



Eric and Sandra Read

Link Letter no. 46 | March 2026

Contact details:
esread@smallburn.co.uk



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,

You may have seen in the news a few months ago the story about the collapse of a private Islamic school in Indonesia which killed 67 high school-age boys. Despite the collapse being entirely down to human error and failure, there was no apology for several days. Eventually the school caretaker, who apparently is a well-regarded local Islamic scholar, issued an apology followed by this statement, which was quoted in The Guardian;

“This is indeed God’s will so we must all be patient, and may God replace it with goodness, with something much better,’ he said. ‘We must be confident that God will reward those affected by this incident with great rewards.’”

I read this and just felt really angry. I was angry on two accounts – one, it was **not** God’s will for those boys to die, they died because of human greed and incompetence. And two, I was angry that the parents should be expected to accept this! It was not God – what sort of God would will this to happen? Not our loving Father for sure.

Of course, when your belief is based on “inshallah” – “if it is God’s will”, then you have to say, “this is indeed God’s will...”. But if that’s the case, why bother attempting to do anything, as it is all pre-ordained anyway? Whatever I do or don’t do won’t make any difference. But we know this is not the truth. The **truth** is that not everything that happens is God’s will. Sin and evil is never God’s will. Did God want Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit? What we do or don’t do does make a difference, we can be agents of change (for better or worse) and that applies to all of us, whether we believe it or not.

Yet, how often do we as believers choose not to act and say, “Lord, I leave it to you, you’re in control”? Or in the Philippines, when something seems too difficult, people say “bahala na!”, meaning fate will work it out. That is us copping out. We can ask for God’s help and his Spirit will help us, but it is still our responsibility and choice to act. God has chosen to work through his people, through us.

Let us praise God that he has put his laws in place to govern the world and within those laws given us free will. He gives us responsibility, that we can change things and make a difference. But likewise, we all know that bad and hard things do happen, things which seem unfair, where there is no easy answer. We were watching the news following the first of the two recent typhoons here, they talked to a lady who had lost her



Learning a South Asian dance at the CMS conference in Thailand – a good time was had by all

Support Eric and Sandra Read:
churchmissionsociety.org/read

**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



husband and her two children and to a man who had lost his wife and five daughters. They were both in so much pain at their loss – it is unjust and our hearts ached for them. We pray that God will be their comforter.

This is what Eric shared during a devotional at our CMS mission conference in Thailand. A gathering of some of the UK CMS leadership, UK mission partners and Asia-CMS mission partners. It was a time of encouraging affirmation and warm fellowship.

Our plan for school visits last year did not happen, as the principal (like all other schools too) is under pressure to make more of an effort to improve children's reading skills. He kept having a reason to delay the visits. And the heavy

rains we had complicated things further. In the end we concluded it's better to put off the farm visits this school year. So we are now thinking and praying about how we should move forward – please pray with us.

On the other hand, the extra rain we've had was good for the farm. It helped to quickly establish newly planted fruit seedlings and the guavas produced more fruit. We also managed to plant eggplants and okra between the rows of fruits. The rain was also a test of the commitment and interest of the Thursday Bible study group and the Friday children and youth fellowship, as they kept coming despite the rain and mud!

At Christmas our whole group went carol singing around the community with carols that Sandra and the youth translated from English to Visayan. We did it for two evenings to reach as many homes as possible despite the rain. But instead of collecting money, we gave each household some homemade biscuits, which Sandra and the girls made, and a guava seedling. This was a pleasant surprise for people! Then we declared blessings for their home and a short statement that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the greatest gift of all – to us all! And we finished with the carol:

**Naghinaot kami kaninyo
Usa ka malipayong pasko
Nanghinaot malipayong pasko
Ug bulahan tuig!**

Can anyone guess which song it is?? This is our greetings for you too!!

With love and blessings,

Eric and Sandra



Photos from top to bottom: Syntropic (regenerative) farming; Sandra and some of the girls making biscuits for the carol singing; carol singing in the rain



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 Elinaja in Tanzania who is earning a living for his family thanks to new skills he learned at a CMS project. Read his story and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower

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

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this update on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400. Church Mission Society is a Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).