

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

Psalms 96:1-2 (NIV)



## Winter ~~JAARS~~ Report

August 22, 2009



### Singing And Praising God From A Joyful Heart



This banner greeted us on Monday morning, June 29<sup>th</sup>, in the little church where we were to hold the song-writing workshop for the Koronadal Blaan. Earlier we and all the participants had enjoyed a delicious Filipino breakfast complete with mounds of rice.

We had flown to the Philippines a few days earlier, arriving at the SIL group house on Saturday morning. Sunday morning, June 28<sup>th</sup> dawned with us flying to the bottom of the Philippines, to General Santos City, on Mindanao. Many of our Blaan friends live there and this is where the workshop would be given.

Sunday was special for it was also our 12<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We could think of no better way to begin our 13<sup>th</sup> year together than to help lead a workshop that would give the Blaans encouragement to use their unique cultural music as part of their worship of the living God and His only son, Jesus Christ.

We had prayed that the participants would be diverse among the Koronadal Blaan believers. God gave us eleven attendees from four different church groups. Ten of them were pastors, and one of the pastors was a woman. They were an amazing group and so excited to use their ethnic music to build strong worship within the Blaan church.

The next three pictures are traditional instruments the participants started using for worship singing.



Traditional instruments, top down: fuglung, tanangong, and falimak.

Songs were written from the heart, speaking to things uniquely Blaan. We were amazed at the talent that emerged, in creating lyrics and in creating beautiful tunes.



### Praise 'n Prayer

- Praise God with us for the safe arrival of our eighth grandchild—born to Sheri and Chris. Big brother, Aiden is excited too!
- Praise God for a recent special gift given to SIL Philippine Branch, Koronadal Blaan Project Account to cover the costs of releasing all the Blaan New Testaments. Pray for the remaining 15%. (See our Feb. '09 letter.)
- Praise the Lord for our safe travel coming and going and for the wonderful peace in the city the whole time we were there. We traveled freely with no need to fear.
- Praise God for the eleven participants for the hymn-writing workshop. The ones God selected were truly ready to use these new skills to build up the church. **Pray** for the new group the pastors formed to keep the project going.
- Pray we'll be able to arrange future recording sessions, as needed from half-way around the world. We've been assured there will be media people available and they have portable equipment to make recordings in the field.

Continued on the next page...

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## Conclusion and New CD

The workshop outcome was more than we had envisioned. The collection of songs grew, so that by the final day they had written 21 new Blaan songs. The participants listened to all the songs again and chose 12 they liked best. Each singer or group of singers took time to polish and practice their song. Then a recording session captured the songs in digital form. Later in the afternoon as the workshop drew to a close, we held a rousing program of songs, dance, Blaan chanting, and playing of instruments. Each participant went home with a CD of the 12 selected songs.



## What's Next?

A most exciting thing began to happen as the workshop was ending. A great desire sprang up among the eleven participants to continue to write songs that present the Gospel message to Blaans. They formed a group and chose leaders. We assured them of our help to preserve the songs. Their plan is to write songs, gather every month or two to present and edit their songs and teach them to each other. Then, when they have a set of 12-15 perfected, they will contact us to arrange for SIL Vernacular Media people to go there and record them. One concern they expressed is they do not have training in writing the tunes they create. To keep from forgetting the tunes they want to have their best songs recorded.

## Saying Good-bye

This is always the hard part for us. Lord willing, we are hoping to remain healthy enough and funds are provided so that we can return about every two years. That gives us time to recover and to plan meaningful projects for when that 2<sup>nd</sup> year rolls around, as we did this time.

We did get to stay five days beyond the end of the workshop. This gave us time to check on the Koronadal Blaan New Testament distribution and to have a good visit with Rev. Saya and his family—something that was not possible during the workshop.



That also gave us a Sunday to worship with the Blaans. We rode in the back of a pick-up truck up to a small village near where Sally and Kathy began their work of translating the New Testament into the Koronadal Blaan language. The worship time was enjoyed for the enthusiastic way the Blaans sing their songs and give their testimonies. Being fluent in Blaan, it was a huge blessing for Sally.

Leon enjoyed the presence of the Lord, but could understand little of the language having never lived among Blaans.

There was one very special part of this service. The pastor was the one woman in the song-writing workshop. She was also around as a little girl when Sally began her work there in 1978. The very special part was a quartet.



Pastor Jenny had taught one of her new songs to three other Blaans. Then they performed it for the congregation. We got to actually hear the result of

why we came to the Philippines this time—worship songs made just for the Blaan Christians and they obviously loved it. Praise the Lord!

If you look at [www.leonwinter.com](http://www.leonwinter.com), our new website, under menu item Blaan Media, you can see a young Blaan woman, Mercy, dancing and hear her husband, Edgar, sing a song he wrote. About three weeks after the workshop Edgar and Mercy lost their home and belongings in a flash flood. This is very hard on them, but they are not discouraged. Pray for them as Edgar pastors a small church, and as they rebuild their lives.

## Welcome, Kellan Elias Leigh!



On Tuesday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed our 8<sup>th</sup> grandchild into the family. Sheri and Chris anticipated a little girl, but welcomed a second son, Kellan Elias Leigh, instead. We are thankful for a safe delivery and a healthy baby.

**The last few months have been full of the Lord's blessings. Our thanks to all. Your prayers, gifts, and often remembering us are noticed by the Lord.**

*Leon Sally*

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