

# BANGON BOHOL

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From January 23-29, we were given the opportunity to witness the devastation brought by typhoon Odette. Although weeks have passed since the landfall of the typhoon, the current condition of several communities testify to the strength of Odette. Our initial objectives for this trip were to: (1) assess long term community development and livelihood projects in partnership with local leaders (2) assess possible church planting efforts in partnership with local leaders (3) offer discipleship and missions training to local churches and (4) provide initial relief goods for the communities we will visit. As we pursued these objectives, we intentionally sought the Lord to lead us. By His grace, we were able to visit three islands and several church communities.

"Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield."  
- Psalm 33:20

As we arrived at Nocnocan Island, the first community we visited, we immediately felt the warm welcome of local believers. Although they obviously went through a traumatic experience, our team could sense this immovable joy in their hearts as they continued to testify of the Lord's goodness and grace upon them.

In our first day, we spent majority of our time assessing the damages in the community. Since Nocnocan is a fairly small island, we roamed the entire place in less than two hours - and this is with multiple stops to chat with locals. As we sought the Lord's wisdom, we were led to ask Pastor Joewie Basalo - their current Pastor - if we could meet with the men and/or leaders of the church to discuss possible livelihood programs. Pastor Joewie agreed and we scheduled to meet the following day.

When evening came, we gathered the church for a time of worship and fellowship. To our surprise, the house where they gather for worship was packed and overflowed beyond the front gate. Within just a few minutes of singing songs of praise, it was evident that these people are able to rejoice in the midst of sorrow. Although all we had was a guitar and a beatbox, the voices of both young and old declaring the sufficiency of Jesus was a testimony of the Lord's hand at work in this place.

The following day, as we met with the men of the church, we facilitated our time by empowering them to brainstorm ideas regarding the best way to support their community. Our objective was

to come up with the most practical and cost efficient way to help them earn a living while simultaneously giving a portion of their income to their church - in order to support the church's expenses as they seek to help many others.

As we deliberated, we were affirmed that the best way to support them is by purchasing four fishing boats which will benefit several families. The boats will be considered the church's property and Pastor Joewie will be in charge of supervising its use, while also ensuring that the agreed cooperative effort to give a portion of their income to help generate funds for the church is fulfilled.

Although our time with them was short, we pray that this visit was simply the beginning of a long term partnership as we seek to saturate the entire island with the gospel of Jesus! Lord willing, we plan to make a trip back this April to officially hand over the fishing boats and to offer help in the context of discipleship. The Lord be praised! ✱