used wisely. Everyone handed over their unwanted clothes including wellingtons. The rain season is about to start soon and they need to get to places, safely.

Then as part of our worship, Phil handed over some money to Ron so that KCM could purchase a new projector, tables and an amp. The whole church, including us, cheered with joy. Giving is the most wonderful feeling.

Before we worshipped together Ron recorded us singing the chorus for one of his new songs for the next album. He will bring the CD with him for us to purchase when they visit end of April. Look forward to seeing them again.

We started at 7.30 and finished at 10.15pm. Before we headed back to Shalom for our final sleep in Manila, we handed over the shoes we were walking in so that the people on the dumpsite have something 'new' to put on their feet.

What a day! What a week! What an amazing trip!

Tomorrow we are packing.

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February

After breakfast Glenn and I managed to pack everything into two bags instead of three (We placed one of the bags inside another). Our clothes were spread around the 'Basura' bags ('junk' in Filipino) and the total weigh, excluding hand luggage, was 57 kilos.

We checked out just after 10am and went for a walk towards Robinsons. Glenn and I decided on a French style cafe. Great choice! Coffee was delicious. After that we did some retail therapy in the Mall, but after a few minutes Glenn needed to get rid of his heavy back pack, so we went back to the hotel and then decided to return and have a Caesar salad lunch at Robinsons.

One thing that we had been planning on doing, but couldn't arrange, was to have Glenn's hair cut at 'Hapi Land', so we went next door instead. The young man had never cut a westerners hair before but he did a fantabulous job. As I was waiting for every strand to be cut I had my toenails pampered. Best pedicure in my life, and only £2.

The whole team met up at 5pm to share dinner together at 'Recipes'. Our final meal was perfect and when it was time for Theo to take us to the airport we were ready to say good bye.

The journey to the airport was long due to....congestion. I have heard that Manila airport is dreary. It was but I'm so glad that James had given me a letter of certificate to state that there is no value in the bags we had packed. The man behind the scanner wanted to have a hand out for letting us through. Glenn dealt with it beautifully.

It costs P550 to leave the Philippines as a tourist or P5000 if you are a resident.

Bye, bye wonderful people. So long and stay safe! "Dare to dream"

**A Huge Big Thank You to:**

PCF for allowing us to integrate with the school

KCM for worshipping with us

Heidi for arranging our daily schedule

Jane Walker for getting the ball rolling in the first place

Arbonne for making my 'paying it forward' initiative possible

Theo for driving us safely

God for keeping me safe

SCF for praying

The team that went out: Glenn, Berith, Phil, Rachel, Lydia, Roy, Shirley, Alice, Ezra, Elaine, Mike, Chris, Cedria and Peter