

Ken Noecker: Our Man in Asia, 20 Years and Counting

In 1986, Ken Noecker was asked by the brothers to go to Asia and begin a Servants of the Word household in Manila. Since joining our brotherhood he had had thoughts of being a missionary someday in some Third World country, so the chance to work in the Philippines struck him as providential.

Arriving in October 1986, Ken first took on the challenging job of learning the Filipino language. Language study included six months of intensive classroom learning and on-the-street practice. "Once I learned Tagalog, life here became easier for me," Ken recalls. "But up to today I still discover the many nuances of the language; I'm still learning!"

Another challenge for Ken has been to understand and adapt himself to the local culture. Filipinos, he says, are extremely hospitable and friendly people. Over the years, he has made numerous friends. One indicator of this is the number of times he's been asked to be a principal sponsor at a wedding; such an honor is usually reserved for those either with money or with a significant relationship with the couple-of course in Ken's case it's the latter reason!



Because the Servants of the Word in the Philippines are involved in a number of major outreaches and lay communities of families, there is no shortage of opportunities to relate with large numbers of people. Add to this Ken's recognized abilities in leading, teaching, and counseling, and the result is a very busy missionary life. In the past twenty years he's served as an evangelist, a campus youth worker, a community builder and coordinator, a trustee in various organizations, a peripatetic speaker, and everybody's-so it seems-favorite adviser.

"Where have you experienced the greatest sense of fruitfulness?" I asked him. Ken considered this and answered: "I think that was when I was leading the University District (the members of the Ligaya community who are university-age). I was involved in the formation of young adults, and I worked with some remarkably gifted and committed people. I had opportunities to help them mature in the Christian way of life, forming them in their thinking, in their discipleship to Christ, in their understanding of community life, and in stepping forward to take on significant Christian service." Many of those university students have since become leaders, teachers, and missionaries in their own right.

Being a missionary in the Philippines also has its challenges and difficulties. It saddens Ken that much of the poverty he sees is caused by the avarice of some and the unconcern of others. Even the much-vaunted Filipino friendliness has its down side: a complex system of social expectations that can be difficult, if not impossible, to meet. In all this Ken's shown himself adept in relating effectively with all kinds of people-young, old, rich, poor, single, married-becoming "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22), in the process loving many and being loved by many.

For the foreseeable future, Ken, as regional elder, will continue to oversee The Servants of the Word in the Philippines: the brothers, their assignments, our

"I can't think of working anywhere else!"

corporate mission, faithfulness to our way of life, and expansion in the Asian region. What are his hopes for the future? To start with, he has hopes of having more Servants of the Word in Asia. "I expect continued growth, and believe we'll have young men joining us from other Asian countries," he says. "I also see the establishment of more communities in various places in the Philippines. Many of these will come about as a result of our work with young people."

Continued on page 2



Celebrating Thirty-five Years of God's Goodness

Beloved family and friends of The Servants of the Word,

We send fall greetings to you after our busy summer of missionary travel, youth events, and summer households. In many of our locations, a new academic year has begun, full of promise and of new opportunities for our brothers to truly be servants of God's word, men who love him and who make him loved.

At the end of August, we held two weeks of important international meetings at our center in Chelsea, Michigan. On one of those days we joyfully celebrated together our thirty-fifth anniversary as a brotherhood, and on another evening we celebrated with our brothers who were making their commitments this year. Over the course of these weeks, we brought together our theologians for a day of study, our regional youth directors for a day of planning and development, and our primary leaders for three days of discussion and decision-making. We also held our Brotherhood Council, which meets once every four years for several days and comprises elected representatives of the brothers in every region. Among other functions, it is the council's duty to elect the Presiding Elder for the coming four-year term. For better or for worse, our brothers decided that the current Presiding Elder (still eligible for one further term) should continue in this role for yet another four years. Set yourselves, then, for several more years of receiving my greetings and seeing my smiling face in this corner of the newsletter. (We'll be merciful, though, and change the mug shot before too long.)

