

SERVING THE LORD IN

# THE PHILIPPINES

REV. ROGER & AMY JAMES



Lent  
March 2020



## PHILIPPINE FACTS

*“On July 7, 1946, three days after Independence Day in the Philippines, the first Lutheran missionary arrived in Manila to sow the seeds of the Reformation Gospel. This was unique in the history of the sponsoring, sending church, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LC-MS), for three reasons. First, it was unique in that the first missionary was not the usual expatriate, but a native citizen of the country to which he was sent. Second, it was the first of several mission fields which the LC-MS entered after World War II after returning Lutheran servicemen brought the news of the need for sharing the Gospel in various parts of the world. Third, it was unique due the fact that this was the first overseas mission area the LC-MS entered by its own initiative. India in 1895, China in 1913 and Nigeria in 1936 built on the foundation laid by other mission groups.”*

*(From Robert Day McAmis, The Lutheran Church in the Philippines: History of a Half Century of Lutheran Mission in the Republic of the Philippines, 2-3).*



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**Rev. Roger James serves as LCMS theological educator. He and his wife Amy live and teach at Lutheran Theological Seminary and Training Center (LTS), the seminary of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP).**

Last time I wrote there was a volcano erupting causing all sorts of uncertainty here in the Philippines. This time it is the coronavirus. Lent is an excellent time to frame the uncertainty of our day to day lives in terms of what Christ has done for us. On Ash Wednesday, as the soot is crossed onto the forehead, the pastor says, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” The only honest response to that statement is, “Amen. It is true.” But that is not all that is true. It is also true that just as God formed Adam from the dust of the earth, so he will raise all people again from the dust of death. Those who believe in the Savior Jesus will draw near to the Blessed Trinity, never to fall to dust and ashes again, never to die, never to sin, never to sorrow, never to shame or be shamed, never to be ill. This is most certainly true because of what the Son of God did, becoming a man of dust Himself, for us and for our salvation. This is a certainty that infinitely surpasses coronaviruses or volcanoes! Thanks be to God.



Speaking of volcanoes, thankfully that seems to have passed. Minimal loss of life, but substantial loss of property and the whole surrounding area, which had been a major tourist destination, has been deemed unfit for human habitation. Thankfully, churches of the LCP in that area have been restored

Now there is the coronavirus. “Here in the Philippines, there seemed to be little impact.” That was what I was going to write March 12, when I first started this newsletter. What a difference a few days can make! Since 18 March until April 15 we are on “enhanced community quarantine.” This means that only one person from a household can go out to get necessary groceries or medicine at specific times assigned to city districts. Our district time is Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from eleven to two. We have about nine different “households” on campus. Each of the professors has a separate home; the deaconess students are one household; two different student families have small apartments; the single men share a living area; and then the caretaker and his son, home from college have a small home.

Classes have been canceled in order to comply with community directives. However professors continue to give reading assignments and study guides. (I tell the students that it is their daily dose of medicine.) Hopefully, we can catch up quickly when the quarantine ends.

Nevertheless, we gather daily, either in the morning or the evening for prayer. We meet outside in the grassy quad, each household together, but distanced from others. The order varies, but usually there is a psalm and hymn, Bible reading and homily by





Here they are! The Women of LTS. From the left, Margaret, wife of Rev. Teodorico Taran, dean of LTS; Daphne their daughter; Evelyn Cerdeñola, wife of Rev. James Cerdeñola, professor and former LCP president; Dorcas Dalog, secretary of LTS for over 30 years; Amy; Leysin Vincent, deaconess student; Miriam Mung, special student from Myanmar; Rowena, wife of Vicar Jaguil Laoyan; Bebe, wife of seminarian Michael Salila; and Virginia, wife of Rev. Willando Roa, professor. Unfortunately, this group is on hiatus until the epidemic is over.



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one of the professors, Matins, or Morning Suffrages, or the Litany. It is truly a high point of the day.

Thank you for remembering us in your prayers. Our prayers also go out to all those who are serving to alleviate this crisis; to our fellow missionaries, far from home; to the sick and fearful; to the pastors who continue to care for their flocks; for those who are out of work; for our congregations....

The list goes on! Thanks be to God that He eagerly hears us.

Peace in Christ,

*Roger B. James*

This February a group started to get together each Friday afternoon in our apartment to discuss Katie Schuermann's *Pew Sisters*, a women's study by Concordia Publishing House. This group consists of the wonderful women of LTS, professors' and seminarians' wives and daughters, deaconess students, and seminary staff. What a joy to be a part of this bunch of faithful Lutheran women, exploring what God's Word has to say about helping and loving our sisters in Christ, right where we are in our homes, neighborhoods, congregations, and workplaces.

—Amy



Daily prayers in the campus quad.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR:**

- The timely renewal of our missionary visas, without complication.
- That our summer plans are not hurt by coronavirus travel bans.
- Good health and safety for us and our students and colleagues at LTS.
- For new students eager to study for the Holy Ministry.

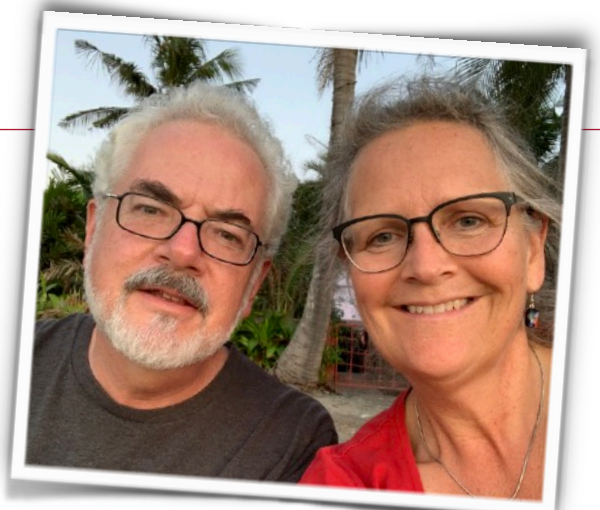
**GIVE THANKS FOR:**

- That the threat from Taal Volcano has subsided.
- Continued good health in the LTS community.
- Two new grandchildren "scheduled" for 2020!

**PRAISE GOD FOR:**

- The many individuals and congregations that pray for us, support us and encourage us.

Thank you for supporting us with your gifts, pledges, prayers, and encouraging words.



There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](http://lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

To support the LCMS through the work of Roger & Amy James, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of Roger James." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at [lcms.org/lastname](http://lcms.org/lastname).