



THE BLUSTS

EMPIRE BAPTIST TEMPLE • PASTOR ERICH P. McCANDLESS, PHD
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Dear Pastor and Brethren,

July-August 2026 Prayer, Praise & Progress Report

We rejoice in America's 250th anniversary. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12). "...them that honour me I will honour..." (1 Samuel 2:30). If America truly desires God's blessing, then our acknowledgment of Him must be more than ceremonial; it must be reflected in how we live, the Bible truths that we uphold, and the moral courage that we demonstrate as a people.

Brother Dave Thompson and his wife Deanna from Empire Baptist Temple (sending church) visited us from June 23 to June 25. Truly a blessing to meet them and a time of sweet fellowship. Praising the LORD for their Bible convictions, faithfulness and obedience to the LORD, being most definitely profitable serving Him in the ministry. We know that it will help our home church to better pray for us and to understand the challenges and great blessings of our ministry in Bukidnon.

Malaybalay City mission church: Six people got saved and four families (unbelievers) were rescued out of a nearby Baptist (GARBC) church. Their former pastor is a drunkard and an overnight knee crawler in the single women's quarters (who sleep on the floor) during overnight youth fellowships, and the church treasurers and youth leaders are two homosexuals and two lesbians. Their former Baptist (GARBC) church has church fellowship with a next door Catholic church since that Catholic church offers disco dancing, party-party and fiestas and other types of sinful entertainments. And some Baptist (GARBC) church members love Catholic sinful entertainments so much, they become Catholics. Their former pastor is a ten minute story teller and their entire life as members of that Baptist church, they had never heard any teachings against sin or anything about God's salvation. One family of that Baptist (GARBC) church who left is Efren (70), his wife Arlin (50) and son Ricky (24). Efren said he's a gambler who went to gambling halls that offered packaged deals of gambling, alcohol, women. His son Ricky, a drug addict, drunkard, tattooed gang member, whoremonger (married/single women) got saved on Sunday June 7. The Muslims who are living in Malaybalay City have issued death threats against Ricky and are trying to kill him. Perla's cousin's wife step mother Vicki (60+) Baptist (GARBC) church is again attending our church meetings. She said she's clueless about God's salvation as she never learned anything from the Bible (only storytelling) from that Baptist (GARBC) church. Her daughter Honeybee (25) from that Baptist (GARBC) church got saved in our church meetings on Sunday June 21. They are bringing their Baptist (GARBC) neighbors to our church meetings.

Some Baptist (GARBC) pastors and their church members are telling our members that our Baptist mission works are bastard churches because they were in Bukidnon FIRST before we were. I told our members that: 1. Jesus is the founder of His Baptist church (Matthew 16:18) at Jerusalem Israel in 30AD (FIRST Baptist church anywhere in the world). 2. New Testament Baptist churches existed in the FIRST century BEFORE the man founded Baptist (GARBC) denomination in 1935. 3. New Testament Baptist churches used the 1611 King James Bible BEFORE the man founded GARBC denomination in 1935. 4. They are members of my sending church Empire Baptist Temple, Sioux Falls, South Dakota which has church perpetuity back to the FIRST Baptist church in 30AD (Ephesians 3:21). 5. We are the FIRST Unaffiliated Baptist missionaries in the province of Bukidnon that holds to Baptist doctrine, Baptist practice and Baptist lifestyle unlike the man founded GARBC denomination that is Universal Church Fundamental Protestant in doctrine, New Evangelical in practice and Catholic in lifestyle.

A Higaonon tribal leader (Baptist GARBC) donated a small piece of farmland for our poor tribal church members.

We've been evangelizing the Canubas family (Boholano/Cebuano) and their relatives and their friends (all are Catholic) for the past three years. There are hundreds of them and we've evangelized many if not most of the younger ones. Finally, many of them have a full understanding of God's salvation. That their inherited Adamic sin nature condemns them. They're under Holy Spirit conviction. Humility is beginning to replace pride. They're closer to a decision to repent and believe the gospel of Christ and His sacrificial blood atonement for their sin debt.

Princess Mae (24) Catholic from Lanao Del Norte is a Bukidnon State University graduate in Malaybalay City. She has been attending our Sunday church meetings off and on for the past three years. After one of our Sunday church meetings, she said that she has a full understanding of God's salvation, but that she is a coward to confess Christ. I told her that cowards don't go to heaven "But the fearful [cowards]...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev.21:8). And that we must confess Christ and that confession is made unto salvation (Mt.10:32; Lk.12:8; Rom.10:9-10; 1 Tim.6:12; 1 Jn.4:2-3,15; 2 Jn.1:7).

Municipality of Kitaotao (four hours away): Barangay Panganan: Ongoing daily evangelism in multiple locations. Ronie (52) Matigsalug tribal, former General Baptist deacon and former barangay officer who got saved in November 2024 is evangelizing the gospel of Christ to hundreds of pagans which has resulted in four new outreaches in a nearby purok and three sitios (two hours round trip by walking). **Never in my life did I ever expect to see a group of pagans get saved who are praising the Lord Jesus Christ.** Ronie's niece Jenny Ann (21) who is a member said she loves our Bible preaching, admires my wife Perla and is interested in being a preacher's wife.