I mentioned above that we are currently celebrating thirty-five years of God's goodness to us as in The Servants of the Word. We are tremendously grateful to the One who has called us, and who never ceases to fill our lives with his blessings. He is our joy and our treasure, and we have gladly left all to follow him wherever he may lead us. And we are deeply grateful to him for all of you, whose love and support is a continual source of strength for us. Be sure that we keep you continually before the Lord in prayer. Please keep us in your prayers as well. ▲

In Christ,

John Keating

We are tremendously grateful to the One who has called us, and who never ceases to fill our lives with his blessings.

Ken Noecker, continued from page 1

Because of the brotherhood's connection with The Sword of the Spirit, Ken now heads the community-building work in Asia, traveling to such countries as India, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand.

How long will he continue working in Asia? "I can't think of working anywhere else!" he responds quickly. He goes on to say that he sees himself as a man under obedience, and this could result in his being elsewhere someday. In the meantime, Ken is a brother who's been given an assignment that he intends to do well. "And besides," he adds, "this is my home now!" ▲

—Jake Yap



Ken Noecker and John Yocum (back left) with community brothers in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Called From Many Christian Churches, Races, and Nations Brothers Celebrate Lifelong and Full Commitments



Joseph Piquero following his lifelong commitment

This past August The Servants of the Word celebrated the lifelong commitment of Joseph Piquero at the brotherhood center in Chelsea, Michigan. On the same day, making their first full commitments were Peter Legaspi, Brian LaLonde, Marlon Castro, and Brian Laba. God has continued to bless The Servants of the Word by adding to our numbers young men who are making fervent and wholehearted responses to his call.

Some have asked, “How long does the discernment process take, and what does this process for a young man interested in our life look like?” The lifelong commitment culminates what is typically an eight-year period of discernment that begins with the initial investigation and trying out of our life as an affiliate and is then followed by two years of being an affiliate in training. At that point, the brother comes to our international formation house in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a period of two years. Toward the end of these years of guidance and formation during which the brother matures in his understanding of our call, he discerns whether he desires to make a more significant commitment. That commitment is called the “full” commitment, meaning that the

brother is fully a part of the life of The Servants of the Word. However, the full commitment is made for one year at a time for at least three more years, so that during this extended period the brother can gain experience in living out our life apart from the formation process. At the end of that time, the brother may request to make a lifelong commitment.

Joseph reflects on his recent lifelong commitment, “All the way! That’s how I want to love God and live for him. It means loving God with all that he has given me, including the grace to live single for him in The Servants of the Word.”

Brian LaLonde says of his full commitment, “I am very grateful for my first full commitment. I know personally that it’s not easy for a young man to make commitments. But the Lord has helped me see that real freedom takes commitment. There is freedom for me in being able to say that I am a Servant of the Word.”

Joseph Piquero resides in Manila, Philippines, where he is a member of the local community, Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon, and will continue his service working with the young professionals movement. This fall Peter Legaspi and Marlon Castro, also members of Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon, will return to the Philippines, where they will be involved with university evangelism work. Brian LaLonde is the University Christian Outreach director at Michigan State University. Brian lives in Lansing, Michigan, and is a



Surrounding Joseph Piquero from l-r are Brian Laba, Peter Legaspi, Marlon Castro, and Brian LaLonde.

Called From Many Christian Churches, continued from page 3

member of the local community, The Work of Christ. Brian Laba has recently moved to Charis, the community in Belfast, where he is serving with Youth Initiatives.

In our Covenant, it states, “We believe that he has called us together to be a brotherhood where men of many Christian churches and of many races and nations can live and serve the Lord.” We are grateful to God that he continues to call such men to our life. ▲

—Mike Kramer

We Are Celebrating our 35th Anniversary



Brothers and guests at our annual retreat weekend in Jackson, Michigan.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

THE SERVANTS OF THE WORD
P.O. Box 7087 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107 • U.S.A. • Tel: (734) 475-3550
www.servantsoftheword.org

ALL DONATIONS TO THE SERVANTS OF THE WORD ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND MAY BE GIFT-AIDED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.