

MZCF @ 30

GOING & FORWARD

Thirty years ago in June of 1979, Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn came into being after the sibling dentists, Francisco, Jr. and Lourdes Ramirez, who had come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ opened their parents' home for Bible study for their neighbors and workers. In a year's time, there were around 100 in attendance forcing the Bible study to be transferred from their sala to their garage. This congregation of young believers who met in the garage came to be known as the Called-Out Fellowship. In the years to follow outreaches in Mindoro, National Bilibid Prisons, Sta. Mesa and Calocan were established.

Pastor Ching Barte of San Pablo, Laguna served as Called-Out Fellowship's first pastor. Sunday worship services were held in the afternoon in the "sanctified garage." Under his able leadership the fellowship continued to grow in number with young university students outnumbering the adults. During his tenure student fellow-

ships were established in Manuel L. Quezon University and National University. A few months after his resignation in December 1981, the Lord sent a Canadian-American missionary in the person of Rev. Michael Pridham of Christian Life Community, Lacey, Washington who was mightily used by the Lord to lay a solid Biblical foundation on vision, church govern-



1979: Bible study at the sala of Dr. Lourdes Ramirez



1980: The bible study transfers to the "sanctified garage"

ment, and church life. Rev. Pridham labored to teach the Word of God from January 1982 until June of 1983 four nights a week and on Sunday afternoon before the worship service. This school came to be known as Called-out Bible College (COBC). A clear vision from Hebrews 6:1-2 "Let us go on to perfection" was imparted to the church that gave direction for her to move toward the high calling of being conformed to the image of Christ.

As a major highlight in the graduation of 14 (out of 54) students from COBC, a three-night prophetic presbytery was held in June 1983. Rev. Pridham invited the pastor of his home church, Rev. Earl Bradley to lead in praying, prophesying over the graduates and the ordination of the first set of elders



1980: Sunday evening service of Called Out Fellowship begins



1982: Rev. Michael Pridham teaches in a Leadership Training Seminar

namely, Dr. Francisco (Jun) D. Ramirez, Jr., Dr. Rizalino Mercado and Rev. Exequiel Lazaro. At this time, the name of the church was changed to Mandaluyong Christian Life Center (MCLC). Dr. Jun Ramirez served as its Senior Pastor until 1999.

After the first group of Bible college students graduated and the eldership established, the church embarked on starting home fellowships in different places of Mandaluyong City such as Coronado, Hulo, Sgt. Bumatay, Plainview, Paraiso, Poblacion. Groups also began in Resurrection, Sampaloc, and Old Panaderos, Sta. Ana, Manila. As these home groups went on, parents of the young people and families began to be added to the church. Theatrical and musical presentations were employed to proclaim the Gospel publicly and within the four walls of the church. By 1984 the church had to move its services from the garage to the house in front of it to accommodate the numerical growth it was experiencing. The church would stay here for the next two years until the Lord's miraculous provision was released and the church was able to lease the land in its present location beginning November 1986.

At this time also, a church school was begun named Called-out Christian Academy (CCA) with Rev. Lazaro serving as its first pastor-principal. In June 1985, the Elders appointed the first deacons, Felizardo Gonzales Jr., Bob Guzman, George Padilla, Charlie Bautista, and Edwin Abisado. It was also in this year that Sis. Beulah Badua, a former professor from University of Baguio and church staff of Living Word Fellowship accepted the invitation to become CCA's principal. Apart from her role in the school, Sister Beulah began



1983: First set of ordained elders: Dr. Francisco (Jun) D. Ramirez, Jr., Dr. Rizalino Mercado and Rev. Exequiel Lazaro

to teach the church in the area of prayer and intercession. The church became instrumental in birthing a national prayer movement which today is known as the Intercessors for the Philippines (IFP). Prayer and Intercession became one of the courses offered at COBC.



1983: Fourteen (14) graduates from Called Out Bible College

As the training of church leaders continued, the Lord sent a pastor from Shelton, Washington who likewise, originated from Pastor Bradley's church, Rev. Dennis Teague, to take the helm of COBC for one year (1984). By 1985 Rev. Michael Biggerstaff of Rainer Christian Community, Rainer, Washington accepted the invitation to become its Principal/Administrator. Both men of God were colleagues of Rev. Michael Pridham. Then in 1988, Rev. Biggerstaff had to return to the United States and the Elders assigned Pastor Edwin Abisado to assume leadership of the Bible school until its closure in 1994.

In 1987, a year after the peaceful EDSA Revolution, MCLC hosted a seminar for the leaders of the Body of Christ with the theme, "What is God saying to the Nation?" The communist armed movement was at its peak number and its front organizations were freely marching the streets of Manila in demonstrations almost weekly. Mercifully, God's word for the nation was given to MCLC. "The Lord is not giving this nation to the hands of the Communists, but to the hands of the Intercessors. It is up to you to

ask Him what to do with it. He is sending you the Spirit of Elijah to prepare for My coming visitation.” This revelation gave much encouragement to the church to pursue her calling to pray for the nation and monthly overnight prayer meetings began.

