



Back into the Race

September 2026



Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

It's not to say that our summer was relaxed. With extra outreach to Caramoan and San Miguel Island, the construction of the ministry center in Caramoan (as well as the first baptism there), and the wedding of two of our staff, the month of July could hardly be referred to as "dog days!" Yet if you compare them to what ensued in August, it made the summer seem slow in comparison.

One reason was that August brought a new explosion of student ministry. As you may know, it was a call to student ministry that led me to Legazpi and helped launch the church here. Since then, ministry to this energetic group has continued to be a big part of our ministry here – and it was an especially big part of this last month.



Sharing at one of the first student gatherings

I shared in my last letter about the unusual large gathering at our student welcome-back fellowship. But it didn't stop there. The second gathering drew more than 70 students and packing our center from wall to wall. From that gathering, five Bible studies were launched on campus at Bicol University, and one-on-one discipleships are getting started weekly. We are discussing now if we need to do two large group meetings each week to accommodate the many students with different schedules.



Pile up of students at our first group meeting. Keep praying for following fellowships!

In relation to this ministry, we were also able to hold special student activities this past month. I taught a "Getting Good Grades" seminar, relating back to my student years where I discovered how putting God first (Matt 6:33) was the key to success in my college life. We were also able to set up a booth on campus (the third time we made it two-stories!) at which we shared the gospel through dramatized testimonies of Bible characters, native dances (one song and all the choreography composed and led by our students themselves), and a opportunity for students to make their own pots (reflecting how God is our Potter and we are His clay). This led to a second follow-up activity with the students in which we taught them how to paint the pots, again with an accompanying message of how God desires to beautifully paint our lives if we submit to His skillful hands and perfect plans.

Yet the blast into student ministry was only part of the August activities. While helping ignite the Bicol University events, all our staff also split up and continued traveling to our two main outreaches (Caramoan and San Miguel Island) two-three days each week, sowing into the people there as well. The Caramoan team continued to maintain eleven different ministries each trip (besides door-to-door visitation when there was time) while the San Miguel Island team, along with staff there, began six new ministries as well, besides one begun previously.



Students in front of our booth performing one of their original songs about Jesus's wonderful workmanship in us His "clay pots."



Sharing at the campus booth about God's desire to work in our lives the same way a potter does with clay.

sanctuary yet still leaving it such that the two can be split when we have multiple church activities at the same time. Praise God for the need to keep expanding, both externally with outreaches and internally at the church itself!

Very clearly, August was not a relaxed month! However, it proved to be the launch of almost more than we could handle! God is good, though, and never gives us more than we can handle – with His help, of course. I truly thank Him for the doors He is opening, the amazing staff who never grow tired of pouring out their lives for Jesus, and for the fruit He is bringing. I also thank Him for all of you whose prayers encourage me so much in this work.

God bless you as you enter September, and may He give you as well all the strength you need to run the race He has set before you!

Running by His Grace,

Dave

David Matthews

That was clearly enough for the start of the school year, but no, the Lord had to add still more! This involved two new work projects in Legazpi. The first was finally fencing the land God provided a couple of years ago in Estanza. Though partially fenced before, the newest section was not, and so the men from our San Miguel Island church came in to put it all in place. Now we are in discussion concerning building a road so that access to the property is easier, and we are hoping by next year to dig a deep well and begin to develop the land.

The second project involved our ministry center in Legazpi. For the past year, attendance has forced us to seat people in an outside overflow area at many of the services. We finally decided that enough was enough, and so we are now in the process of combining the overflow area into the main church



Than and Gilbert putting in fence at our Estanza lot (and hopefully by God's grace one-day a prayer center and campsite)

Faith in Action

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Running with Prayer

It's hard to run without strength, and God gives us that strength through His Spirit and prayer. Thanks so much for being a part of God strengthening me with your prayers. I need it a lot! Here are the latest prayer needs!

1. Physical health and decisions – I've been doing OK since I came back, but this month my back issue was really set off, leading at times to numbness and discomfort in my right leg. Please pray for wisdom and for the ability to solidify insurance if I need surgery soon. It's been hard to work on it from here.

2. Wisdom with the ministry – So much is going on now that it's hard to balance everything. Most decisions for one ministry mean a sacrifice of another. Please pray we will have God's wisdom and unity in our decisions.

3. Solution to US challenges – Besides trying to secure insurance, I'm also still working on other issues regarding the ministry account and government requests for info. Pray for God's wisdom in dealing with them all.

4. A close walk with Jesus. In all the busyness, challenges, and decisions, I need Him more than ever. Thanks!