



# Eric and Sandra Read

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**Location:** Philippines



**What we do:** Demonstrating natural farming models alongside equipping churches in holistic mission for real community impact.



**Empowering** people pushed to the edges of life to reach their God-given potential

Dear friends,

Rain! Rain! Rain! Very heavy, and easily the wettest start to the rains since we have been here. The ducks love the puddles and streams. But the papayas are dying, we've lost almost 100 trees now out of 300. On the brighter side, the bananas and guavas are doing well in it.

A rainy day for a school visit to a muddy farm won't generate enthusiasm among children. So we spoke to the principal of the primary school and suggested they start visiting after the mid-year break, hoping the rain will have eased off by then. He was also relieved, as the Department of Education just had a meeting with all schools to put together plans for the children to be given extra tuition to improve reading skills. The schools will need extra effort and time to establish this. So, in the meantime we plan to test out our materials and activities on informal small groups of local children and Sunday school groups.

Thank you for your prayers regarding our workers leaving. We have now been able to replace them all. It is inspiring that some of those leaving expressed the peace they had while working on the farm and having a newfound understanding of who God is and can be in their lives. They go home with a Visayan New Testament, the same version we use for the Bible study. Bimbim is one of those who have left. He was 17 when he came, so quiet and timid and had hearing difficulties, which is the main reason he stopped schooling. He came to work partly to escape his mother's pressure – she saw him as an unmotivated, lazy son!

**Bimbim** was our house help and it took a while for him to reach the self-motivated, initiative-taking stage. But he always had a good attitude and was always very attentive during Bible studies. Gradually he started to open up more about himself while working with Sandra in the garden and they talked about the difference between **a belief in God** (his family are devoted Roman Catholics) and having **a personal relationship with God**. Being of the same tribe as Romel and Jencel (Romel's wife is a cousin of Bimbim), they also talked to him about a confused faith where their traditional animistic tribal beliefs are interwoven into their Christian faith. God's work in Bimbim's life was slow but sure. He surprised us with the deep reflective thoughts he started to contribute during Bible studies, and didn't even hesitate to pray publicly. One day he shared with Sandra that he believes God healed him from his deafness. He prayed for healing



*How the papayas should be looking*

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With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges



and he believes God guided him to do a sort of breathing-swallowing manoeuvre and it cleared his hearing! So every morning when he gets up and his hearing is dull, he does this specific breathing-swallowing exercise and his hearing clears up. When asked, he was confident about Jesus Christ as his *Manluluwas*, his Saviour. Bimbim also talked to Romel about his desire to be baptised.

Bimbim stayed with us for three years. He just left last May. Being the only son in his family, he feels his father needs him now to help with farming. On his last day with us he did a puppet show (he is a good ventriloquist) on David and Goliath for the Bible study group and the children. And he has plans to gather children in his village for Bible stories. We are all happy to see a transformed Bimbim – he is confident, capable

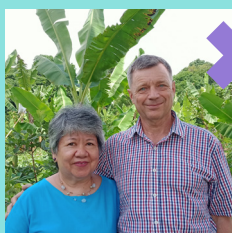
and takes initiative. Most of all, we are inspired by his faith. He is now married to Romel's sister and their first child is due in September. Bimbim's newfound relationship with God was put to the test when his family was planning to butcher a chicken as a sacrifice and do their traditional rituals for this pregnancy. Bimbim firmly refused, which caused a lot of upset and the tension continues until now. He came for a visit last week. He said he has already planted some crops and is now getting ready to build his own house. **Please pray for Bimbim and Gina**, his wife. Pray for a strong faith so that Bimbim can stand firm in the midst of strong family pressure and continue to grow in his relationship with the Lord. Pray for Gina to have a safe delivery and a normal, healthy baby, especially as the family continues to warn of impending calamity because of Bimbim's refusal to do a tribal sacrifice.

On a personal note, we had a good family time for a few days at a nice beach resort when Atiyyah came for a couple of weeks, and Peter and Sheki managed to take a few days off from their business. We're amazed by Peter's perseverance. He and Sheki are working very hard to get their paintball/camping/coffee shop business venture off the ground. Atiyyah is about to start working for the Ministry of Justice shortly after she returns. We are very thankful to God for providing this job for her and for graciously leading and guarding our children thus far.

Eric and Sandra



**Photos from top to bottom:** The effect of too much rain!; Dodoy cutting the pioneering vegetation, which will be allowed to regrow, then cut to the ground and planted with papayas in late August; Gina and Bimbim; at the beginning of April we had the pleasure of a brief but encouraging visit by Anne and Rhena from CMS (this was taken at Peter and Sheki's)



## Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

**It builds our faith when we hear stories** from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. We hope that you're inspired as you read about indigenous women training for ministry in Argentina, and about children receiving trauma support in DR Congo. You can read their stories, and others, at [churchmissionsociety.org/empower](https://churchmissionsociety.org/empower)

Please note that opinions expressed in updates are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

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