Nine years after the founding of the church (1988), MCLC gave birth to her first daughter church – Siniloan Christian Life Center. It was started from a group of administrative staff of the Laguna State Polytechnic College (LSPC). The church’s first pastor was Pastor Butch Pascual. When Pastor Butch resigned in 1991, MCLC commissioned Pastor Charlie Bautista to be the church’s next pastor. At the beginning of the latter’s term the name of the church was changed to Faithful Christ Christian Church. Pastor Charlie still pastors the church until this very day.

MCLC’s second daughter church came into being due to the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in June 1991. MCLC, like many Metro Manila churches, was one of those who organized medical and relief mission teams to aid the victims of this natural disaster. Her efforts were focused to the residents of Barangay Calantas, Floridabanca, Pampanga. Naturally, along with food, clothing, and medicines, the Gospel was heralded and a Bible study group was started. Pastors Charlie Bautista and Rico Hechanova teamed up to pioneer the work. After their wedding in May 1992, Pastor Rico and wife Beth were commissioned to continue the work that began. Since then the church has planted daughter churches in nearby Porac and Concepcion, Tarlac. Today, the church is called Zion of the Holy One Church (ZHOC) with Pastor Rico Hechanova taking the oversight.

Four years back (1987) after the ordination of the first set of elders, the second prophetic presbytery meeting was held. Another prophetic word for the nation was given. The prophecy mentioned about two winds blowing upon the Philippines - the First Wind called “Holiness unto the Lord” and the Second Wind, “The Kingdom of God.” As a result of this

1984: MCLC transfers to the house across the street



revelation, Intercessors for the Philippines was born at MCLC in 1989. By 1990 MCLC had encouraged two other churches (Christ the Living Stone Fellowship and Jesus Christ Saves Global Outreach) to join her and incorporate IFP with Pastor Jun Ramirez serving as its first Chairman and Rev. Beulah Badua as Vision Keeper/Executive Director. IFP has become a national prayer movement in the Philippines.

A year after the establishment of IFP, the Lord moved Pastor Jun Ramirez to start a fellowship among pastors of Mandaluyong in response to a message shared in one of the IFP hosted conferences – “The Elders of the City”. So, in April 1991 the pastors of Mandaluyong Christian Life Center, Christ the Living Stone Fellowship, and Mandaluyong Bible Baptist Church met for breakfast and prayer at Annabel’s Restaurant at Shaw Boulevard. This was the beginning of Mandaluyong Pastors Fellowship (MPA)



1985: First set of ordained deacons: Charlie Bautista, Edwin Abisado, Sary Gonzales, Justy Guzman, and George Padilla

1986: Building construction begins (present site of MZCF)



with Pastor Jun Ramirez becoming its first Chairman. Today, this fellowship of pastors and churches is known by its name Mandaluyong Christian Churches Association (MCCA).

1992 was the year when another daughter church was born, this time in Taguig. With the blessing of the Eldership Pastor Edwin organized a team to re-establish a home outreach that stopped meeting. After about a year, oversight was transferred to Pastor Nandy Ibon and he pastored the church for eleven years. This church was named Triumphant Christian Living Church (TCLC). When Pastor Nandy moved to the U.S. in 2002, Pastor Alan Esporas, another home-grown leader from MCLC was set in. Pastor Alan resigned in 2003 to pursue his call to missions and one of the elders of MZCF, Pastor George Padilla was sent to take the pastorate. Pastor George continues to oversee the church to this day with its two daughter churches in Lagundi, Morong, Rizal, and Bagong Sikat, Taguig. In response to the leading of the Lord the church name has been changed to Highway to Zion Church of the Firstborn in March 2009.



1990: Edwin Abisado was ordained as pastor-teacher

name is needed again. Since then, the church has been known as Mount Zion Church of the Firstborn (MZCF).

In the summer of 1994 a Young Adults Camp was held at Capuluan Central, Guinayangan, Quezon. The group brought along a medical/dental team and showed the Jesus film. Those who responded to the Gospel were followed-up by husband and wife team of Bro. Diony and Sis. Evelyn Flores. There was much spiritual struggle before the work bore fruit but for the glory of God, today there is a worshipping congregation that has adopted the name of the mother church, MZCF. Two



1991: MCLC launches Operation Barnabas in Calantas, Floridablanca, Pampanga

From Mandaluyong Christian Life Center the church name was changed to Majestic Christ Living Church in 1994. In 2002, the Lord spoke to the late Pastor Gerry Valle that MZCF is a "church of the firstborn." By that time, a growing knowledge about the Vision of Zion was getting stronger among the leadership so that the Elders felt that a change of

other churches have since been influenced by the Vision of Zion and have come under the umbrella of MZCF.