Praise God our converts have been transformed from wicked living to God fearing Bible quoting believers in Christ. Members desire is for all men to come to know Jesus Christ and accept His free gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9) through the forgiveness of sin through the Cross, believing in the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 19:30).

The LORD has entrusted His Baptist churches with His Great Commission—called to go into all the world, preach the gospel of Christ, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them all things that Christ has commanded us (Mt.28-18-20). Evangelism and discipleship are really inseparable. Our mission from Christ is to proclaim Jesus, lead people to Him, and then get them grounded in the faith. New believers need older believers to stabilize them, but older believers need new believers to energize them, right? That's why I always encourage older people to get some younger people in their lives, because younger people need older folks, older folks need younger folks.

There are two provinces in the Philippines where our ministry can easily evangelize hundreds of people (captive audience-Perla's relatives-friends-acquaintances and their relatives-friends-acquaintances) in multiple locations: **1. Bukidnon** (Central Mindanao South Philippines) and also **2. Bohol** (Central Visayas South Central Philippines). Other provinces where our ministry can easily evangelize sufficient sized groups of people are Agusan Del Sur, Compostela Valley, Davao Del Oro, Davao Del Sur (these provinces located in East Mindanao South Philippines). If a missionary is willing to evangelize a captive audience for 3 to 6 months straight and longer, he'd have a harvest. **Sadly, some missionaries find it a burden to evangelize** a captive audience and will get angry if too many people showed up to hear the preaching of the gospel of Christ and if people don't get saved in the very first Bible study, the missionary will abandon it and justify it by saying the people aren't open since they didn't respond immediately.

The denominational group churches in Bukidnon disregard the **WORK** of God (missions, evangelism, discipleship). They want to **PLAY** (activities, entertainment, fellowship, games, music, programs, sports, etc...).

PRAYER REQUEST 1: Missions emphasis for Empire Baptist Temple (sending church) and Unaffiliated Baptist churches including Old Paths Baptist mission works in Bukidnon with three specific missions requests: **I. MEN** – God called. **II. MONEY** – God's provision. **III. MINDSET** – God's salvation and the indwelling Spirit of God and God's calling is our motivation for missions. Evangelistic churches "that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [converts] with him" (Ps.126:5-6).

PRAYER REQUEST 2: God establishes an industrialized economy with sustainable income in the province of Bukidnon so members and visitors wouldn't suffer starvation. This would also allow for the relocation of Perla's relatives and friends as most reside outside the province of Bukidnon in other provinces and need to be evangelized as they're without a Scriptural Unaffiliated Baptist church in their city, municipality, village where they can attend. [Most Baptist churches belong to man founded denomination groups under authority of a president, board of directors, etc...].

God commanded us to love the truth, uphold justice, care for the innocent, and protect what He has entrusted to us. As watchmen on the wall, it is our duty to warn others about what is unfolding in our world. This is how we remain salt and light. Do we desire people, including Islamic people, to be saved? Absolutely. But when individuals or ideologies come with the intent to kill, steal, and destroy, the terms change. Protection rises to the forefront to safeguard the work of ministry. This is why Jesus, on the night before His crucifixion, told His disciples to sell what they had and buy a sword (Lk.22:36). During His earthly ministry, His divine presence had provided their protection. Once He departed, they would face real and increasing hostility and would need to take practical measures to defend themselves. Refusing to tolerate an ideology that seeks to dominate and dismantle our way of life is not unloving—it is obedience. Pray. Stay alert. Refuse deception. Stand firm in the truth as the days grow darker. In the last days, moral clarity would fade and truth itself would be redefined (Is.5:20).

Philippines 'baby bust': Birth rate plunges as rising costs, power woes and digital lifestyles reshape family life. At first I didn't believe it yet the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that the country's total fertility rate (TFR) fell to 1.7 children per woman in 2025, down sharply from 4.1 in 1993, a decline of nearly 60% over three decades and is well below the 2.1 replacement level needed to maintain a stable population without immigration. Persistent inflation over recent years has increased household spending on food, housing, healthcare, education and transport. Many young Filipinos also face insecure employment, stagnant wages relative to living costs and high housing prices, leading many couples to postpone marriage or decide to have only one child—or none at all.

What a blessed hope that God has given to us through Jesus Christ! We are honored to serve Him and thank you for your love, prayers and support of our ministry. We have a huge debt of gratitude. Deepest respects for your friendship and cooperation. We greatly value Biblical obedience and personal integrity. May God bless your unceasing faith and your extremely important local Baptist congregation and all your ministries with the goal of bringing the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ to a local populace who are so desperately in great need thereof. Hopefully many others will follow your biblical and godly example. Praying for the Lord's local Baptist churches.

Because Of His Faithfulness And Abundant Mercies ----- Let Us Go Forth And Sow The Seed!

Jeffrey C. Blust

Philippines

"People that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many" (Dan.11:32-33)

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