In fulfillment of the prophetic word spoken to the church in June of 1983 – that of serving churches that need strengthening – the Lord began to stir up the heart of the Eldership in the year 2000 to organize a fellowship of churches beginning with her three daughter churches and one affiliate. As of today, MZCF is serving a network of 46 churches under the banner of the Fellowship of Ministers and Christian Churches (FMCC). These churches are mostly located in Metro Manila and outlying provinces from Kalinga to the north and Quezon to the south. One affiliated church is located in the island of Leyte. FMCC is spiritually aligned with Zion Fellowship International headed by Dr. Brian J. Bailey at Waverly, New York.



1993: Mandaluyong pastor pray for Mayor Benjamin Abalos, Sr. at a Jesus March that culminates at a service in the Mandaluyong City Hall

In 2004, the Elders inaugurated a daughter church at Bacoor, Cavite commissioning Pastor Willie Macauyam to be its pastor. The Lord has since moved the church

to a more strategic location in the town of Imus and has now planted its first daughter church at General Trias. The church is named Zion of the Glorious Redeemer Church (ZGRC).

In 2004, the Lord promoted Pastor Gerry Valle to glory and Pastor Edwin Abisado was set in to oversee MZCF together with Pastor George Padilla. Pastor Audie Valencia, a former Deacon, was appointed Elder in April 2007. While serving as elders of MZCF, Pastor George and Pastor Audie are overseeing Highway to Zion Church of the Firstborn, and Christian Community in Mount Zion respectively at the same time.

In April 2007, the eldership decided to divide Mandaluyong City into 6 strategic areas each with an assigned area pastor for effective pastoral care and church planting. Each area covers three to four barangays led by an Area Pastor as follows: Pastor Linda Abisado (A1); Pastor Tony Goudin (A2); Pastor Amie Valle (A3); Pastor Mike Muyot (A4); Pastor Art Recio (A5); Pastor Efren Alzate (A6). Those members who live outside Mandaluyong are considered to fall under Area 7 (Metro Manila) under the leadership of Pastor Jimmy Isidro. Since 2007 four outreach churches have been started in Block 38 Welfareville Compound (A3), Old Zaniga (A4), Chowking, Maysilo, Plainview (A5), and Lores Subdivision, Antipolo City. Simultaneously, members coming from Antipolo City were organized and a church was planted and the elders appointed Pastor Arjun Pelias to be its pastor. In 2008 three more areas in Mandaluyong have been organized so that there are now MZCF outreach churches in Welfareville, Old Zaniga and Plainview.

The start of 2008 brought with it the re-establishment of ministry training program through Zion Ministerial Institute Extension Bible School where third generation, biological and spiritual sons and daughters of the second generation leaders are now attending. It was also in this year that the vision of MZCF was written in the form that we have today. With the seminar "Journey of Israel" held in October of the same year, MZCF is receiving a fresh word to the nation consistent with the prophetic word for the nation in 1986 "Prepare for My coming visitation." The Word for the nation is "Prepare for Revival."

The year 2009 was ushered in with a call for a 50-day

chain-fast. A week before the end of the fast, the Lord has started to impress upon the Eldership to continue on with the nightly prayer meetings that began upon the commencement of the fast. It was in the March 1 Sunday Worship Service, a day after the 50-day fast that the Lord spoke to the heart of



2000: MZCF Elders organize a fellowship of churches under the banner of Fellowship of Ministers and Christian Churches (FMCC)

Pastor Edwin that MZCF had just finished another leg in her journey on to spiritual Mount Zion and God is ushering her into another segment of the journey. The presence of the Lord in the service that day was so special and prophetic utterances and prayers were brought forth. In connection with the nightly prayer meetings the Lord gave Pastor Edwin the verse in Isaiah 64:1, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence." The verse highlights God's desire for the nightly prayer meetings to go on until revival comes. One of the early prophetic promises given to this church is that the worship that's coming from this church will impact this nation.



2008: Ministry training program is re-established through Zion Ministerial Institute Extension Bible School

The prophecies that have been given to us as a church are about to be fulfilled. The Lord is preparing the Joshua and Caleb generation for the days ahead. We are living in special days. There is a call for leaders, a call for heads of the families, a call for intercession and a call for true worshippers. There is a call to collective anointing which will bring us greater and greater unity in the Spirit and will bring us higher and higher for the vision that the Lord has for this church. MZCF is 30 and it will go forward this year and in the years to come from strength to strength and from glory to glory!

We are to heed the call by consecrating ourselves to God and to the vision of the church anew encouraging one another daily even as we see the Day approaching!